

On Saturday afternoon, July 10, 2010, fourteen divers gathered at Barcelona Harbor, NY, for a weekend of diving in eastern Lake Erie on Osprey Charter's boat "Southwind." The divers included Brian Keith, Aaron Medley, Jim Jones, Georgann and Mike Wachter, Ed Noga, Mike Chrisopulos, George Balas, Bernie Atkins, Michele Stoffan, Jim Taylor, Steve Moysan, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. Dawn Moysan was aboard as a bubble watcher, and also joining the group was Jim Herbert's friend John. Jimmy Herbert Jr. came along, and Mike captained the boat.

The weather appeared good with 2' seas at the harbor, so it was decided to make the planned 30-mile run to the "Trade Wind" and "Crystal Wreck," which are across the lake off Long Point. On the way across, the seas began to build to 3'-4' with whitecaps due to a stiff west wind. When the boat arrived at the first wreck, the mooring was quickly hooked, and everyone started to enter the water. That's when it became obvious there was a significant surface current from the wind, and some of the divers had to abort the dive after tiring from fighting to swim to the mooring line. Those that made it and descended found a 75 deg F surface temperature with a thermocline at 60'-70' and a warm 43-45 deg F bottom temperature. Visibility was acceptable at about 30', and ambient lighting was a little dim on the bottom, so a light helped.

The first wreck was the "Trade Wind," a three-masted barkentine that sank in 120' of water when the Canadian barkentine "Sir Charles Napier" collided with it during a snowstorm in December, 1854. The "Napier" appeared out of the storm, hit the ship, and then disappeared back into the snow squall. The "Trade Wind's" primary cargo was stoves and railroad rails, but it also carried two metal U.S. Government lifeboats as a deck load. The lifeboats came in handy when the crew used them to escape the quickly sinking vessel with no loss of life. The "Trade Wind" was a new ship when it sank, leaving it in excellent condition on the bottom.

The mooring was at the bow, which points south. It was tied to the windlass, which was used to raise and lower the anchors. On both sides of the bow are two older style metal-stocked anchors with their flukes resting on the deck and their stocks resting forward up against the railings. Anchor chains pass from each anchor through the railings and into the hawseholes at the ship's bow. The bowsprit is missing, and the bow has a blunt shape. From the windlass' pawl bitt extend two beams that run diagonally forward and outwards beyond the railings to form what would normally be considered the catheads for the anchors. However, aft of each beam is an additional L-shaped cathead mounted to the railing, making two apparent sets of catheads, an unusual feature. Hidden on the starboard side is a small third anchor partly concealed under the windlass end cap but with its arms and flukes sticking out and resting flat on the deck. A small square deck opening for the chain locker is visible immediately aft of the windlass.

The entire ship has a list to the port side, making the starboard railing the highest point of the wreck. The starboard railing is at about a 105' depth, and the port railing slopes down to a 115' depth. The ship's wooden railings are mostly intact except a pair of purposeful breaks near the stern to make cargo loading easier. Sets of deadeyes can be seen mounted on the railings on both sides of the wreck for the three masts. The forward half of the ship has railroad rails scattered across the deck like matchsticks. These railroad rails were part of the ship's deck cargo, and they fall down towards the port side and collect against the railing. On the starboard side near the bow is a large gash that extends into the side of the ship, destroying the railing in this area. A large spar lies across the deck and down into the lake bottom at this hole. This is where the "Napier" hit the "Trade Wind," and the spar is the "Napier's" jib boom, which was left behind on the stricken ship after the collision.

The decking is completely intact everywhere except at the collision hole. Moving aft along the centerline of the ship, the broken stub of the foremast is first encountered. Strangely, it is set inside a very small hatch opening. Behind it is a cargo hatch partly obscured by railroad rails scattered across the opening. After a span of decking, an old-style cylindrical-head capstan is encountered. Immediately behind the capstan amidships is the broken mainmast fallen towards the port side and lying perpendicularly across the deck. A centerboard winch is partially hidden by wood debris immediately aft of the mainmast. Moving aft across another span of decking, a second cargo opening is encountered with two side-by-side large-diameter pump barrels in front of it. These pump barrels are of an older design. Looking underneath the edges of the cargo opening, several rectangular stoves from the ship's cargo can be seen peeking out of the silt. Aft of the hatch is the broken mizzenmast stub sticking out of the deck.

An intact cabin fills the entire width of the ship at the extreme stern. Two companionways lead inside the cabin, one on each side of the ship. The cabin is mostly filled with silt with only 3'-4' of clearance overhead. On top of the cabin roof in the middle is a small skylight opening with raised framing. Set into the cabin's roof at the aft end is a square opening with a sunken floor and the ship's wheel mounted inside. This is a rather unique design since most ships had an aft steering deck instead. Swimming past the stern, the impressive transom, rudder, and underside curves of the ship can be seen. The rudder points straight ahead and exists in a scoured hole where more than 120' depths can be reached. The fluted end of a boom or gaff can be seen projecting out from under the ship on the port side into the scour hole.

On the port side of the ship along its length lie the extensive remains of all three masts. Stepped topmasts, crosstrees, bracing platform, spars, booms, gaffs, and other parts all form an impressive collection of rare barkentine mast structure on the bottom. Also, a possible second centerboard winch was seen on the bottom off the port side of the ship adjacent to the foremast. It was not unusual for

barkentines to have two centerboards, but the object was hard to identify since it was partly buried in the silt and heavily encrusted by mussels.

The next wreck planned to be visited was the "Crystal Wreck," an unidentified two-masted schooner a few miles away. Unfortunately, the seas appeared to be building, so it was wisely decided instead to run back across the lake with a following sea to the "Betty Hedger," which is only a few miles outside Barcelona harbor along the more sheltered south shore of the lake. This proved to be a good decision since the seas receded down to a more reasonable 2' with only a mild surface current. Conditions underwater were also better with 60' of visibility, bright ambient lighting, and a balmy 45 deg F temperature on the bottom. The thermocline was at 50'-60' with 75 deg F water and 15'-20' of visibility above it.

The "Betty Hedger," also called the "Sulfur Barge," has a large pile of sulfur cargo which dominates the center of the wreck. It is a large 113' x 30' wooden barge that sank in 115' of water during a November, 1937, storm while being towed by a tug with four sulfur-loaded barges from Buffalo, NY, to Cleveland, OH. The three other barges broke loose in the storm while the "Betty Hedger" remained under tow. The Coast Guard from Erie, PA, removed all eight crew members from the four barges, preventing any loss of life in the incident. Unfortunately, the "Betty Hedger" sank before the safety of Erie, PA, could be reached, and the other three barges supposedly washed ashore and were broken up. However, it is rumored one or more of them actually sank in deep water and remain to be found. The mooring is tied to a concrete mooring block off the bow, which points southwest. The hull's sides are fallen outwards, leaving the large cargo hatch frames improbably suspended 10'-15' off the bottom and delicately balanced on a series of large square center posts running down the length of the ship. The entire structure appears to have a "T" shape when viewed from the front or back with the sulfur packed around the center posts in a large mound.

The hatches are really one large hatch with dividers at each center post. Decking is suspended along the sides of the hatch coaming with occasional large cleats attached. At the bow the front deck has collapsed forward towards the mooring block. This deck lies upside down on the bottom, and a smooth shaped later-style capstan can be glimpsed underneath still hanging from the deck. At the extreme port side lying on the bottom can be seen a navigation light fixture, which was previously attached to the bow's deck. On the starboard side can be seen hanging chain from the small Navy-style anchor that used to rest on the deck, but the anchor could not be seen. The entire forward deck's center post is pulled out of the sulfur pile and is lying on top of the mound. Swimming down the length of the wreck, fishing net can be seen snagged on the port hatch coaming amidships. At the extreme stern are the sides of the cabin attached to the main structure. Missing are the roof, floor, front, and back walls of the cabin. The side walls each have two portholes installed, and on the inside of all of these portholes can be seen intact metal screening. The stern's deck has fallen

diagonally downwards to the bottom on the port side, and there is another small smooth-shaped capstan mounted in the middle of this deck.

After surfacing and heading back to shore, everyone gathered to eat a great dinner at the Barcelona Café at the top of the hill entering the marina. Jim Herbert's daughter Lisa is the chef, and she created some marvelous meals and desserts, which everyone enjoyed before heading back to the Holiday Motel for additional drinks while sitting outside the rooms.

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On Sunday morning, July 11, 2010, the seas had calmed to 1'-2', the sky was clear and sunny, and the day appeared beautiful. Unfortunately, Kevin decided to have a reoccurrence of a mysterious sciatic nerve problem with his back while getting out of the shower that morning. He had the same sciatic problem the previous week and almost missed the trip. Unable to walk, stand, or sit, he wisely decided to wait ashore lying on a picnic table while everyone else dove. Jim Herbert and Mike captained the trip, which went to the following two wrecks summarized by Georgann Wachter.

“Next day we headed to the schooner George Finney that sank in a storm in 1891 with no survivors. Maximum depth here is 100 ft. It was dim with a distinct current on the surface and also on the bottom. Vis was 25 ft. and temp was 44 degrees.

The last dive was the steamer Niagara which foundered in Dec. of 1899. There is a fine engine, boiler and a lot of fish net on this wreck that is not a problem since we had about 40 ft of vis. We also saw her rudder, pump anchor, windlass and wash basin. Temperature was a balmy 46 degrees, and depth was 90 ft.”