

On Saturday afternoon, July 16, 2011, seventeen divers gathered for a weekend of diving in eastern Lake Erie on Osprey Charter's boat "Southwind." The divers included Adam Poniknar, KB Sporck, Griff Ralston, Jim Meads, Ian Davis, Steve Moysan, Georgann and Mike Wachter, Michele Stoffan, Bernie Atkins, Brian Keith, Aaron Medley, Chris Herbruck, David Taylor, Isadora Van Riemsdijk, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. Dawn Moysan, Steve's wife, joined the group as a ride-along and general all-around diver helper, and Jim Herbert captained the boat with the help of John as deckhand.

The weather was calm with 1' seas and sunny skies, which was perfect for the planned long run across the lake to the Canadian side off Long Point, Ontario. The trip is approximately 25-30 miles each way and takes about 1-1/2 hours, so it can only be done in good weather. The first wreck to be visited was the "Trade Wind," a three-masted barkentine that sank in 120' of water during a snow squall in December, 1854, in a collision with the barkentine "Charles Napier." After the "Napier's" bow cut into the starboard side of the "Trade Wind," it disappeared back into the storm, leaving the "Trade Wind's" crew to fend for themselves in their rapidly sinking ship. The ship's cargo was mostly iron stoves and railroad rails, a heavy cargo that helped the ship to sink, but it also carried two U.S. Government lifeboats as cargo on the deck, and the crew fortunately used both of them to escape the vessel with no losses.

Upon entering the water, the divers found 10'-15' of surface visibility with a warm 73 deg F water temperature. The thermocline was at 50', and a disappointing 30' of visibility was below it. Ambient lighting on the bottom was dim, requiring a good light to see, and the bottom temperature was 43 deg F. The ship lies north-south with the bow pointed south. The mooring was tied in the debris field amidships off the port side. It was tied to one of the three fallen masts, which lie off the wreck on this side. The foremast and mizzenmast lie parallel to the wreck, and the mainmast lies fallen perpendicular to the wreck. Topmasts, crosstrees, bracing platform, spars, booms, and gaffs can all be seen lying scattered on the mud bottom in this area.

After swimming west to reach the wreck, the stern was visited first. Its most noticeable feature is a completely intact low-lying cabin that fills the entire width of the ship. There is no steering deck behind the cabin, and instead the wheel is on the cabin's roof. It is placed inside a square opening with a sunken floor so the swinging mizzen boom over the cabin would not strike the wheelsman. There is a small opening into the cabin inside this sunken box. On top of the cabin roof in front of the wheel is a small rectangular skylight with a raised coaming. Two companionways are at the front of the cabin, one on each side. The cabin is mostly filled with silt with only about 3' of clearance inside. The stern is squared off and completely intact, and swimming behind the ship the entire 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. Interestingly, the rudder has a decorative curved notch on top of it.

The entire ship lists significantly to the port side by about 30 degrees. Scattered all over the deck, but mostly slid to the port side, are the railroad rails, which were evidently stored as deck cargo. The rails are scattered randomly but have a higher concentration at the bow. The deck is at an average depth of 110', but most of the wreck can be viewed while swimming along the higher starboard side at about 105'. The ship's wooden railings are mostly intact, and deadeyes can be seen mounted at various locations. There is a break in the railings on both sides near the stern, which were used to make cargo loading/unloading from the dock easier. In front of the cabin is the broken mizzenmast stub with a cargo hatch opening in front of it. Inside the cargo hold can be seen several rectangular iron stoves peeking out of the silt, although this year it was noticeably harder to see them due to deeper silt. Forward of the hatch is a double-barreled, large-diameter pump of an older design. Moving forward to amidships, a centerboard winch is askew immediately behind the fallen mainmast, which lies perpendicular across the deck and heads out towards the port side. An older style cylindrical capstan is forward of the fallen mainmast, followed by a second cargo hatch with its opening mostly hidden by railroad rails scattered across it. Finally, forward is the broken off foremast stub, which is inexplicably set inside a small hatch opening.

Not noticed in previous years is a small slot in the deck forward of the aft cargo hatch opening. A chain leaves this slot and trails across the deck before falling over the port railing and into the bottom. It is quite possible this is a second centerboard winch which now lies buried off the port side. It was common for barkentines to have two centerboards. On the starboard side adjacent to the foremast is the collision hole where the "Napier" struck the "Trade Wind." The railing is destroyed in this area, and a large gash extends into the ship's hull. Lying inside this hole and leaning up against the deck is a large spar, which is purportedly the "Napier's" jib boom that was left behind on the "Trade Wind" after the collision. At the bow is a windlass and small square deck opening aft to the chain locker. Two older style metal-stocked anchors lie on the deck on each side of the windlass with their arms and flukes resting on the deck. A third small kedge anchor can also be seen with its arms and flukes sticking out from underneath the windlass end cap on the starboard side. There are 90-degree catheads attached to the railings on each side near the upright stocks of each anchor, and the anchor chains are draped from the anchors over the railing to the hawse holes on each side of the bow. Curiously, two wooden beams also project out diagonally from the sides of the bow and seem to serve as a second pair of catheads. Why a second pair of catheads was needed is not known. At the extreme bow the bowsprit is missing, and the bow has a blunt canal-boat shape to it.

After surfacing from the first dive, a chemical tanker from Toronto passed upbound to the north, and the "Southwind" passed behind it as it headed to the next wreck, the "Crystal Wreck." This is an unidentified three-masted schooner in 115' of water. It is also called the "Hook" due to its originally being located by divers investigating a fisherman's net snag. Not surprisingly, the wreck has many fishing nets on it, and as it was learned, there are more still being added. The surface water conditions were the same except the thermocline was a little shallower at a 40'-50' depth. However, the conditions on the bottom were noticeably better with 40'-50' of visibility. The lighting was still a little dim, requiring a good light. The mooring was tied to the port side near the stern, which points west. It was immediately obvious that significant changes had occurred on the wreck, apparently from another fishing net being snagged on it. Whereas the railings were previously mostly intact except on the port bow, almost all railings are now down on both the port and starboard sides, causing some damage to the hull and decking as well.

At the stern a large cavity fills the width of the ship where the cabin was once located before the ship sank. It was common for the cabin to blow off from escaping air when a ship sank. The remains of the cabin floor joists and debris can be seen about 5' below the deck level in the cabin opening. At the forward starboard corner of the cabin is a rectangular iron stove, and sitting on it are the sole of a shoe and the remains of some cookware found by divers and collected there for viewing. At the rear of this cabin is an elevated box-like structure that surrounds the rudder post and holds the ship's wheel in an arrangement very similar to the "Trade Wind's" wheel. The box is partially draped in netting, and the front of the box, which formerly hid the wheel, is now missing, exposing the wheel for better viewing. Furthermore, the starboard side of the ship, which would have been the cabin wall, is now missing. Previously, the cabin sides were completely enclosed. The transom, which in the past was completely covered in hanging net, is now exposed with only some net hanging off the starboard corner. The rudder, transom, and undersides of the ship - previously obscured by this hanging net - can now be easily seen, and the rudder was noticed to be turned slightly to starboard. There are also two small square windows in the transom, an unusual feature and something never before noticed!

The hull stands 5'-8' high off the bottom, and the deck is at a 105' depth with only a few missing boards. However, a new large patch of missing decking was noticed in front of the cabin. Two posts stand in line along the centerline in front of the cabin opening. The aft one is the mizzenmast stub, and the forward one appears to be a single-barreled wooden pump, although identification is hard due to the coating of zebra/quagga mussels. Forward of the pump is a cargo hatch opening, some more missing decking, and the mainmast hole. This is followed by a centerboard winch that is askew with a small hatch in front of it with the top of the centerboard box visible running through the center of it. An older style cylindrical capstan is mounted to the deck in front of this hatch, and this is followed by a foremast stub with a broken square fife rail around it. Near the bow

is a double-barreled metal hand pump with the linkages present but the handles missing, followed by a small square chain locker opening and the windlass. Also noticed was a prominent piece of white crockery on the deck.

The windlass has a pawl bitt in front of it, and the bowsprit abuts it at the base. The bowsprit is intact and sticks out to where the jib boom breaks off. The whole bowsprit is draped in net that hangs underneath like decorative bunting. On the mud bottom immediately in front of the stem is more netting, and on closer inspection it was found to be snagged to a large wood-stocked anchor. The starboard anchor has always been missing, and it is now known where it has been hiding. The netting must have shifted enough for it to be seen. The port side of the bow has a lot of floating netting snagged to it, and in the past a metal-stocked anchor has been seen inside this netting, although it is now so thick as to be unseen. One anchor has been exposed, and another has been hidden. Upon surfacing, the seas were mirror flat, and the long trip back to port was made on smooth seas with a beautiful sunset behind us. Upon arriving back at port, we unloaded our tanks for Jim Herbert to fill before the next day's trip. We then ate dinner at his daughter Lisa's restaurant at the top of the hill near the marina. She stayed open for us, and the food and local vineyard wines were excellent.

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On Sunday, July 17, 2011, the sky was clear and sunny, and the day was hot at 80-85 deg F. However, the wind was blowing strongly out of the west with whitecaps and seas at 2'-3'. Replacing Adam on the boat were Ed Noga and Glen Fisher, who could not make the first day's trip. As the boat got underway, the seas appeared to be building. Therefore, the planned wrecks of the "Carlingford" and "Finney" were forgotten in favor of the near-shore wrecks of the "Boland" and "Betty Hedger." The first dive was on the "John J. Boland." This large steel ship foundered in 130' of water in October, 1932, after a sudden storm caught it steaming the short distance from Erie, PA, to the Welland Canal, Ontario, with excess coal loaded on its deck and no hatch covers installed. The ship suddenly rolled and sank in the storm as water filled the cargo hold and the load shifted. Fifteen crewmen survived and four died. The wreck lies almost upside down but partially on its starboard side, exposing the port deck and gunwale. The mooring is usually tied to the stern, which points northeast. Upon entering the water, a warm surface temperature of 75 deg F was encountered with 10'-15' of visibility. The thermocline was at 40'-50', and an excellent 50'-60' of visibility was below it with bright ambient lighting. The bottom temperature was also noticeably chillier at 41-42 deg F. The mooring was tied to the skeg of the large single rudder, which is mounted behind a large four-bladed propeller. Swimming to the west side of the wreck, the port side of the ship can be examined.

First to be encountered is the small stern deck, which has a deck winch half-buried in the bottom where the deck slopes into the mud. Immediately in front of this deck is the stern deckhouse. The side of the deckhouse has a covered breezeway with two portholes and two open doors at the forward end. Both doors reveal rooms with steel interiors half-filled with silt. There are also two hanging lifeboat davits and two lifeboat cradles mounted below on what used to be the roof of the deckhouse. Very close to the bottom can be seen the raised skylights of the engine room. In past years they were partially buried in the bottom, but now they are fully exposed and scoured out. Also, there appears to be a hatch opening forward that may provide some access. On the forward part of the deckhouse roof is a square box partially buried in the bottom. At the forward end of the deckhouse is an intermediate deck with another deck winch mounted to it, a ladder leading up to the deckhouse's walkway, and a ladder leading down to the main cargo deck. On the deckhouse wall behind the winch is a new open door which leads to a small closet.

The long swim along the cargo deck can be done along the port gunwale, which is at about a 100' depth. At least five cargo openings can be found while swimming down the length of the wreck, and the cavernous interior of each cargo hold can be examined by looking into each hatch opening. The last two cargo openings are separated by a third deck winch. The forward deckhouse is encountered at the bow with an open door on the aft end that leads to a wood-paneled hallway and two rooms branching off it. Visible are a steam radiator, ceramic electrical insulators on the wall, and lots of debris and broken furniture. Because of the upside nature of the wreck, it is disorienting to look into the interior spaces, and the thick silt makes penetration hazardous. New this year is another open door on the upper side breezeway of the deckhouse. It reveals a wood-lined corridor which leads to a room at the end. It was also noticed the open door has an attractive spiral vent on it.

Forward of the deckhouse is a small bow deck with a half-buried windlass on it. The stem curves gracefully into the mud bottom, and there a navy-style anchor stowed sideways in its hawse recess on the side of the bow. The "Boland" is 250' long, making it a long swim to see the entire wreck in one dive, especially at the depth of the port gunwale. Therefore, after finishing at the bow, Cindy and Kevin decided to swim back along the highest raised portion of the wreck. The top of the wreck is at 90', which is where the bottom and port sides of the ship meet each other. The bottom of the ship is fairly flat, and there is a raised keel running the length of the ship. Thanks to the fabulous visibility, the entire wreck below could be seen from this vantage point. Along the way, a small baby walleye was seen hanging out at the highest point of the wreck near the stern.

Upon surfacing, it was discovered the rough seas encountered earlier in the morning had subsided to less than 1'. However, since we were now committed to the near-shore wrecks, we continued to the second alternate wreck, the "Betty Hedger." This wooden barge, also called the "Sulfur Barge," was carrying sulfur

when it sank in 115' of water during a November, 1937, storm. It was being towed by a tug with three other sulfur-loaded wooden 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 was called and arrived to safely remove all eight crew members from the four barges, preventing any loss of life in the incident. Unfortunately, the "Betty Hedger" sank before arriving at the safety of Erie, PA. The other three barges supposedly washed ashore and were broken up in the wild surf, although it is rumored at least one of them may have actually sunk in deep water and remains to be found. Upon entering the water, the same excellent conditions as the "Boland" were found. Due to the fragile nature of the wreck, the mooring is tied to a concrete mooring block 30'-50' off the bow, which points southwest. The hull's sides have fallen outwards, leaving the large cargo hatch coamings improbably suspended 10'-15' off the bottom and delicately balanced on a series of large square center posts running down the middle of the ship. The entire structure appears to have a "T" shape when viewed from the front with the sulfur cargo packed in a large yellow-brown mound around the center posts.

The barge was a rectangular-shaped vessel, and the bow deck of the wreck, which used to be standing, collapsed forward sometime between 2002 and 2007. This resulted in the deck lying upside down on the bottom. Looking underneath this deck, which has only 3' of clearance above the bottom, reveals a small late-styled capstan still hanging from the deck. Off the port side lying on the bottom can be seen a navigation light fixture, which was previously attached to the bow deck. The entire bow deck's center post is pulled out of the sulfur pile and is lying on top of the mound. The forward hatch coaming is also lying upside down on this pile, and this is unfortunate because this hatch coaming contained the carved tonnage marks that were first used to positively identify this wreck.

Swimming down the length of the wreck, it can be seen the center hatches of the barge are really just one large hatch with beam dividers at each center post. Decking is suspended along the outside edges of the hatch coamings with occasional large cleats attached. At the stern the cabin's side walls are attached to the hatch coaming's longitudinal structure. Missing are the roof, floor, and front and back walls of the cabin. There are two portholes on each side wall, and on the inside of these portholes can be seen intact metal screens. The stern deck has fallen diagonally downwards to the bottom on the port side, and there is another small early-style capstan mounted in the middle of this deck. Boards and other debris are scattered around the wreck outside the fallen side walls of the hull.

While everyone was gearing up to start the dive, John made the mistake of leaning against a side gate that wasn't there, resulting in a cool, refreshing swim. Gone were the reading glasses on his forehead, but during the dive Steve Moysan found them off the port side of the wreck 115' down below the boat, earning him the grand scavenger hunt prize of the trip. During the deco/safety

stop, there was a noticeable amount of current from the west. After surfacing, the seas had completely calmed to a glassy flat state. Since it was very hot and humid back on shore and there was no afternoon trip, we lounged on the mooring and did not hurry back to shore. Everyone shared their food and snacks for lunch, and after a while we casually headed back to shore. It was a perfect, relaxing ending to another great trip in the eastern basin of Lake Erie!