

On Saturday, July 26, 2003, twenty divers met at Osprey Charters in Barcelona, NY, to go diving on some of the fabulous wrecks in eastern Lake Erie. The divers were Georgann and Mike Wachter, Annette and Dave Soule, Rita Montorsi, Ted Green, Bob Ericsson, Ann Stephenson, Marty Leonard, Bob Treynor, Greg Ondus, John Norris, Mark Siebert, KB Sporck, George Balas, Ken Marshall, Kelly Colebrook, Griff Ralston, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. Along for the ride was "Ondus Guest," Linda, and captaining was Jim Herbert with the help of his new assistant Mike. The two wrecks were the "Trade Wind" and "Crystal Wreck," both a long hour, forty-five minute (30-35 mile) run from Barcelona Harbor and located on the Canadian side next to Long Point. Although they are a long way, both are some of the finest examples of 1800's wooden sailing vessel wrecks at recreational depths in Lake Erie. The dive boat "Southwind" was late getting underway, and the weather was overcast but pleasant with 2' choppy seas, allowing the boat to make acceptable headway to the distant dive sites.

The first wreck was the "Trade Wind," a three-masted bark that sank in 120' of water in a collision with another sailing vessel in 1854 during a December snowstorm. Its cargo was stoves, railroad rails, and two U.S. Government lifeboats, which came in handy and allowed the crew to escape the sinking with no losses. The "Trade Wind" was barely a year old when it sank, leaving the ship in excellent condition on the bottom. After hooking into the mooring on the wreck, Jim announced that a gale warning had just been issued for Lake Erie calling for winds in excess of 40-50 mph. The weather was worsening, the wind and waves were increasing, and the hour was growing late as the divers entered the water at 6 PM. It was decided this would probably be the only dive of the day.

Despite the topside conditions, great underwater conditions were encountered. Surface visibility was a respectable 15', and the surface temperature was a warm 70 deg F. A thermocline was encountered at 55', and 40-42 deg F water was found below this with visibility of at approximately 50'-80'. Lightning was also good with dim but ambient conditions on the bottom. A light was only required to pick out some of the smaller details and to peer into some of the darker corners of the wreck. The mooring is tied to the bow on the starboard side, and the bow points south. Two large classic fluked anchors can be seen on the deck on both sides of the bow. Catheads for the anchors stick out from the railings near the anchors, and the anchor chains pass from the anchors through the hawse holes and into the ship's bow in an orderly fashion. The bowsprit is missing, but the bow has an attractive shape when viewed directly from the front and stands 8'-10' high off the bottom. A large windlass and square bit are on the forecastle at the extreme bow, and a large square opening to the chain locker is visible immediately behind the windlass.

The whole ship is tilted to the port (east) side, and the deck and cargo openings are all completely intact with no significant damage. The deck level is at a 110'

depth and can be easily viewed while swimming at 100'. On the deck, especially to the port side, are what appear to be many lumber planks scattered like matchsticks. These are, in fact, the iron railroad rails that were part of its cargo. The ship's wooden railings are mostly intact except where broken by fallen pieces of mast structure. The railings have some deadeyes on them, and at least one block was found. A hand pump, capstan, centerboard winch, and the top of the centerboard box were found down the length of the vessel. In the aft cargo hatch was found the remains of two large rectangular stoves.

At the stern the cabin was found intact - a rarity since cabins usually blow off during sinkings. The cabin fills the entire width of the ship and has two companionways leading inside, one on each side. Peering into the cabin revealed that it is mostly filled with silt with only about 3'-4' of clearance on top. In the middle on the cabin roof is a small skylight opening, and the individual boards and caulking are visible on the roof due to the lack of any silt accumulation. At the rear of the cabin's roof is found a square opening with a sunken floor and the ship's wheel mounted inside. This is a rather unique design since the steering wheel was usually contained on a separate aft steering deck, which does not exist on this ship. Viewing the ship from the stern reveals the impressive sight of the entire transom, rudder, and undersides of the ship. The rudder is turned slightly to port and exists in a hole where more than 120' depths can probably be reached.

Off the port side of the ship in a large debris field are scattered the extensive remains of the three masts, mostly lying parallel to the ship's hull. Topmasts are still in place on the various masts, and an impressive bracing platform and crosstrees can be seen on one of the masts. The masts are very long and are made of large diameter (3'-4') pieces of wood. Much time can be spent just examining these fascinating structures and parts of the masts, and it is almost a separate dive on its own.

Upon surfacing, a long retreat was made in 3'-4' seas back to port, arriving at 9 PM just in time for dinner at Lisa's (Jim's daughter) new restaurant at the top of the hill at the entrance to the marina. Great food and cold beverages were obtained and enjoyed by all.

Upon awaking the next day on Sunday, July 27, strong 30 mph winds and 5'-6' waves and whitecaps greeted the divers, making that morning's trip to the "Boland" and "Betty Hedger" unlikely. After waiting an hour or so to see if things would improve, it was decided to call it off and live to dive another day. At least two couples decided independently to head inland and view the pretty and interesting Panama Rocks near Lake Chautauqua. There are lots of cracks, caves, and passages to explore in this natural fun house, and it makes for an interesting diversion if there is a spare day where no diving is possible. On the way home, very strong rains and winds were encountered, reinforcing the fact that diving would have been unwise. Overall, however, the previous day's dive

still made the trip seem worthwhile, and it is hoped the weather gods will be happier on future trips.