

On Saturday, August 30, twelve AquaMasters went diving in Kingston, Ontario. In order to be there early Saturday morning, everyone had taken off work on Friday and driven 9 hours from Cleveland, OH, to get there. Kingston is on the eastern end of Lake Ontario near the head of the St. Lawrence River on the Canadian side. The general area is called the Thousand Islands because of the many islands - large and small - that dot this end of the lake and river. The diving was done with Northern Tech Divers on the boats "Spike Sr," captained by Dan MacKay, and "Spike Jr," captained by Walter Brokx. Since the two boats had different docks and speeds, they operated independently for both dive days, including going to different wrecks. On the "Sr" boat were Mark Miller, Ted Green, Rita Montorsi, Mark Siebert, George Balas, and Jacques Girouard. This boat preferred to have long political discussions about DIR. This group was also joined by George's wife, Linda, who stayed on shore the first day and went out on the boat the second day. On the "Jr" boat, which was faster despite one inoperative engine, were Bob Ericsson, Ron Hudy, Gail Gray, Ann Stephenson, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. They preferred to talk about the dives and how lovely the weather was.

Both days were sunny and pleasant with 70 deg F air temperatures and calm seas of less than 1'. The water surface temperature was 70-73 deg F with a thermocline at 70' and warm 50-53 deg F water below. Visibility was also a spectacular 60'-80' viz below the thermocline and a respectable 20'-25' above. The diving was easy and enjoyable, and the wrecks are in very good shape. They all have a moderate coating of zebra mussels, but not so much that objects cannot easily be seen or identified. The wrecks and visibility are comparable to Lake Erie's eastern basin, but the water is warmer, and the depths are shallower. The only disadvantage for Cleveland divers is the relatively long drive that must be done to get there. This area is best known for its great diving conditions (warm and clear) in the months of September and October when most other diving in the Great Lakes is over, and it is the perfect choice for late season diving.

The first dive for the "Jr" boat was on the "George A. Marsh," a three-masted schooner that sank in 1917 during an August storm with the loss of 12 out of 14 lives, including the captain's wife and 5 children. The captain may or may not have lived. The wreck lies upright in 80' of water with a concrete block mooring off the starboard side near the bow, which points N. The hull is intact and stands upright with the deck at about 75'. Since the thermocline was at 70', this meant everything could be seen in the relative comfort of warm water with occasional dips down into colder water to look at some items closer. The most impressive feature of the wreck is the imposing bowsprit, which still has its bracing chains intact. A classic wood-stocked anchor is laying on the bottom on the starboard side with chain leading to it, but the port anchor is missing. Both anchors' catheads are in place on the railings, and the port cathead still has a block hanging from its end. The railings are intact, and sets of four deadeyes can be observed in their proper places on the railings adjacent to where each mast

would be. All the masts, however, are missing. The decking is mostly intact but is slightly collapsed in some areas.

On the bow is a windlass with a chain locker opening behind it and some chain running down into it. A hand pump and winch are located aft of the chain locker. Several cargo openings can be seen along the length of the ship, and a capstan stands amidships. The centerboard box beneath the deck is somewhat exposed, and a fallen winch can be seen near the aft end of the box. Standing vertically upright on its end amidships on the starboard deck is a donkey boiler. It was customary on sailing ships to stand the boiler like this rather than laying it down horizontally on its side. Scattered on the deck are spars, booms, blocks, and some unidentifiable machinery pieces, including one that almost looked like a bell. Reaching the stern, the cabin is missing, but its floor, which is flush with the deck, remains. On the port side is a rectangular stove with a collection of pots, dishes, a teapot, and a leather shoe on top of it. Nearby is a prying bar tool standing upright from between two boards. At the extreme stern can be seen the ship's wheel, steering gear, and rudder post. The two arched lifeboat davits have fallen, but the transom stands mostly intact with the rudder pointed straight. There were many interesting things to view on this wreck, and it was circled twice to be able to see everything it has to offer.

The second dive was made on the "Comet," a side paddlewheeler that sank at the beginning of the Civil War in 1861 after colliding with a schooner. It lies in 75' of water with a concrete block mooring off the starboard side near the stern, which points E. The hull is mostly collapsed at both ends, but the decking remains somewhat intact in the middle. The most remarkable feature of this wreck are the fully intact side paddlewheels amidships on both sides. They stand about 20'-25' off the bottom and are very impressive to view. Inboard next to each paddlewheel stands a walking beam engine, and both engines tower 30' off the bottom. Each engine has a horizontal walking beam at the top with vertical shafts at both ends. On the forward end the shafts are connected to a vertical piston near the deck, and on the aft end the shafts are connected to each paddlewheel's hub via a crank. The boilers are visible immediately underneath the deck and running lengthwise forward of the paddlewheels, and the fireboxes can be viewed by penetrating beneath the deck from the side. On top of the boilers' fireboxes are the smokestack bases, one on each side, which penetrate the deck and stand about 8' high. Two smokestack pipes can be seen lying side by side nearby on the bottom on the starboard side.

A collection of dishes and cups are on display at the stern, and a fallen door can be seen among the debris. Also visible is the rudder, which is half exposed and attached to a tall standing rudder post. Part of the transom structure is also attached to the post, and the whole assembly stands tilted to the port side. The chines around each paddlewheel are partially intact, and the deck between the paddlewheels and immediately forward is also intact. The forward deck has two square hatch openings, a unique circular opening, a winch lying fallen on its side

with its under-deck support structure still attached, and a windlass, which also had its under-deck structure still attached. The extreme bow is completely disintegrated, but there is a bow-pointing pole angled upwards from the bottom and still attached to the bow stem with a "Y"-shaped bracket. Many details of the structure and various miscellaneous parts are visible all around the wreck.

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On Sunday, August 31, the first dive for the "Jr" boat was the "George T. Davie," a bulk freighter that foundered in heavy seas at the end of World War II in April, 1945, while carrying a cargo of coal. All four people aboard were rescued. The wreck lies in 100' of water almost on its starboard side with its deck at a 45 deg. angle and the port railing at a 70' depth. From the top railing the whole port side of the ship can be viewed, complete with 3 wooden rub rails running the length of the ship. The bow appears rather blunt and rounded and points N. A small Navy-style (stockless) anchor hangs from its hawsehole very close to the bow stem on the port side, but the starboard anchor is missing. Chain runs from the port anchor to a small steam-driven windlass on the bow's deck. A large horizontal boiler, complete with a small auxiliary tank on top, sits immediately behind the windlass with many valves and pipes. Aft of this are many large hatches with piles of coal pouring out onto the bottom. Many zebra mussel shells have also collected in this area, making deep drifts of shell.

A lifeboat - a rare sight on wrecks - can be seen sitting upright on the bottom on the starboard side approximately amidships, and several divers sat inside and tried rowing. At the stern can be seen the cabin with a freshwater tank mounted on its roof. The inside of the cabin is easily penetrated through several doors and windows, but care must be taken because of the extreme tilt of the cabin and the many collapsed interior wood paneling slats that fill the inside. On the aft deck can be seen an elaborate steam-assisted steering gear and the attached ship's wheel. The rudder can be seen underneath the hull, but no propeller was visible. Lying on the bottom off the starboard side of the cabin is a crane house with its mounting platform attached. From the crane house a large metal boom runs along the bottom diagonally away from the ship, and at its end is a cable with an attached clamshell bucket lying on the bottom near the wreck's hull. This crane probably gave the ship some self-loading capability long before most other ships had it. This dive was a little colder on the bottom at 48 deg F, but the same great dive conditions persisted.

The second dive of the day was on the "Cornwall," an iron-hulled side paddlewheeler that was scuttled in the ship graveyard off Amherst Island in 1928. Dynamite was used to sink the ship, and the shattered remains of its hull can be viewed in 70' of water. Because the thermocline extended all the way to the bottom, it was a very warm dive. The visibility was less at 25'-30', but this still allowed everything to be seen with relative ease. The bow points N, and the

concrete block mooring is off the bow on the starboard side. Most of the bow's hull is still intact, but it is tilted to starboard, causing the top decking to slide partially off. The bow stem has an interesting decorative post on top of it. Moving aft, the hull is split open until reaching the paddlewheels amidships. The port paddle wheel is tilted to the port side at a 45 deg. angle, but the starboard paddlewheel stands erect about 20'-25' off the bottom. The engine(s) are missing, but two massive boilers are next to each wheel with a large gap along the centerline in between them. The large shafts for the paddlewheels can be seen, and various miscellaneous machinery parts and support frames are also evident in this area.

Swimming aft, the hull is again split open and scattered, but the rudder post can be seen standing with the rectangular rudder turned hard against the hull on the starboard side and almost blending into it. A large expanse of wooden decking can be seen on the starboard side of the stern. Examining the metal hull parts along the length of the ship revealed five portholes, four with the glass swingplates still mostly or completely intact and dogged to the backplate. A metal bucket was also found at the bow, but this could be a modern artifact.

Overall, the diving was excellent and very enjoyable in Kingston. This is the place to dive towards the end of the season or as a beginner who wants to see good Great Lakes shipwrecks in relatively warm water and good viz. Everyone had a great time, and many thanks to Mark Miller, who worked hard to arrange this trip!