

On Saturday morning, July 7, various Lake Erie Wreck Diver (LEWD) members met in Barcelona, NY, at Osprey Dive Charters to dive Lake Erie's famous eastern basin. For some, it was their first time diving in the area, and they wanted to see what they'd been missing. The LEWD members on the trip were Georgann and Mike Wachter, Gary Humel, Greg Ondus, Michelle Foss, Monica Dobies, Ann Stevenson, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. Several other non-LEWD divers were also present to fill out the boat. Some divers had shown up Friday evening to dive a newly discovered wreck called the "Sulfur Barge," but the weather didn't cooperate, so the dive was moved to Saturday morning. The weather was mostly cloudy, but the seas were a tolerable 2'-3'. It's a short ride from Barcelona Harbor to the "Sulfur Barge," and we were ready to dive within minutes. The barge lies east-west in 110' of water, although it is advertised as 120'. The mooring line is attached to the bottom at the western end, which appears to be the bow. The barge is made of wood and is one of four possible barges that sank in approximately 1938 carrying a cargo of sulfur. One of the purposes of the dive was to measure the wreck to identify which of the four it is.

Upon descending, the barge was found to be upright but with its sides collapsed. However, the hatch framing and parts of the decking are still standing about 10' off the bottom supported by a series of columns and posts. Beneath this overhead framing lies a large pile of sulfur, which has pushed the barge's sides outwards and caused them to collapse. Curiously, the north (starboard) side has collapsed outwards, but the south (port) side has collapsed inwards. A small deck is still intact at the western end of the barge and has several square wooden tow bits, a small winch, and a capstan, which makes it the most likely end to be the bow. A triangular bulkhead at this end marks the area where the hatches started. The hatches are marked by a series of large rectangular openings surrounded on both sides by a continuous low wall with a thin strip of decking beyond the wall and running the length of the barge. Large cleats can be seen at regular intervals on this strip of decking. Some snagged netting was evident amidships on the port side. At the eastern end of the barge is the remains of a cabin. The roof, back, and front portions are gone, but the sides remain with two portholes on each side. They still have their glass in them, and they have what appears to be mesh screen on the outsides. A collapsed aft deck is tilted downwards behind the cabin with a single capstan still attached. Some excavation and scouring of the sediment on the bottom is also evident in this area.

Afterwards, the "Dean Richmond" was visited for the second dive. This wooden steamer sank in 1893 and was a famous treasure ship that was hunted for years before finally being found upside down in 110' of water in 1983. Naturally, there was no treasure, but many salvage efforts were necessary before this was confirmed. The wreck lies roughly SW-NE with the stern at the SW end. The mooring line is attached here, and the rudder can be seen turned hard to starboard. The port propeller is visible next to the rudder, but the starboard propeller is missing because it was salvaged. Despite being upside down, there

is a wealth of interesting debris surrounding the wreck, partly from the sinking and partly from the salvage efforts. The wreck is also penetrable from under the gunwales at the stern or from several holes cut or pulled from her sides. Her port side at the bow is terribly disfigured from salvage efforts, which pulled/blew this side away from the wreck. There is the strange sight of her forward mast, which can be seen near the bow and off to the starboard side sticking vertically into the mud and rising 20'-30' off the bottom. At first it appears to be a telephone pole planted next to the wreck until examined closely. It can be seen to be square-cut with metal banding and an old lantern attachment point. A small, plain porcelain plate was also seen placed on the keel near the stern, although it may not be an original. During the dive Kevin followed his yearly tradition of rescuing someone with his 7' long hose when a free flowing regulator occurred to a diver soon after they arrived on the bottom. After an escort to the surface and a short safety stop, he and Cindy continued the dive.

Visibility was very good on both wrecks at an estimated 60'-70', although this is considered average for the eastern basin. Lighting conditions were also good, making for good dives and a wonderful introduction to eastern basin diving. The thermocline was located at 65'-70' with a bottom temperature of 40 deg F (brrrrrrr) below it. This is another joy of eastern basin diving. The surface temperature was 69 deg F, and despite a cold bottom temperature, about half the people dove wet. A fairly strong eastern current was found on the "Sulfur Barge," but there was no current found on the "Dean Richmond." Several burbot, also known as lawyer fish or ling cods, were seen on both wrecks, and the zebra mussels were not too heavy on either wreck. A great time was had by all, and hopefully there will be several more visits to the eastern basin before the season is done!

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After the morning trip Ann Stephenson, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee stayed around for the afternoon trip on Osprey. It was a full boat with 20 divers, mostly technical types wearing double tanks and carrying one or two stage bottles. The wreck was the "Trade Wind," a three-masted bark that sank in 1854 off Long Point after a collision with another ship in a snowstorm late in the season. The "Trade Wind" was only a year old at the time, and it was carrying railroad iron, stoves, and - fortuitously - lifeboats as cargo. Because of her location off the extreme western end of Long Point, it was a long 2-hour boat ride to the site, but this gave Ann, Cindy, and Kevin plenty of surface interval time to offgas before the dive. The weather had calmed down since the morning to 1'-2' seas, so the long trip was very tolerable.

Ann, Cindy, and Kevin were the first ones in the water while everyone else aboard geared up. They helped tie off the deco bar line to the mooring line, then descended to the wreck. The wreck lies north-south in 120' of water with the

stern at the north end. The mooring line is tied amidships off the port side in the debris field. All three masts and their various members lie in a jumble to this side of the wreck and extend both parallel and perpendicular to the wreck. Iron railroad tracks lie scattered all over the deck, adding to its overall disheveled appearance. In fact, it is hard to pick out the outline of the hull out from the masts and tracks, and at first the wreck appears to be a lumber pile. Despite this, however, the hull was found to be very much intact. Swimming aft, the cabin was discovered to be in place - a rarity - with several narrow companionways headed below deck. In the center of the cabin is a small, cramped cavity or cockpit in which lies a beautifully preserved steering wheel. The stern is rather plain looking, but the rudder can be seen partially exposed and pointing straight ahead.

Swimming forward, many cargo hatches can be seen, and supposedly iron stoves can be found inside, although we did not enter them. More railroad iron can be seen scattered over the deck, and the sides of the ship stand about 5-10' above the bottom. Few deadeyes were found except at the extreme stern, but the railings are intact. A single capstan was seen amidships. At the bow two large fluted anchors with wooden stocks can be seen in their proper places hooked to the railing and hanging over the sides. A large winch and a capstan stand behind the anchors. The bow is in good shape, but the bowsprit is missing. A very noticeable list to port is also evident. Swimming back to the mooring line along the port side, the masts were examined in detail. They were found to be remarkably intact with many of the double poles of the upper masts, bands, and bracing structures (crow's nests) visible. If it weren't for the fact that they all lie flat on the bottom, they would be the signature feature of this wreck. Most wrecks have almost no remains of the masts beyond the main poles.

After surfacing from a 27-minute dive, it was discovered that only four other divers had left the boat. So, Ann, Cindy, and Kevin helped everyone else get geared up and, later, back aboard. After the last divers had entered the water, they got geared up again for a short second dive. They also released the deco bar from the mooring line. The visibility for this wreck was not as good as the morning with only 50' visibility. Lighting conditions were also somewhat darker, especially on the second dive when complete cloud overcast moved in. The bottom temperature was still 40 deg F, but the thermocline was located at a much shallower 45', and the surface temperature was a colder 65 deg F. Surface visibility, on the other hand, was much better at about 20'-25' compared to 15'-20' for the morning's dive. No current was evident. This shows the wide variability in conditions that can occur simultaneously for different portions of the lake on the same day. Overall, it was a full day of diving, and we all had a great time.