

On Sunday, July 31, 2005, eight Lake Erie Wreck Diver (LEWD) members drove 9 hours from Cleveland, OH, to Tobermory, Ontario, which is located on the Bruce Peninsula of the Georgian Bay in Lake Huron. Making the journey were Dave and Annette Soule, Greg Ondus, Ken Marshall, Eli Zegarac, Dee Carter, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. The purpose was to board the "Dawnlight," a steel hulled 70' tug built in 1891 (114 years old) and run by Capt. Ray Davis of Tobermory Adventure Tours. It serves as one of the few - and certainly the oldest - liveaboard dive boats on the Great Lakes, and with only 8 of the possible 12 berths filled, it allowed for relatively uncrowded living conditions and an open dive deck. The boat is the ultimate in dive convenience. There is an onboard compressor and Nitrox Stik so Capt. Ray can pump custom nitrox mixes directly into each diver's tank before each dive, necessitating only one set of tanks for each diver. Joining Capt. Ray were Nolan, his son, as deckhand and Courtney as the cook and additional deckhand. The goal was to spend five days diving the wrecks of the Georgian Bay and remote North Channel. A furious thunderstorm with heavy rain and lightning greeted the travelers as they arrived, but this was a good omen because it was the worst weather to be experienced all week.

The next morning on Monday, August 1, 2005, the boat got underway under a blue, sunny sky and calm seas. The first stop was a checkout dive on the "Niagara II," a sand sucker that was purposely sunk upright in 90' of water in 1999 for use by divers. It is 180' long, and it is a large wreck with much to explore and see. The mooring was tied to the stern, which points S. Greeting divers upon descent is a Canadian flag flying from the stern flag pole. The deck is at 70', and the transom has "Niagara II, Tobermory" painted on it. Dropping to the bottom underneath the curved, undercut stern reveals the rudder, but the propeller is missing. The stern deckhouse contains the ship's living spaces, and at the very stern is the crew's mess with cabinets and countertops inside. Decoratively arranged plates and coffee mugs have been left by divers inside the cabinets, making for a nice display. Swimming forward along both sides of the ship reveals a series of single rooms for the crew's quarters. All the rooms have wood paneling on the walls and contain built-in cabinets, bunk beds, sinks, showers, and/or toilets. These rooms are fun to enter and explore. On top of the deckhouse in the middle of the roof are the engine room skylights and several other large openings. Entry into the engine room is easy through the roof openings, and both levels inside can be explored. The top level has ladders and a grated catwalk floor. The bottom level has two large concrete slabs instead of the engine, which was removed. However, engine controls, pipes, valves, and other equipment were left in place, making for interesting exploration. The engine room can be exited by swimming straight up through the large single smokestack in the center of the engine room. There are many large air scoops on the roof, and two sets of lifeboat davits are on each side of the deckhouse roof with two still having blocks hanging from their ends. There are also two small, separate rooms on the stern roof with closed doors. Opening the doors reveals a desk or beds inside the rooms.

On top of the deckhouse forward is the bridge with a couple more rooms at the roof's level. The starboard room contains a safe that can be opened, but no gold or treasure was found inside. The port room contained an office. Above these rooms is the bridge with a radar display, throttle, working wheel, and a beer mug so you can drink and sing pirate songs while you drive the ship. There are a radar and antenna mast on top of the pilot house, and "Niagara II, Tobermory" is painted on the front of the pilot house. Forward of the deckhouse is the sand sucking boom and the large enclosed cargo hold where the sand was stored. The roof of this space is easily penetrated, and inside is a cavernous hold with winches and chains hanging from the ceiling. Several openings have been cut into the sides of the hull, revealing the double-hulled construction of the ship with spaces that can be explored down both sides of the ship. There are also openings out into open water within this space. The front of the cargo hold contains a sharply inclined ramp that leads back up to the deck level. There is a forecastle with a winch on top of it. Working levers and controls for the sand boom are on the starboard side, and there are gauges and dials at this station. Inside the forecastle is a machine shop with side rooms containing tool bins, gears, workbenches, and other interesting things. The chain locker is in the forward part of this area.

Going over the side of the ship, a toilet can be seen on the bottom off the bow's port side. The port anchor is missing, but the starboard anchor chain is deployed and goes out to a concrete block some distance away from the wreck. Additional chains snake around on the bottom on this side, and a fallen boom can be seen lying on the bottom, too. The starboard side of the bow is wrinkled and damaged from the impact with the bottom, and a tear can be seen in the hull's skin. Overall, the "Niagara II" is one of the best artificial wrecks around. It has many passages and openings cut into it, but they are not too large or numerous. They allow interesting navigation challenges to all levels of divers. It is also refreshing to see that so much furniture, dishes, and original ship equipment left in place for the sinking. The "Niagara II" is a wealth of little details to explore and have fun with. Other artificial wrecks are stripped completely bare of all items, leaving only barren, empty rooms with excessively big and numerous holes in them. Visibility was an excellent 60'-80', and the water temperatures were 40-41 deg F on the bottom and 65 deg F above the 30'-40' deep thermocline. On the stern a school of 10-20 lake trout were seen swimming past, an unusual occurrence.

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After leaving the "Niagara II," the divers headed to the "Arabia," a 3-masted barkentine that foundered in 1884 during a storm. Unfortunately, Kevin was suffering from a stomach bug from the previous night's dinner, so he wisely sat out the dive. The divers reported a strong current and hard swim along the entire wreck's length. Visibility was excellent, but it was a strenuous, tough dive.

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The next wreck visited was off Yeo Island in the far northern end of the Fathom Five National Marine Park. It was the "San Jacinto," a 2-masted schooner that sank in 1881 in heavy seas after possibly hitting a rocky reef. Kevin was feeling much better after resting, so he geared up for the dive. The wreck lies on a flat mud bottom in 80' of water near the island with the shoal that it hit somewhere towards the southwest. The bow points north, and the mooring block is a significant distance north of the bow, requiring a reel to be used to find the wreck since there was no jump line. The wreck lies flattened on the bottom with its sides splayed outwards and the intact deck collapsed straight down. However, there is a wealth of details on this wreck, and the collapsed but organized nature allows the internal parts to be easily viewed and understood. A fallen windlass and tow bit are at the bow, both with long anchoring posts exposed underneath. They are followed by two chain locker openings, a standing hand pump, foremast hole, hatch opening, and the centerboard box fallen to the port side. Peeking inside the box shows the ends of the centerboard itself.

Immediately aft of the box is the centerboard winch and another hand pump, both fallen on their sides. Aft is another cargo hatch, and then the deck ends at the cabin opening with a large wood-stocked anchor lying on the bottom inside. This anchor was found on the reef to the southwest and moved to the wreck for viewing by the public. The attachment point for the rudder is seen on the standing sternpost, but no rudder is evident. Swimming along the sides, deadeyes, large blocks, and a wealth of other parts can be seen. At the bow off the port side is the fallen foremast leading away from the wreck with a topmast stepped in place at the end. Around the bow can also be found hearteyes and pieces of wire rigging. Conditions were nearly identical to the "Niagara II," and the whole wreck is covered in thin green algae that soften the wreck's features.

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The final dive of the day was the picturesque and interesting "City of Cleveland," a large 255' wooden steamer that plowed into Fitzwilliam Island in 1901 during a blinding snowstorm. It now rests in 25' of water with the obliterated bow pointing east. The crashing waves on the rocks above can be seen at the bow, and the ship obviously settled to the bottom at the base of a small underwater cliff. The wreck lies on an almost flat rock bottom, and moving aft the interior can be seen filled with iron ore, the ship's cargo. This completely fills the interior of the ship, making the center of the ship appear as a pale gray gravel bottom that is artificially raised 5'-10' above the surround rock bottom of the site. Center posts can be seen poking out of this gravel like tree trunks. The collapsed wood sides can be found on both sides with an abundance of bass, crayfish, and small snails inhabiting the site. The underside planking and curves of the ship are evident along a significant portion of the port side of the wreck towards the stern.

Two large side-by-side boilers are found near the stern in the middle of the ship, each with a stack opening, exposed steam tubes, two fireboxes, and an attached auxiliary tank. Behind them stands the impressive compound engine with both pistons' connecting rods attached to the propeller shaft. The engine machinery is partially broken open and exposed, making everything very viewable. Behind the engine is the intact sternpost with the rudder steering quadrant lying loose on top and propeller shaft passing through the stern to a single large 4-bladed propeller. Behind the propeller lying on the bottom is a large metal-sheathed rudder. The entire stern area has large lumps of coal, turnbuckles, dump chutes, side door openings, and many other interesting details viewable throughout the structure. Overall, it was a very entertaining dive that lasted almost an hour to see all the parts. Cindy also entertained herself by trying moon walking without fins on the wreck. Visibility was 40'-60', and the water temperature was a balmy 65-68 deg F.

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Afterwards, the "Dawnlight" moored near Fitzwilliam Island for the night. The next day, Tuesday, August 2, 2005, was spent motoring up the east/north side of Manitoulin Island, the largest island in the world. After passing a picturesque lighthouse and swing bridge at Little Current, the most major town in the area, we continued on to the site of the next wreck in the North Channel. We arrived there before noon. The wreck was the "North Wind," a large 300' steel steamer built in 1888 and a sister ship to the "North Star" that sank off Port Sanilac, MI. The "North Wind" sank empty of cargo and without loss of life on a calm day on July 1, 1926, after supposedly striking Robertson Rock near Clapperton Island. The speculation is, however, she was scuttled in this remote area and deep water for insurance reasons. This is supported by the lack of damage on the bow and the crew's failure to do basic damage control in the 2 hours she took to sink and slide off into 115'-120' of water. The stern mooring is the deepest but most interesting part of the wreck, so this is where the "Dawnlight" moored for the next two days of diving. Three dives were done on the first day, and the calm, mirror flat seas allowed us to stay moored there overnight and do three more dives the next day. So many dives are possible on this single wreck because of its large size and incredible intactness. Like all Tobermory wrecks, no zebra mussels are present, and water conditions were excellent with a warm 48 deg F bottom temperature, the thermocline at 50'-60', and 68-70 deg F water above. Bottom visibility was good at 40'-50' with dim ambient lighting conditions, and surface visibility was about 10'-15'. Most dives were done on 29%-30% nitrox with 20-30 minute bottom times, only mild decompression, and run times of typically 35-50 minutes.

The stern mooring was tied to a bitt on the starboard railing just forward of the stern deckhouse. The deck at this location is 105' deep, and the top of the deckhouse is at 95'. The deck slopes upwards towards the bow, which can be reached at 80'. The extreme stern of the ship is buried deep into the clay bottom with large clumps of clay piled up onto the stern deck from the lake bottom. The

rudder and propeller are completely buried and not viewable. However, the stern deckhouse immediately forward is completely undamaged and can be fully explored. The deckhouse covers the entire width of the ship. In the center of the roof at the extreme stern is a large square skylight over the crew's mess that is missing its roof but with the side windows, wooden frames, decorative trim, and lighting fixtures still in place. Dropping into the skylight reveals broken furniture and wood paneling inside with a sink and two toilets visible on the port side where an antechamber leads to a collapsed bathroom, a doorway for the port hallway, and some stairs leading down into the almost completely silted crew's quarters the next level down. The starboard side has a doorway that leads to that side's hallway, and there is an opening forward that leads to the labyrinth-like galley. Entering leads through a hallway pantry with storage closets and collapsed shelves on both sides and a small skylight overhead. The hallway then makes a L-turn to the starboard side and enters the galley. A stove is against the port wall with a pot on it, and a sink and countertop are on the starboard side with some broken dishes on the counter. Overhead is another skylight, and aft of the galley is a large freezer or ice room with an open thick wooden door. Forward of the galley is another room which is thought to be the officer's mess with a connecting door to the starboard hallway and the bottom half of the room painted blue. It should be noted that almost all living spaces inside the deckhouse are wood lined and painted white with the paint peeling, so the blue walls are an unusual feature.

The deckhouse contains hallways leading forward along both sides of the ship with rooms adjoining the interior sides. All the rooms have wooden walls and contain portholes looking into the rooms from earlier days when the hallway was an open breezeway before the exterior wall was added to fully enclose it from the weather. The exterior wall is metal and also contains portholes, some with their glass still intact and some that are missing. Both hallways are filled with silt almost to the doorknobs of the rooms. The port rooms all have their doors partly open and reveal the officer's sleeping quarters. They contain beds, sinks, toilets, and various other pieces of furniture. One room has a light bulb floating near the ceiling supported by its electric wires, and another room contains an ornate lantern holder. The very end room forward contains a tub, toilet, and sink with a stone countertop and stone splashboard on the wall. Above the sink is a sign that says, "Washing Water Only." The starboard hallway doors are mostly closed, but the rooms can still be viewed through the portholes. A freezer/ice room door also opens into this hallway from the galley, and most of the rooms appear to be more utilitarian in nature rather than living quarters. In the middle of the starboard hallway is a drinking fountain recessed into the wall that says, "Drinking Water Only."

At the end of each hallway is an exit door leading forward to the main deck and an interior door that leads to the engine room. Next to the port side door is mounted a fire axe on the wall with a modern plaque next to it that says, "Fireman's Axe: This axe belongs to the North Wind. Please make sure it

remains here. Found Sept. 1999." Next to the starboard door is a bed or workbench in the hallway. Entering the engine room, it is found to be surprisingly small with the top of the triple expansion engine immediately viewable. The largest cylinder is aft, and the smallest is forward. The engine is surrounded by a catwalk, and lower engine levels can be reached by following the catwalk down some stairs aft. On both sides at the upper catwalk level are two doors the next level below the cabins. The port room is a tool and maintenance room. Entering the room, a workbench can be seen against the far wall with a vise mounted to it. Next to the door aft is another workbench with a vertical wallboard and tools mounted to it. A burbot is also frequently seen in this room. The engine room can also be entered/exited through the skylight overhead with one open window. An I-beam crane and hanging block can be seen running down the middle of the skylight for heavy engine maintenance.

Exiting the engine room onto the roof of the deckhouse, a standing wooden mast can be seen just forward of the skylight. It goes up out of sight with wire rigging hanging down, and the mast base is ringed with a collar of vertical cleats. Next to the mast on the port side is a standing ventilation scoop with its red painted interior still visible, and on the starboard side of the mast are the remains of a wheelbarrow with the front wheel missing. Empty lifeboat davits with hanging blocks are seen on both sides of the deckhouse, and remains of metal buckets and pots can be found on the roof. Looking off the roof onto the bottom, additional air scoops and debris can be seen. Forward of the mast is a large opening where the massive single funnel was mounted. The funnel itself is fallen to the starboard side on top of the roof, and it is so large it can be easily swum through. Next to the stack's hole on the port side is a small skylight that opens into the port boiler room. The room appears tight with little room around the boiler. The matching starboard boiler skylight is under the fallen funnel. Forward on the deckhouse roof is a cavernous rectangular opening that is almost the full width of the deckhouse and goes down all the way to the bottom of the ship. This is the coal bunker, and large pieces of coal can be found on various parts of the ship from this open bunker.

Descending from the roof of the deckhouse onto the main cargo deck, six large cargo hatches can be found along the ascending deck towards the bow. Swimming inside the ship through the cargo hatch openings, the hold is so large and deep that no wreck can be seen in all directions without a very powerful light. The holds are empty with a mud bottom. On the deck past the first hatch opening is mounted a deck winch offset to the port side. A ladder also lies on the deck in this area. Past the second hatch opening is a massive 4-bladed propeller mounted to the deck as a spare. Swimming all the way forward, another deck winch can be found before the last cargo opening and is also offset to the port side. A cylindrical tank also lies on the deck in this area and appears to be a fresh water tank.

Forward of the last cargo opening is the broken remains of the wooden bridge. Another mast is standing at the rear of this partially collapsed structure but is leaning towards the stern. On the mast is mounted a modern plaque identifying the wreck. The walls of the first level of the bridge are standing, but the interior rooms and roof are completely collapsed. Peering inside reveals a bathtub near the base of the mast and an assortment of collapsed walls, wood paneling, and furniture. Some stairs and interior rooms are partly standing towards the front, but they are not easily navigated due to the collapsed nature of the structure.

Forward of the bridge is a seventh cargo opening, and then the standing metal forecastle at the bow. The forecastle is a major structure with an interior room on the port side that contains workbenches, storage shelves, and a stone grindstone resting on top of one of the workbenches. The starboard side contains a partly collapsed room with wooden barrels in it. A single door enters the forecastle at the center, and on the starboard side of this entrance is a hatchway that descends to lower levels. However, this hatch also contains a sharp metal spike on the wall that reaches out and tears important inflation gear - as one person found out. The majority of the forecastle is one large room that is mostly empty. However, the port side contains what appears to be an instrument or fuse panel hanging from the ceiling and a roll of tarpaper lying on the floor. The very peak of the forecastle has a small hatchway surrounded by a railing that presumably leads down to the chain locker. Diagonal metal pipes that contain the anchor chain head through the ceiling and down into the floor in this area. There is also a coil of hawser rope hanging on the wall next to the peak, and the rope appears to be remarkably intact and preserved. On the starboard side of the forecastle room is another small companionway in the floor that leads to the lower levels.

On top of the forecastle is a massive windlass with two anchor chains running across the roof and down holes through the previously observed diagonal pipes to the chain locker in the lower levels. Both navy-style anchors are stowed in place on the sides of the ship. Looking for the name, none was found on the starboard side, but on the port side can be seen painted in white letters "NORTH WIND." The name is a little hard to see, however, through the rusticles. Dropping to the bottom at the bow, it is a long way down along the massive hull, and a large number of portholes can be observed on the sides of the ship on the way down. Upon reaching the bottom, the curved bow can be seen pointing upwards with plenty of room to swim under the forward keel and examine the bottom for damage. None was found, leading to the previous suspicions of the ship being scuttled. Also seen on the bow were several 2'-2.5' long whitefish, which glowed silver in our lights and appeared to be somewhat curious at our presence.

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After two days of diving the "North Wind" under mirror-flat conditions, the weather turned rough enough in the afternoon of the second day with 2' seas that shelter

was sought overnight at a site nearby. This site proved to be the wreck of the "Emma Thompson," and this was the fourth and last dive of the day. The "Thompson" was a small wooden steamer that caught fire and sank in 25' of water while at anchor waiting out a storm in 1914. The mooring is the deployed anchor off the bow, and the anchor chain is followed to the wreck. Along the way it passes through a hawse pipe and later the board the pipe was embedded in. The anchor flukes are buried with only the metal stocks visible above the bottom, making for a very sturdy mooring. Upon reaching the bow, three anchor chain loops can be seen draped decoratively off the stem onto the bottom. The bow points south and stands 10'-15' high off the bottom. The ship burned to the waterline, but there are still plenty of details to be seen. The second anchor can be seen nestled under some debris inside the bow, and there are lots of miscellaneous pottery shards, tools, and ship pieces scattered throughout the interior of the ship. The sides are splayed outwards, but the large keel can be followed to the stern, which contains a coal pile with a fallen deck winch on it. Aft is an older style single cylinder engine standing high with a boiler behind it, and pipes and various machinery parts surround both. There are two forward-facing firebox doors on the boiler with latches, and tie-down straps can be seen on the boiler's body. Two large tubes, possibly the flue and/or smokestack, are on both side of the boiler. Behind the boiler on the port side is the stove, and the rudderpost sticks up at the extreme stern with the steering quadrant attached and turned hard to port. The underside of the rounded stern is intact, and peering underneath reveals the underside planking, turned rudder, the tip of a propeller blade, and the outlet of the toilet. The toilet tube can be seen sticking up on top of the stern. There were lots of bass, bluegills, and crayfish on this wreck, and further fun was had when Eli allowed everyone to take turns riding his scooter around the wreck. Visibility was 10'-20', and the water temperature was a warm 68 deg F.

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The next day on Thursday, August 4, 2005, two more dives were done on the "North Wind," and then we started to head back to Tobermory. The weather was beginning to get more windy and overcast, and it began to rain heavily after passing Little Current. As we approached the third and last dive of the day, it stopped raining but remained windy, overcast, and unsettled. It was the "India," a wooden steamer that burned and sank in 20' of water while taking on a load of cargo next to West Mary Island in 1928. The dive was quickly dubbed "Terror at 20 Feet" as the seasoned deep divers had nothing but trouble on this wreck. The wreck stands 15' high all the way around the perimeter and is almost awash, so the "Dawnlight" used its own anchor some distance next to the wreck to avoid striking the submerged hulk. The problems began when everyone tied their reels off to the anchor chain and went searching for the wreck. The wreck was found easily enough, but those who were running their reels immediately noticed the anchor was dragging. Some continued their dives, and some went back to the anchor and tried and set it. Visibility was absolutely zero, reel lines were quickly

fouled on all sorts of debris on the bottom, dry gloves were sliced open in the zero visibility, drysuits developed leaks in them, and the anchor continued to drag.

For those that dove the wreck, they found that the wooden hull's sides stand tall all the way around the wreck, blocking access to the interior except for a couple of gaps. The stem of the north-facing bow is split open, allowing access into the majority of the interior. The interior of the hull is empty with a mud bottom, but there are some decorative grasses growing inside, the keel, a fallen mast lying lengthwise, and a couple of fallen winches. There is a metal barrier, possibly the coal bunker, blocking access to the stern, but it can be swum over in 3' of water. The stern can also be accessed through a breakdown on the starboard side, and inside are two upended boilers, a standing compound engine, and various machinery parts scattered around. At the stern is found a fallen rudder with an attached quadrant and more debris. There is also some debris on the outside around the perimeter of the ship. Amidships on the starboard side can be found the remains of a unique loading mechanism with a wheeled cart on tracks and some fallen booms. The dive was ended by untangling reel lines for 10 minutes by feel in zero visibility. Afterwards, we headed to Fitzwilliam Island to weather out the night.

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The next day dawned clear and sunny but windy with 3'-4' seas. The transit across the Georgian Bay was made to the sounds of the Gordon Lightfoot's "Edmund Fitzgerald" ballad being repeatedly played. After a while, Nolan refused to "play it again!" We found shelter behind Bear's Rump Island and were immediately greeted by the flies you'd expect from an island with that name. However, it was calm 1' seas, and the next wreck was the "Forest City," a wooden steamer that sank in 1904 while running in dense fog in unfamiliar territory at full speed right into the island. The bow is completely obliterated and lies at a depth of 60'. The wreck lies on a sharply inclined rocky slope only 50'-100' from shore with the stern dropping down to a depth of 150' before it reaches a flat mud bottom. The mooring block lies far off the port side at a 70' depth with a small line running along the undersea cliff over to the wreck.

The bow consists of mostly timber pieces, but the starboard side can be seen to be intact and folded over onto the deck area. Descending down the length of the wreck, it is mostly plain decking and hull. However, at a depth of approximately 110'-120' two side-by-side boilers are encountered with a large manifold joining the forward ends of the boilers and a single funnel stack hole on top. A single-cylinder engine stands behind the boilers, but very little machinery is otherwise evident in the area. There are two strange square posts standing behind the engine in line with the keel, and this is followed by the rounded fantail of the ship. The stern is buried into the mud bottom, and the rudder and propeller are buried and not visible. The fantail has two levels exposed and a small amount of

decking above to create a covered overhang. Up under this decking on the port side was found a very small outhouse with a toilet inside. Visibility was good at 40'-60' with bright ambient lighting, and the water temperature was 41-42 deg F with the thermocline at 40'-50' and 70 deg F water above.

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The last dive of the trip was a geologic dive in 10'-50' of water along the south side of Flowerpot Island along some of its scenic underwater cliffs. There were lots of crayfish and interesting rocks to examine, and it was a nice and relaxing way to end the trip. Overall, a great time was had by all the divers, and the wonderful hospitality of Capt. Ray, Nolan, and Courtney was much appreciated. The "Dawnlight" is a great way to travel and dive. All the wrecks were great - even the "India" - and the "North Wind" was the highlight of the trip and worth the journey alone. Note pictures of the "North Wind" taken by Tom Wilson and Vlada Dekina can be found at the following web sites.

<http://www.wrecksandreefs.com/northwin.htm>

<http://www.scubaq.ca/ontarioscubadiving/northwind.htm>