

Scapa Sept 2022

Dive Report

George Mitchell & Andrew Bradford

Getting there was a simple but laborious drive up the spine of the country, onto the A9 stopping in Scrabster overnight on the 2nd. We stayed in the Ferry Inn with a 30second drive to the Ferry and Breakfast thrown in. We reached Valhalla on the morning of the 3rd and bumbled around Stromness until they were ready for us.

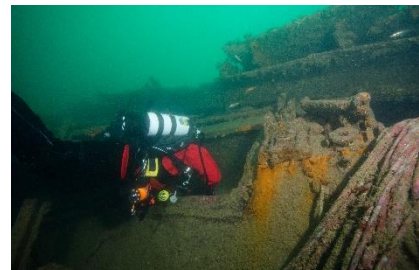
Scapa, for uninitiated, is the historic anchorage for the Royal Navy. It was to here that the RN interned the German High Seas Fleet (slightly at odds with the agreement to be taken to a Neutral port) in 1919 whilst the discussions at Versailles between victor and vanquished continued. Whilst under guard the German Officer Commanding feared treachery by the Allies and ordered crews to scuttle the ships. Today a number of battleships, Cruisers and destroyers form the base of the 'Classic Wrecks' dive week.

Whilst 11 were expected for the boat this week only 5 appear to have made it which allowed us a room each which is hardly an everyday occurrence, but very welcome. We were joined by a solo diver from Florida & two very affable Germans from Munster who were more used to lakes than sea diving.

Sunday the 4th was the first day of diving and after a very comprehensive brief we were dropped onto the stern of the Karlsruhe at about 25m. Viz was good (10m) were moved forward finding a casement



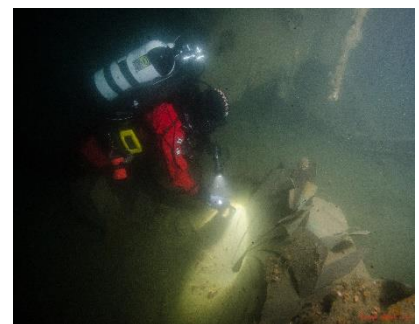
gun and the gas generator compartment. It was a long dive on a reasonably rich mix but we still racked up 14mins of deco with a total dive time of 72mins. Second dive was the F2 and her salvage barge – we were dropped onto the latter



in about 17m of water. The Barge proved a nice swim-through before following the line over to the F2. We found both rudders each in excess of 10ft in length. Another long dive @ 70mins.

The food today was somewhat overwhelming..I don't think we'll need to eat until Friday.

Monday 5th served up the Brummer which in truth was the only dive that bummed us all out due to the dark and poor viz conditions. Max depth was 34m but it felt much deeper. We found the Armoured Control and had a good look around it for several minutes. Moving away from the wreck we found the remains of the searchlight (pictured) on the sea-bed (6m candles!) – it could apparently fire a shaft of light 10miles. 15mins of deco on this dive, total dive time of 60mins. The second dive was onto the bow of the Kolhn....at the bottom of the shot we came across the largest lobster I have ever come across – possibly the length of my arm. He actually chased us away! Found the Armoured control and Casse-mate guns.



More copious amounts of handmade food from Helen in Galley...I'm going to need a gastric band

Tuesday 6th had us dropped onto the Kronprinz Wilhelm. This was a fantastic dive. Viz was 6-8m and it was not too dark. We dropped to the seabed at about 38m and swam into an area beneath the hull to find the 12inch guns which were spectacular...further forward we found another hole into which we traversed and found another main gun turret with the barrels pointing up into the hull. Lots of holes to investigate – a fantastic dive. The second dive was UB116 (B-series U-boat) at 30m. The sunshine topside combined with white sand made this another spectacular dive with Viz at 20m....and the ability to see dark objects up to 30m. the 116 has been blown apart and Torpex can still be seen dotted around the wreck from the remaining torpedoes. We found our way to the brass Conning Tower which seemed ridiculously small for anyone to squeeze into..another 60+ minute dive. Tuesday was generally considered the best diving day of the trip.



Food situation now critical. George beginning to cry. Is it joy or constipation – who can tell.

Wednesday 7th. SMS Markgraff beckoned. At 45meters it was time to whip out the stages and prepare for a reasonably complex dive. The dive plan involved a 25min run time at depth using a weak trimix (26/10) followed by a 50% mix in our stages. The dive plan was as follows:

Depth	Cumulative run time	Mixture
45m	25mins	26/10 (Tmx)
21m	27mins	50%
15m	29mins	50%
12m	31mins	50%
9m	37mins	50%
6m	53mins	50%



The stern shot-line led us straight to the famous rudders (George pictured)...viz wasn't great here so pictures were rather underwhelming. From there we dropped to the sea-bed and followed the hull. With the wreck quite broken up at depth we were careful to avoid an inadvertent entry into the ship's bowels. We did see gun mountings and part of the director, the armoured area from which gun firing and so on would have been commanded.

The second dive was the Dresden's bow. Once off that & down to the sea bed Andrew was determined to get inside the wreck but found it just a bit too tight. Just before ascending a seal whizzed past us but was so quick there was no chance of a photo. With the stages again we only had 7 minutes of deco to do.



A macaroni Cheese this evening that probably could have sunk one of the battleships. Homemade custard creams the size of a fist sat quietly in the corner with an irresistible-cholesterol-fuelled brooding menace.

Thursday 8th. Was a return to the Koln and afterwards, following the previous day's visit to the pointy end, a visit to the blunt end of the Dresden. This time on the Koln we penetrated the forward spaces housing the anchor storage and gearing. This was generally quite an open space but liable to a little silt once 2 or 3 divers had been. There was always plenty of daylight visible through the good size holes in the decks.



We are joining a religious order to abstain from more food.

Friday 9th. Konig loomed out of the gloom this morning. We focussed our time in the aft salvage area managing to find the stern gun turret aperture and the turbine. Visibility wasn't fantastic, probably 2-3m) and so we needed the help of another diver to find them. For this reason we did not leave the salvage area at about 36m for the entire dive. The turret aperture was enormous, measuring 12-14ft across...the turbine was also very large possibly able to swallow up a diver. The second and final



dive of the week was on the V83. A very quiet dive in 6-8m of water on the shore of a local island we breathed down the 50% mixes to off-gas a little after a week in which we had accumulated quite a lot of deco. Some very pretty views under the hull of this vessel but tales of nudibranchs persuaded George to set up a macro lens rather than the wide angle. Looks like a new more versatile system is needed!

The main risk this evening will be Helen's excellent sticky toffee pudding which "everyone must completely finish!".

We must also add that Hazel Weaver gave excellent detailed briefings before each dive with useful drawings so that could plan our dives to see the most interesting aspects of each wreck and understand the history. The way she ran her ship was first rate. Phil did the fills, providing advice on what the following days diving would be so that we could plan in advance. The mixes were accurate, the drops off spot on and the pick ups smooth and easy. We were also lucky that with similar kit setup, appropriate mixes and air consumption we were able to maximise the dive times throughout. The only significant and consistent difference through the week was the deco demands of the Shearwater & the Suunto with the former demanding consistently longer 6m stops - except for the deeper wrecks where the algorithms were quite similar. Overall a superb weeks diving.

And as they say, *that is that*. 1,400 miles driven, nearly two hours of mandatory deco, 30 cylinder fills, 1.4bn calories eaten & 3 new friends later our trip to Scapa came to an end. Another trip in a couple of years will be in order if not to Scapa then to Norway perhaps...

George & Andrew