



## North Norfolk Wrecks

July 2009

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### The Divers:

- Matt Watson (DL)
- Stuart Moore (SD)
- Karin Muller (SD)
- Georgie Stooke-Vaughn (SD)
- Beccy Mant (OD)

### Details

Inspired by [this website](#) we decided to investigate the Vera and Rosalie, two World War 1 wrecks off the Norfolk coast, about 2 hours drive from Cambridge.

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### Diving

#### Dive 1: The Vera, Cley Next The Sea (12:05, 12/7/09)

The tides at Cromer were 10:00am (high) and 5:00pm (low), and we'd been told that slack on the wrecks would be 2 hours later. The plan was to get the first wave in the water shortly after 11am, but faff meant that the first wave didn't get in until about midday, dead on 'slack'.

We found the markers that had been placed on the beach, looked out at the sea and realised just how tricky finding the wreck might be. Luckily there was a Lobster pot buoy in about the right place, and someone had approached Stuart in the car park saying they thought they'd got snagged, and would we be able to untangle it if we were there.

Stuart, Matt and Beccy swam to this buoy, battling a significant current flowing West to East, which didn't fill us with confidence that we'd hit slack water. Once we got to the buoy, and down onto the wreck, staying near the ground or the wreck itself avoided some of the current. Vis was about 1.5m and torch signals quickly became the order of the day.

The wreck itself is a large quantity of sheet metal, with a few identifiable features including the prop shaft, some kind of boiler, and a pressure vessel of some kind. It is covered in dead man's fingers, and had several crabs (edible and velvet swimming). At one point Stuart saw several silvery fish, possibly Mackerel, but the vis was so poor that the others didn't see it. The wreckage is quite broken up in places, but there is generally something on the sea bed to follow. In other places, there are upright ribs and the sides of the boat. Off the wreck, it is mainly sand.

In high tide, none of us got below 7m, and most of the dive was spent around 4 or 5, meaning it's one that taxes your buoyancy control a lot.

When we came up, some of the wreck had now broken the surface, indicating the tide was going out, and the current was still strong West to East. Karin and Georgie went in for a second wave dive, during which the current turned to face the other direction (some time between 1:00pm and 1:30pm) and described it as being somewhat akin to a washing machine.

Buddy pair	Max depth	Duration
Matt/Stuart/Beccy	6.6m	42mins
Karin/Georgie		

### Surface Interval

The car park at Cley Beach had a food van (reasonably priced) and a shelter, but no toilets (despite the description on the web page) - so after a packed lunch we drove into Cley town centre for a brief drink at the pub/hotel, and an ice-cream at the delicatessen there. There was also a good smokehouse selling a variety of fish. The main delicatessen closed at 4pm (although they served ice creams after this); it would be very possible to buy lunch here. There was also a pottery in the village that we didn't go into.

## **Dive 2: Rosalie, Weybourne (18:00 12/7/09)**

The car park at Rosalie is further from the wreck, and it took a while to carry kit there and back. Georgie and Karin decided to sit this dive out, so Stuart, Beccy and Matt went in at about 6pm, 1 hour before predicted slack. The current was less strong than earlier, this time East to West.

The very top of the wreck was above water - a couple of thin masts. Dropping down on this, the prop shaft became evident, and following this north (but staying on the west side of the shaft) soon lead to the centre of the spare steel Prop. We continued north along the prop shaft, until we eventually ran out of wreck, then returned south along the west side of the wreck. When we ran out of wreck we continued swimming south (towards the shore) until we reached 2m of water, at which point it became apparent that if we didn't ascend now we might not all see each other.

Again the wreckage is mainly sheet metal at seabed level, but occasionally there were upright bits and horizontal beams, so you have to keep looking up to avoid hitting your head. There seemed a lot more to this wreck than the Vera, many holes worth poking torches into (including one that contained a modern anchor), and the wreck was covered in giant edible crabs and lobsters. It also seemed easier to navigate round the wreck than on the Vera, possibly because there's generally more structure and it largely remains in the right shape.

The car park at Weybourne has even less than the one at Cley, so you will probably want a trip into town to use facilities.

## **Future Diving**

We'd suggest that future trips look for a time when they could get to the Rosalie for low tide, attach a buoy and stay to do a second dive there at high tide, with a barbecue on the beach between. Although the Vera wasn't a bad dive, there seemed far more to the Rosalie (worth doing 2 dives in a day), and doing both dives on the same site would save some of the long walking with heavy kit that is the major downside to the trip. Matt was able to get away with 1 15l cylinder for both dives, but all the others would have needed to change cylinders, so we recommend you plan for 2 cylinders each for all but your lightest breathers. Bring a twinset if you want to, but it's a long walk.

It's definitely worth going over torch signals in the briefing, and ensuring all divers have a good torch - in low vis, it was the easiest way to signal. Diving as a three wasn't very easy; if possible arrange things so everyone can dive in pairs.