

# MOLES MONITOR



APRIL 2021



# MVSAC – APRIL 2021

Welcome to our 1<sup>st</sup> Newsletter as we finally come out of lockdown and life slowly begins to return to normal.

Our regular Virtual Club nights on Zoom will continue until at least the week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> May. If you have not joined in one of our Virtual Club nights yet give it a try it is always nice to catch up and see how everyone is doing and to chat about the up-and-coming dive trips & social events.

## SCAPA FLOW 2020 – Sonja & Tristan

The world-renowned dive destination, Scapa Flow, had been on our 'to-do' list since we started diving.

The trip was planned for September to allow time for plenty of build-up dives prior to the relatively deep wreck diving. Little did we know we'd be arriving in Stromness having done just three dives, and one of those was in Wraysbury!

With no time for test runs to shakedown the camper van that we'd spent the year converting, we set off (2 hrs. after Tristan finished working on the van) on the evening of Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September. Not what we had planned, but we were on our way.



We travelled via Chester and the Cairngorms and arrived on the north coast of Scotland via Lairg. We made our way through Bettyhill and Melvich through to Scrabster. In Thurso an extra 13.5 tog duvet was purchased on account of some teething problems with the van heating and nighttime temperatures in Scotland dropping to around 6 degrees.

The crossing from Scrabster to Stromness on the morning of Friday 25<sup>th</sup> was calm and clear, and on arrival we made our way to the (very exposed) Point of Ness Campsite, which was to be our home for the next week.

On Saturday we drove down to Stromness Quay and found the twin 12's we'd hired from Scapa Scuba waiting for us next to MV Valhalla - a steel no nonsense dive boat with a no-nonsense skipper. As we were the first divers to arrive, and my back was playing up, we set up our kit closest to the dive platform.





On Sunday morning we dived light cruiser Karlsruhe at 25 meters and in the afternoon, we were treated to a dive briefing from “Nick off the telly” on the deck. The F2 is a WW2 German escort boat which sank during a gale in 1946. She was being salvaged by a wooden barge in 1968 when on 15<sup>th</sup> November a huge storm took out the weather station on Orkney, blew away all the chickens and sank the barge. After this, so the story goes, Orkney farmers took to farming cattle, instead of chickens as they are less prone to blowing away. On the relaxed 51minute dive that

followed we discovered massive conga, crab and lobster sheltering underneath the barge as well as the anti-aircraft gun from the F2.

For the rest of the week we dived the battleships Markgraf, Konig and the KronPrinz and the cruisers Brummer, Dresden, Coln. We also dived what was left of the German submarine UB116.

On Thursday whilst we were on our way to the Kronprinz, Hazel (our ‘no-nonsense skipper’) shouted that she’d spotted a whale and Valhalla diverted for a while so that we could take a closer look.



We were very aware that we were not ‘dive-fit’ so we dived conservatively, just going into a small amount of deco towards the end of the week. We’d hired the twin 12’s as we’d discovered too late that our 10’s were out of nitrox test. As it turned out, it was an advantage not having to carry cylinders for the rest of our trip and it was great having all that air.



We stayed on Orkney for a couple of nights after we’d finished diving and visited the Stromness museum, the block ships and the Italian chapel.

There was poor visibility for the crossing back to the mainland on Sunday morning and for rest of the day. We drove west, barely stopping as there was nothing to see, we were either in rain or cloud for the whole day.



We camped that night at an idyllic camp site run by crofters with a £5 honesty box at Shegra Beach. We woke up the next morning to unexpected sunshine and took the opportunity to dry off our dive gear and take a dip in the sea.

We made our way back slowly down the west coast, taking in Applecross and the Bealach na Ba road.

We feel very happy to have finally ticked off Scapa, and also that the dive trip was actually on in 2020. Scotland has a lot to offer, both above and below the water, and we will be back.



## Wreck of the Month – James Eagan Layne

Whitsand Bay, Devon

Below is a description of one of the best-preserved World War 2 wrecks, the Liberty ship the James Eagan Layne.

- James Eagan Layne - 25m Wreck Dive
- Max Depth Seabed: 24m
- Depth to top of Wreck: 10m
- Approximate Position: 50.19.55N 04.14.78W
- Tonnage: 4500tonnes
- Length: 130m
- Cargo: War supplies
- Date Lost: 21/03/1945
- How Lost: Torpedoed on starboard side by U-1195

The James Eagan Layne was hit by a torpedo, from the German submarine U-1195, nearby the Eddystone reef and lighthouse. Badly damaged, she was towed by Admiralty tugs towards Plymouth in an attempt to save as much cargo as possible. Unfortunately, on her way back, the stern collapsed, causing her to sink in Whitsand Bay where she now rests in an upright position on a sandy seabed pointing north towards the shore. After the James Eagan Lane initially sunk her masts and funnel could be seen sticking out of the water, these have since been removed and can be seen on the seabed on the port side. A vast majority of her cargo was removed before she sank, however some of her cargo can still be seen in parts of her 5 holds.



Easy entry to no 1 and 2 holds, which hold many railway rolling stock wheels. Fallen decking now covers the main engine. Along the port side are vast sheets of white anemones and dead man's fingers. The stern has broken off by No 5 hold and now lies southwest of the main wreck. The stern section is linked by a rope, which can be easily followed.

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH

### Paul's Pikes Red Pepper and Tomato Soup

#### Ingredients:

- 4 oz butter (or 6 tablespoons of olive oil)
- 2 Medium chopped onion
- 2 Cloves garlic
- 2 Large red peppers chopped
- 4 Carrots chopped
- 1 Tin chopped tomatoes
- Dash of Worcester sauce
- Dash of Tabasco/pepper sauce
- 3 Potatoes peeled & sliced
- 3.5 pts vegetable stock or made with 4 OXO cubes
- Salt & freshly ground pepper to taste

#### Method:

Fry the onion/garlic in a large saucepan using butter until soft.

Add vegetables, sauces and stock, season to taste and bring back to the boil.

Cover and simmer for a further 10 minutes then leave to cool.

Whizz the soup with a stick blender or in a food processor until smooth.

**NB: This recipe makes enough for 12 divers so you may want to adjust quantities.**

## New Boat Storage Shed



Work on the new boat storage shed is progressing well. Big thanks go to Andy Todman & Jon Gower who put in all the uprights and to both of them plus Beth, Champ & Steve for assisting in putting up all the rafters.

There is one more day planned to complete the woodwork and then we will be organizing a final day to put on the metal roof.

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> May - Diving in Weymouth on Tango – Organiser Carolynn**

**29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> May – Diving in Littlehampton – Organiser Steve**

**10<sup>th</sup> July - Annual Club BBQ (If you have any ideas / games for this event please let Beth know)**

**24<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> July – Jon's Club Trip to Devon**

**11<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> September - Diving in Weymouth on Tango – Organiser Carolynn**

**22<sup>nd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> October – Maldives – Organiser Andy D**

**3<sup>rd</sup> November – AGM**

**4<sup>th</sup> December – Dinner Dance**

**If you have any pictures, articles or recipe's you would like to share for the next Moles Monitor please email Steve @ [spavey@spruce.co.uk](mailto:spavey@spruce.co.uk)**

