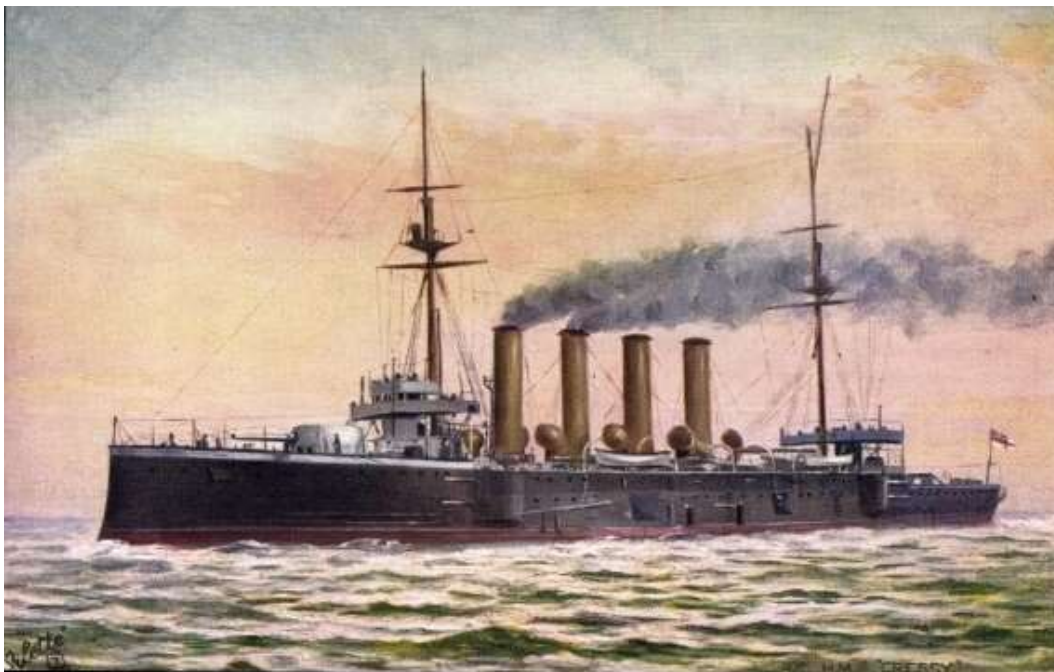


Livebait Squadron Report 2015

PURPOSE:

The primary aim of this expedition was to dive and the WW1 Live Bait Squadron wrecks; HMS Cressy, Hogue and Aboukir. We marked the loss of life during the sinking of these wrecks as part of Lost beneath the Waves Project:

<http://www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org/lbtw> .The wrecks are positioned around 22 miles off the Dutch coast of The Hague. Where possible, we conducted a wreck survey of the current condition of the wrecks and a cleanup of fishing nets was not needed as they were relatively clear of netting.



The Sinkings:

Britain entered the First World War with the world's largest Navy equipped with some of the most modern warships of that time; she also had some of the most obsolescent. These included 3 12,000 ton Chatham Division cruisers HMS Aboukir, Cressy and Hogue. Although they were only 14 years old technological advances had left them slower, less well armed and less well protected than the latest ships.

In late July 1914, Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, mobilised the Royal Navy as the prospect of war was looming. The First and Second Fleets, the Navy's most modern and best trained ships were sent to Scapa Flow and in the Mediterranean whilst the Third Fleet was brought out of reserve with crews brought up from to full complement with men from the Royal Fleet Reserve and Volunteer

Reserve. The 3 cruisers were dispatched from Chatham to Harwich as part of the Seventh Cruiser Squadron to support a force of destroyers and submarines patrolling the southern half of the North Sea.

The day after war was declared, 5th August 1914, a destroyer HMS Lance fired the first shot of the war in action in the North Sea against the Koningen Louise, a German minelayer. The minelayer was destroyed by gunfire by the light cruiser HMS [Amphion](#) and the destroyers HMS Lance and HMS Landrail in the English Channel. The next day, HMS Amphion, a Devonport based Scout Cruiser, became the first Royal Naval loss of the war – sunk by one of Koningen Louise's mines. On the 5th September the Chatham light cruiser HMS Pathfinder was torpedoed off the East Coast of Scotland.

On 22nd September 1914, the 3 cruisers were alone on patrol off the Hook of Holland, bad weather having prevented the destroyers and submarines setting to sea.

In the early hours of the morning they were spotted by the German Submarine, U9. At 06:25 HMS Aboukir was torpedoed and began to sink. Thinking she had hit a stray mine – the other cruisers stopped to pick up survivors. By the time it became clear that she had been torpedoed HMS Hogue too had been hit (sinking within 10 minutes) – followed shortly by HMS Cressy.



Within a period of 90 minutes all 3 ships with a combined complement of 2,250 men had been sunk by a single 425 ton German U-Boat with a crew of 29, 1,459 men were killed. The majority were lost at sea, although some of the bodies were recovered and buried in cemeteries in Holland. 791 men survived, rescued by the Flora and Titan, 2 Dutch merchant ships, which hurried to the scene of the tragedy. Royal Naval warships led by HMS Lowestoft arrived some hours later to help.

DATES:

Travel was by via car sharing as shown below with individuals appointed to book ferry crossings. We boarded the boat on the evening of 3rd August ready to start diving on the 4th. The charter was completed on 8th August when the boat arrived in harbour, on completion of diving for that day. Some divers left immediately and some stayed overnight at their own initiative.

Travel Arrangements:

Name	Passenger
Paul Mann	Dave Lock
John Cook	Carol Wood, Raj Mistry
Phil Alcock	Jane Maddocks
Neil Turton	Mike Rowley
Brian Long	John Heagney
Bart Goedmakers	Resident in Holland

COST:

The boat offers full board services at a rate of € 625, - per person for the whole trip this will total on € 7500. As the payment for the boat was cash only no receipts were obtained for this part of the expedition. Attached are ferry receipts for the majority of people and kit transfer.

Daily Diary:

3 AUGUST 2015: We caught the ferry from Harwich to the Hook of Holland in cars full of divers and equipment. On reaching the dive boat it was immediately obvious she was large enough, but the dive deck was cramped and not really suitable for the amount of equipment we had. The accommodation was in a similar state; however, British divers are an adaptable bunch.

4 AUGUST 2015: A 5.30am start, and a three-hour trip to HMS Cressy. The shot went in, but an imminent gale warning meant a run for port with conditions deteriorating all the way.

5 AUGUST 2015: The wind dropped and the sea was calmer so after a 6am start we succeeded in getting in the water at 10am to dive HMS Cressy. Conditions were pleasant with sea temperature of 17°C and viz of 6-8 metres. The wreck lies mainly upside down, but is broken in places, so there was plenty to see including many

pieces of ammunition. The stern stands 8m high and we were surprised to find she had a wooden keel and bilge keels. We were briefed to ascend the shot line, so we used bottom lines. Unfortunately one reel lost an end plate on this dive so one pair had a tangled mess to sort out on their return to the boat. We dived the wreck again in the afternoon to lay a wreath of poppies. Photographs taken, we continued our dive only to have another reel disintegrate.

We then moved off-site and anchored for the night.

06/08/15: We dived the second slack of the day on HMS Aboukir, then another gale warning was received as we kitted up. We aborted the dive and had a very bumpy 5 hour trip back to harbour. At one stage some of the boat furniture decided to go flying including a wooden eagle which ended by colliding with someone's head. Fortunately the eagle came off second best and we finished the day with fish and chips at midnight.

07/08/15: The wind and sea had moderated so we set off at 08:00 for HMS Hogue. We completed 2 dives on her with no problems finding her not quite upside down and more broken than HMS Cressy.

Again we anchored for the night this time in a flat calm sea.

08/08/15: The next morning it had chopped up a bit but we had a 07:15 dive on HMS Aboukir. To me this was the best of the wrecks with lots to see including shells, cordite and a 6 inch gun. When we surfaced the sea had grown in height and it was difficult to exit the water via the dive ladder. There was another 3 hour trek back to the harbour of Scheveningen.

So we had successfully dived the 3 wrecks and laid a commemorative wreath. I think that this expedition shows BSACs strength of bringing together 12 divers of different grades from 7 different Branches to run a good dive trip.

All of the divers supported each other with physical help on the difficult working deck and with teaching those less experienced in the techniques we used. The techniques used by the dive boat suited them but were inefficient compared to our way of working. Certainly putting in crew at the start and end of diving to deploy and lift the shot could be improved by the use of standard techniques used in the UK. However the method used meant that we always dived the chosen site.

State of the wrecks:

It was not surprising that the wrecks were well broken due to the fact that extensive salvage work has taken place over the years since they were torpedoed. As previously reported the wrecks lay upside down with debris scattered over a large area. There were no areas covered by extensive nets so no clean-up operation was completed. On the Cressy there were large areas of shell cases, projectiles and cordite.

The Divers:

Name	Club	Qualification
Dave Lock	IDive	FCD/NI
Raj Mistry	IDive	FCD/AI
John Cook	IDive	AD/OWI
Paul Mann	IDive	DL/AOWI
Carol Wood	IDive	SD
Mike Rowley	MV Maureen	FCD/NI
Jane Maddocks	Gosport SAC	FCD/NI
Phil Alcock	Gosport SAC	AD/CI
Neil Turton	Cold Feet Divers	AD
John Heagney	Hellfins	AD
Brian Long	Putney, DL/ADI	
Bart Goedmakers	NATO Scuba Diving Club	AD/AAI (European OLO)

The Dive Platform:

The MS Aquila (Eagle) is a converted trawler 22 metres long and 5.9 metres wide and made of steel in 1950. She was a fishing vessel for many years operating out of Lowestoft. She was bought by the present owner and converted over 18 months to be a diving boat and live-aboard and all of us thought that there had to be improvements made before we would use her again.

She is based in Scheveningen and operated by a husband and wife team who usually have 1 or 2 crew on board to help with the diving duties.



Dive Statistics:

All divers dived on 5 occasions using regular buddies. However when circumstances dictated (wreath laying, Advanced Instructor Exam) we changed buddies accordingly. Dave Lock and Jane Maddocks invigilated an Advanced Instructor Exam over 2 days for Bart Goedmakers. Bart was successful in passing the exam.

As there was no on board oxygen supply we took cylinders filled with oxygen for decanting into rebreather cylinders and a Haskel booster pump to get them full. One team member took a twinset of oxygen to mix his own nitrox and some divers decompressed on rich nitrox mixes.

Incidents:

There were no diving incidents during diving although 1 member was slightly injured in rough seas when an ornament fell off a shelf on to his head! No first aid was required or administered.

Carol's account:

Over dinner with my god daughter and her parents the conversation moved to summer holiday plans - imagine my surprise when my best friend's non diver husband asked if my trip to Holland included the 3 cruisers?!

It turns out he knew far more about my next dive destination than I, as his great grandfather was one of the 1459 souls who perished when the vessels were picked off by a German U-boat seven weeks into the Great War.

The family history, photos of the wife and seven children left behind and the reality of what had happened on the fateful day a century ago suddenly turned a trip that I was considering cancelling into a personal mission as I looked at a photo of the 34 year old stoker from Gorleston in Norfolk with his jolly smile and Popeye style forearms folded in front of him.

The truth was that I did not feel I was up to the challenge. Although I had over 450 dives under my belt much of that had been in tropical climates and I was very much a junior member of the crew as a Sports diver amongst some very senior companions.

With the research came a growing interest and a determination to honour the name of William Henry King and his fellow naval reservists by laying a wreath.



William Henry King

To support my colleagues loaned me equipment and came out to the local inland dive centre to help me practice using a pony cylinder, brush up my skills and prepare for the lower viz of the North Sea.

As we arrived on the dive boat my heart sank and I really wondered if I was up to this challenge, but I looked at the box with the wreath and told myself if they were brave enough to take on the Germans I could get into the water and do my duty. After all I had already braved Operation Stack to get the wreath from the Royal British Legion HQ in Kent.

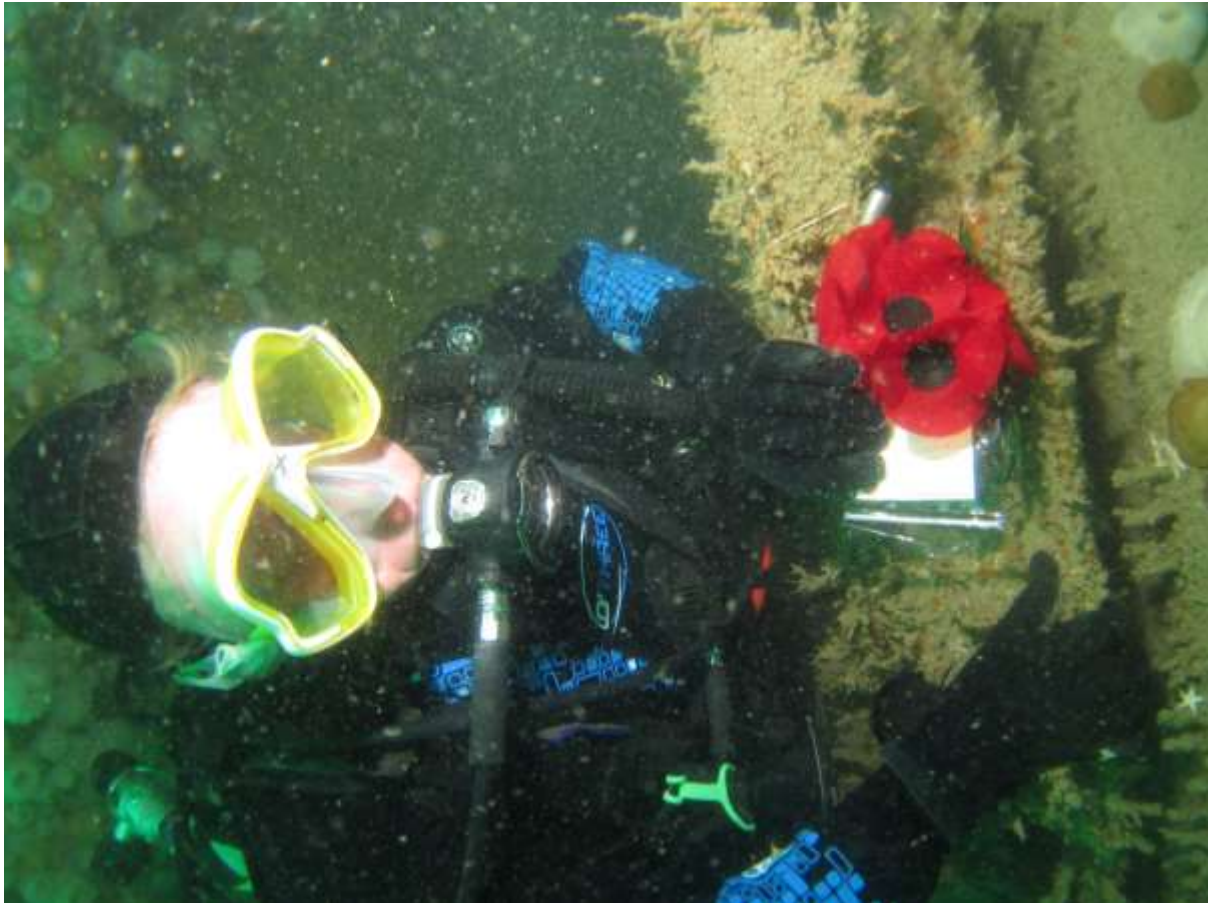
Dive one and there she was - the Cressy - the final resting for Bill. An upturned hull festooned with plumose anemones in an array of colours, the ubiquitous tompot blennies and sleepy crabs who were unused to divers and simply blinked at us. The 40 minute dive passed all too quickly.

Dive two I packed the wreath into a bag and helped by my buddy Raj we secured it to the wreck close to the shotline. This task loading meant the dive was cut shorter than the previous one at just over 30 minutes.

During the course of the week I dived the vessel that Bill had served on - the Aboukir - and was reminded again of the huge loss of life and the tragedy of the blunder. The vessel was smashed by a torpedo and the Cressy had plucked Bill out of the water, only to succumb to the same fate as the Hogue and the Aboukir which rest indistinguishably mangled together.

During the course of the week I extended my diving experience and my dives - doing incremental planned decompression and learning how to switch from main cylinder to my pony with increasing confidence.

I also had some deeper dives signed up as part of my Dive Leader training and am hopeful that I will achieve the qualification by the end of the year. This was a personal journey of discovery on several fronts and I learned a huge amount from diving with people from other clubs and in the company of some very experienced divers who gave their time for me generously.



Objectives Achieved:

We successfully dived all 3 wrecks despite missing dives on 2 days due to inclement weather.

The state of the wrecks was recorded by photographs and video.

Carol Wood laid a wreath to commemorate William Henry King.

Bart Goedmakers successfully passed an Advanced Instructor Exam.

Carol Wood was signed off for depth progression to 35 metres and was given tuition on gas blending, dive management plus nitrox planning and calculations.

Bart Goedmakers was taught a nitrox blending SDC, and got lots of practice mixing nitrox for the expedition.

Press reports:

There were numerous press reports in local media where the divers were based. Some of these are attached to this report.

Carol Wood was interviewed by Anglia TV and BBC Radio Suffolk (copy attached).

The expedition was reported in Scuba January 2016.