

Random Dan and the Forest City

BY STUART SELDON

As the deepest of the wrecks regularly visited by Tobermory, Ontario divers, the *Forest City* has the reputation of being cold and dangerous. However, with the proper experience and gear, she can be dived safely and the rewards are significant.

Originally built as a three-masted schooner in 1870, she was later fitted with a single steam engine so that she might remain a profitable carrier. When she struck Bears Rump Island on a foggy morning in June 1904, (allegedly for a second time) she stuck fast, but refused to sink. There was talk of salvage, but the bow was too badly damaged to risk pulling her free.

Rumor has it that the locals ultimately torched the bow of the wreck in an effort to recover the hardware used in her construction. Tobermory was home to a busy boat-building industry at the turn of the century, and while lumber was plentiful, spikes were not. The result was that, after resting in limbo for two weeks, the *Forest City* slipped below the surface, coming to rest on a steep slope running down to 150 feet (46m).

“Random Dan” taking in the birds-eye view of the stern of the *Forest City*

On this particular morning, there was a charter boat above the wreck as I approached in my Zodiac. I quickly suited up and dropped below the surface, hoping to take a shot or two of my buddies as they descended. While I waited on the bottom, I noticed a solo diver crossing above the deck and towards the boilers. I shot a couple of frames from a distance and knew at once that I had a “keeper”. When I surfaced 45 minutes later, I swam to the other boat to ask who the diver with the orange gloves was, only to learn that the subject of my image was a friend of mine! Ever since, I have referred to this image as ‘Random Dan and the *Forest City*’.

I have always suggested to budding photographers that the single best way to make memorable images is to dive often, and ALWAYS take your camera. You just never know when some guy named Dan will swim into your frame, just in time to make a little magic! []

[Nikon D7000, Aquatica Housing, Tokina 10 – 17 @ 10mm, dual Ikelite DS 161 strobes f5.6, 1/50, ISO 400. Photo © Stuart Seldon www.wetspotimages.com]