



## **HMS D3 Located**

After many years of club dive trips across the English Channel to France we now faced the usual first big decision, dive a known wreck or take a chance on an uncharted unknown? The decision had already been made, but being a democratic club we took a vote anyway, the inevitable show of hands in favour of the unknown decided the fate of a discovery we would make that day.

We had found the mark two years previously but due to typical diving related and external influences, this was the first opportunity we had to dive it. On a calm, clear and sunny Saturday afternoon we dropped off the back of Nauticat and drifted down the shot excited as to what shipwreck awaited us. The sea bed was a good 50mtrs+ below so when at 35mtrs a fully intact submarine came into view, it came as a bit of a surprise. The visibility was a stunning 30mtrs+ and virtually the whole of the submarine could be seen, it was sitting on an even keel with a list to starboard. This was the first dive of a week's charter, could it get any better? We knew immediately because of our position this could be an important find of a previously lost submarine.

Steve had shot the wreck just forward of the conning tower. I landed, like many others between where the deck should have been and the port saddle tanks. I had already planned what to specifically look for on the way down once I realised it was a submarine and with trimix and a scooter I had the tools to help me. Looking around at the amazing visibility I could see divers fanning out over the wreck. Dropping down to the sea bed, I scooted to one end. The keel was clear and on a flat stone bottom looking at the plating I could see no obvious signs of war damage. I arrived at the stern, a pair three bladed propellers and debris strewn around the sea bed. Moving up, the very end of the sub consisted of a single torpedo tube missing its external cover. I stuck my arm across the hole to get a rough gauge of its diameter.

With time ticking away I scooted forward on the port side up to the conning tower, I noted a bollard, pipes and a closed hatch. Moving past the tower towards the bow there was no sign of a deck gun. At the remains of the forward hydroplanes a huge net completely covered the bow to the sea bed and an attached scallop dredger. This was frustrating as I was unable to see through the net to the bow torpedo tubes, another vital clue towards identification.

Motoring back to the conning tower I could see divers and lights starting to move back to the shot, looking down as I went the submarine looked remarkably intact. Arriving back at the conning tower another net came into view. Draped across the starboard side and obscuring the top. Inside however I could clearly see two periscopes, with the top of one retracted just a few inches below its tube. Also a possible radio mast bent forward over the top. From this vantage point I scanned around to see other divers starting their ascent, it was time to leave. Back on Nauticat the conversation moved rapidly from what a fantastic dive we just had, to, what was the unknown submarine? Why and when did it sink? Was it first or second world war? And when can we dive it again? Little did we know it would take another eight months, hours of research, on the internet, at libraries, visits and correspondence to maritime museums, numerous dives being blown out and training in cold quarries over the winter to finally get another chance to dive the unknown sub with a plan to identify the wreck as HMS D3!

HMS D3 was commissioned on the 30/08/1911. Of the class, eight were built. The design was a major leap forward, D class was the first to be driven by diesel engines and with twin screws, saddle tanks, radio transmitter and receiver and improved living conditions for the crew.

Attached to the 8th Flotilla HMS Maidstone, Harwich, D 3's wartime role was to support the grand fleet and destroy German warships. Along with other D and E class submarines D3 fought in the battle of Heligond Bight on the 28th August 1914 and was mentioned in dispatches from Commodore Keyes on 17th October 1914.

The loss of the D3 was a tragedy in itself, due to the circumstances and the fact that it was close to the end of the IWW. At 14:20 on Tuesday the 12th March 1918 a French AT-0 airship commanded by Lieutenant Saint-Remy on coastal patrol to the NW of Dieppe spotted an unidentified vessel to the N.E. As they headed towards the vessel it was recognised as a submarine running at speed to the west on the surface. As they neared, rockets began to appear, fired from the rear of the submarine and steadily getting closer to their airship. Lieutenant Remy took this as a direct attack on his airship and crew, with this his radio operator opened up with machine gun fire and the submarine began to dive. Lieutenant Remy positioned his aircraft for attack and dropped two F bombs which landed 20mtrs wide of the submarine and exploded, the sub had disappeared. The airship regained position and dropped four more F bombs just forward of where the submarine had submerged. Minutes later the conning tower was seen to break the surface. At this time Lieutenant Remy pulled away and attempted to radio in his attack on the submarine. Through field glasses the crew of the airship could see four men in the water and no submarine.

Lieutenant Remy immediately descended to within 20 mtrs of the surface and stopped his motors. He then thought he heard one man shout "you have got us" in English. Attempts were made to rescue the men but to no avail, live preservers were dropped into the water from the airship. Lieutenant Remy then went in search of ships to help in a rescue attempt, eventually

finding the Typhon towing a schooner, Lieutenant Remy called out to her and she immediately cast of her tow and with the AT 0 directing her, headed off to the area of the submarine loss. At 7:25pm after a flight of 7 hours 48 minutes and a fruitless search for survivors Lieutenant Remy and his crew only just made it back to Le Havre after night fall.

A court of enquiry was held at Le Havre into the sinking of D3 on the 16th March 1918. No blame was attributed to Lieutenant Saint- Remy for her loss. Unfortunately, the grenade recognition signals used by British submariners to British aircraft were not known to the French at the time. D3's commanding officer Lieutenant Maitland-Dougall would have been under the impression his submarine was under attack and therefore had no option to dive to escape. The loss of HMS D3 and 29 men became just another accident of war and were forgotten.

Early on a sunny Monday morning a dive team consisting of members of Appleton Sub-aqua SAA 428 and invited videographers Kevin Pickering and Teresa Tulus, headed out of Eastbourne on Channel Diver. The mission, to identify and bring back video evidence of the unknown submarine. Luck seemed to be on our side, it was a calm, clear and sunny day. Key features had been pointed out to Kevin and Teresa from plans and photos obtained by the club over the last eight months. We would give them a 10 minute head start to get as much uninterrupted video evidence as possible. The most obvious feature of D3 was the bow. The torpedo tubes, being of a unique design of one on top of the other with a rotating end cap.

We knew this was going to be difficult because of the netting, so to make the most of this dive we agreed that buddy teams would look for and at specific areas of the submarine. OC air divers would concentrate on the conning tower, this being the shallowest point. Byron and Colin on rebreathers would head forward towards the bow; Paul and I would go to the stern to measure the diameter of the torpedo tube.

Once again Steve shot the wreck first time and Kevin and Teresa went in, an agonising 10 mins later the team dropped down the shot. The visibility was not as good as last time but just as exciting to see an intact submarine loom into view. This time the shot was between the conning tower and the stern, Paul and I wasted no time and headed of to the stern. We had a good look at the props and the torpedo tube also noted what looked like recent damage to the port side of the sub? With Paul lighting the area, I put the tape across the tube, 18 inches, this was the diameter used on the D class, and smiles all round. Now with Paul at the stern I swam forward across the top to the conning tower with the tape measure, between the two engine exhausts that broke through the pressure hull and on over the rear closed hatch, 6 mtrs back from the conning tower exactly as the plans of D3.

As agreed, I signalled Paul who was holding the tape taught and reeled him in. I looked around and I could see sweeping lights drifting back from the bow, Kevin and Teresa videoing as they went. I could also hear chatter from Byron and Colin, its amazing how clear you can hear divers talking on rebreathers. Tasks completed it was almost time to leave, just one last look at the bow. Moving forward an awesome sight came into view, the bow was completely clear. The net had gone, possibly dragged off over the winter, maybe that was the cause of the fresh damage to the port side? The very end of the bow came into view slender, indented with two torpedo tubes one on top of the other. The end cap still in place, it looked as if you could swim over and twist it open amazing condition. There was no doubt, with all the evidence we had this was HMS D3 and no longer lost on patrol.

Back on board Channel Diver while the conversations raged the champagne was cracked. This was the pay off for everyone involved with the project, working together and getting totally involved, a real team effort and proves that sometimes you never really know what you will find at the end of the shot!