

Parting Shot

I realise I am preaching to the converted here, but let's be honest; underwater photography is addictive, driving each of us beyond normal limits in search of the next image. But some photographic dives go beyond the insane, and I would like to confess this one!!.

Diving an intact Second World War vintage German aeroplane in excellent condition lying where it landed sixty years ago is fairly unique, so unique it counts as a personal top three dive ever. It wasn't deep, but the provenance and condition of this particular aircraft makes the dive so special. The Junkers Ju 52 didn't crash, it landed on the then frozen lake in 1940, carrying ammunition to support the German invasion of Narvik.

With insufficient fuel for the return journey the Junkers fell to the lakebed when the spring thaw thinned the ice. Lying on the lakebed with undercarriage extended the

aircraft fuselage and wings still carry their original paint, protected by immersion in cold, fresh water. The only environmental damage is to the starboard wingtip sheared off by years of ice. Sadly, the rest of the damage has been caused by souvenir hunters; two of the three BMW radial engines and all three propellers have gone, as have the flight instruments. This loss of detail is disappointing, but as I write these words the hairs on my arm are tingling and I can still feel the thrill and excitement of looking up and staring at the ribbed Junkers wing and radial engine for the first time.

The madness of this dive is not the subject, it's everything before and after actually seeing the aeroplane; carrying a twinset, 12kg of lead and a camera housing for 500m thought deep snow. Breaking ice at the riverbank. Drifting downriver, feeling the thin veneer of ice at the lake edge break upon my

hood. The drysuit freezing as stiff as a board during the post-dive walk back to the jeep. A freeflow on the wing inflator, forming a ball of ice as big as your fist around the first stage.

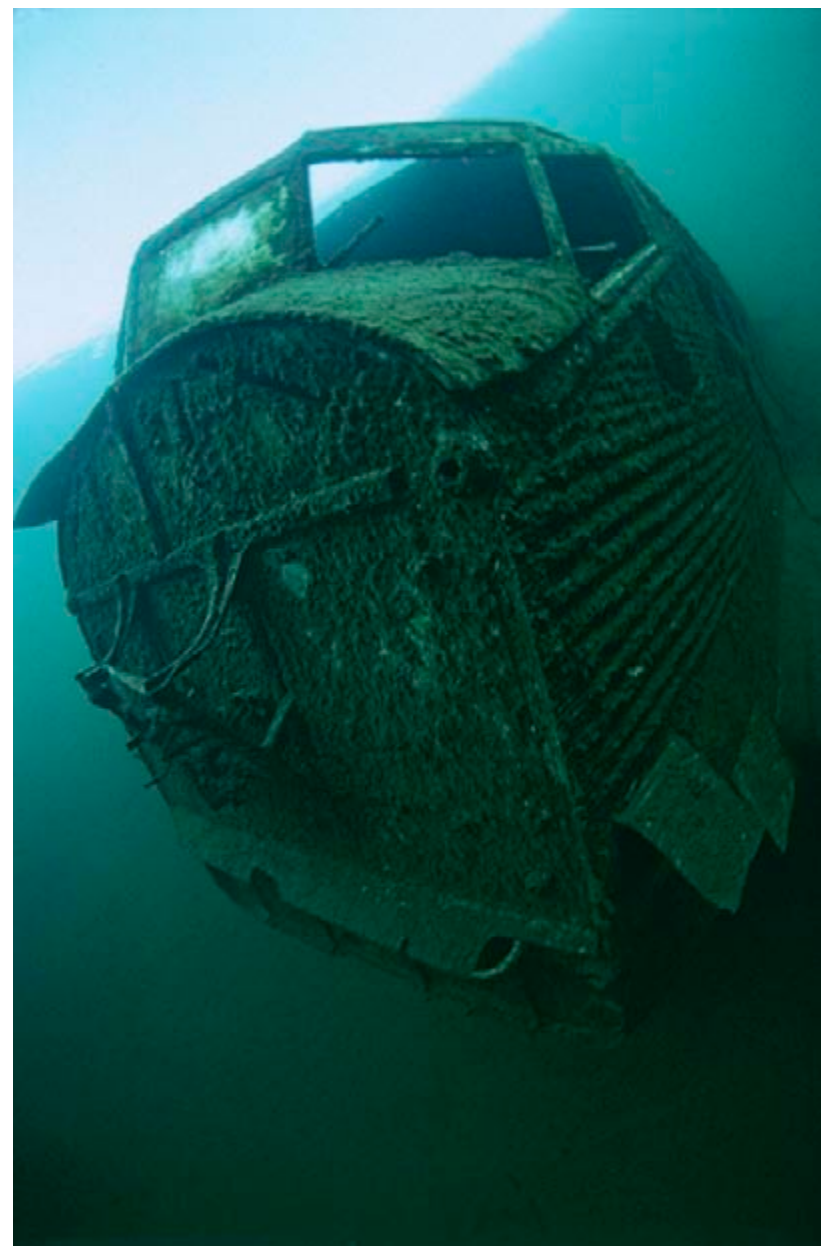
There is no defence to the charge of obsessive photo-driven diving. Guilty as charged!

Photo details:-

F90x in a Subal housing. 16mm fisheye, F4 at 1/10th. Ambient light (not much of that!). Film stock was Fuji Provia 400. Scanned on Nikon Coolscan 5000ED

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**Do you have a nice shot with a short story behind it?
If so e mail me and yours could be the next "Parting shot".**

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