

Parting Shots

Death of a Princess

In British waters we are blessed with an abundance of shipwrecks to dive but the condition of all of them is deteriorating as the years roll by. It is doubly sad when we lose a shipwreck almost overnight but that is what happened to the Viking Princess near Plymouth in the southwest of the UK during the winter storms of 2014.

The Viking Princess was a decommissioned trawler which sank under tow and had been partly salvaged over the years but large sections of her still remained intact and provided a really useful backdrop for photography in about 17 metres (55 feet) where currents were rarely a problem. There were a couple of large congers which inhabited the engine room and a large shoal of fish usually decorated the stern. She was mostly open and very easy and safe to enter. Her exposed framework made for great shapes for fisheye lenses to bend and exaggerate. In short she was a really great dive and was usually blessed with above average visibility.

I should have cottoned on to what I was about to see when the telltale jump on the echo sounder never happened. I put it down to my being slightly off position and kitted up with my usual photographic enthusiasm. The viz was very good that day but 6 weeks earlier we had had one of the most severe and prolonged winter storms in recent history. Waves of over 15 metres (50 feet) were recorded and several navigation buoys were 'repositioned' with one actually being totally wrecked.



All shots are video frame grabs from a Panasonic GX7 in a Nauticam housing with 14-42 EZ lens with an external INON UWL100 with dome port. The bottom two were taken with a GreenWater Magic filter :-)

I should have put two and two together for, as I've already said, the Viking Princess lay in just 17 metres of water.

The scene which greeted me as I descended the anchor chain was totally alien. There was very little to recognise except large areas of flattened metal and a seabed strewn with new rocks and small boulders. Nothing of the wreck stood higher than 1 metre (3 feet) and the shoal of fish were nowhere to be seen. I doubt very much if the congers has survived as it must have been like being in a giant pebble (rock) dashing machine for several days.

It's very sad when you lose such a useful

photographic asset because it's gone forever. I guess the only consolation is that the images of her will still remain.

RIP Viking Princess.

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Do you have a shot which has a story within a story?
If so e mail it with up to 500 words of text and yours could be the next Parting Shot.
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