



# INISHOWEN Sub-Aqua Club

The Club House,  
Neds Point,  
Buncrana,  
Co. Donegal,  
Eire.

Most dives take place on ship-wrecks or reefs. This is an account of how a few members of the club, Danny Keenan, Robert Smith, Seamus McLaughlin and myself finally located the wreckage of an aeroplane about which there has been much talk in our local area of Greencastle for many a year since she came down in Lough Foyle in September 1942.

Both the local fishermen and the older generation who actually remember the day she came down have been aware that "somewhere out there" lay the remnants of a B17, The Flying Fortress, which played such an important role throughout WWII.

My own interest began after talking to Brian Thompson, who suggested that our club take a look. First of all, I started asking around among the local fishermen and anybody else who might know something. The fishermen had a good idea of her whereabouts as, over the years they had lost gear on something "foul".

To begin with the members of the club were enthusiastic, but after five of six dives with nothing to show but a non-descript piece of aluminium which could have come from any plane, there were quite a few lost in this area; it was becoming a little difficult to keep the interest going.

However, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2001 the four of us decided to give it another shot. Danny's son Dermott came with us to act as cox.

We met at the slip at 6.30 and took some time to discuss our plan for the dive. It was suggested that we shouldn't drop the shot until we were actually kitted -up ready to go. We reckoned that the drift between dropping the shot on coming on the marks and taking to the water was perhaps losing position. I was first on the bottom and as I looked around I thought I saw something silvery grey. When Danny came down beside me I looked again but could see nothing. I gave Danny the direction sign and off we set over a large mussel bed.

Suddenly out of the black blanket of mussels the angle of the light revealed the full expanse, wing-tip to wing-tip of our prize, the almost entirely intact remnants of a plane last seen 59 years ago.

The evidence of all those snags suffered by our fishermen was plain to see, ropes, nets and dredges, but they did little to spoil our child-like excitement. It was hard to stay in one place, there seemed to be so much to look at, the plane itself, the wings complete with engine-mountings. From gas-masks to some personal effects, for instance a personal shaver and soap-box, we felt like Santa had been especially generous to us.

But this was August .....my thoughts turned to the two boys waiting patiently on the surface. Seamus, Robert and Dermott had guessed that something had gone right.

Before surfacing, I brought in the shot and tied it to a dredge caught on the plane, so that they could come straight on to the site.

Seamus and Robert then had their 30 minutes of excitement, which I'll let them tell you about, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August has become a red-letter day for the club.

That was the first of many dives, and I have put some effort into researching more about the plane and its flight. Through John Quinn, of Belfast, a man well up on planes lost in Ireland, I have found that it was a B17 "F" type, on her first flight out of the builders, (BOEING), on her way to Thurley in Southern England, to take up station with the R.A.F.

She didn't make it .....but thankfully we have established that there were no lives lost. In fact through the miracle of e-mail Danny Keenan and his son Dermott have heard that one of the crew is still living. We're in the process of making contact with this survivor.

One other fact we have discovered is that the plane was called the "MELTIN`POT" captained by a certain William Melton.

For now, with the winter coming in there'll be less diving and more in the way of research. Armed with more information we look forward eagerly to returning to the dive site in the Spring.

Seamus Carey.  
Diving Officer, ISAC.



C.M.A.S.



C.F.T.