



The Norwegian is well broken up but certain sections are still recognisable

Lobsters can be found below and between the wreckage of the Norwegian



took a break and went ashore, and I was surprised to see a young bald eagle perched on the roof – if only because there was precious little here in the way of food.

After the usual round of photographs in front of the building, we then visited the grave of two children whose parents had lived on the island. They died from diphtheria when passengers carrying the disease were wrecked and

came ashore. The inscription on the headstone reads: Eric George and Violet May, twin babies of Geo and May Laing, died Aug 1938 aged five months. This gave us all an insight into the hardships and the tragedy of St Paul Island and, curiously, we all walked back to the shore in silence – each of us alone with our personal thoughts.

## DIVING THE WEST COAST

Back on board the *Meg & Kell* we continued our journey northwards around the island and then down the east coast to Viceroy Cove. It was a very hot and clear day and the sea was flat calm. It was time to go diving. Our first wreck was the *Victoria*, a French motor trawler of 1,075 tonnes. This ship was built in Copenhagen in 1928 and billed as the 'first big diesel motor trawler in the world'. Further details are very scant, except to say she struck St Paul Island on 28 April 1953 and her fishing gear was partially salvaged by the boats *David* and *Wylie*.

The *Victoria* also has the dubious distinction of being the very last ship to be wrecked on the island, although today she is well broken up. On those occasions when the sea freezes in these latitudes, the ice grinds away at any wreckage found in shallow waters. Nevertheless, large sections of the ship survive, and her boilers are a very prominent attraction, often with lobsters found inside. A loose assortment of brass rails, piping and other attractive paraphernalia litter the seabed, and it is very easy to find yourself sifting through

everything in sight.

A short distance across the cove lie the remains of the *Anna*, a Danish sailing vessel of 746 tonnes lost on 8 September 1874 with the loss of 11 lives. Being of wooden construction the main bulk of this ship is lost forever, though, curiously, many wooden features – especially deadeyes and blocks – are found everywhere. This wreckage, however, lies confused with that of a French privateer lost earlier that century.

Throughout the dive we continued to find cannon. They were all made of iron and had also suffered from extremes of the weather: so much so that some no longer resembled cannon at all, and on several occasions we passed over them, thinking they were just old bits of metal. Then we stumbled across a pile of cannonballs that had been placed together on the seabed by unknown divers. For me, it was fascinating to see so many together. But, later, Terry was quick to point out that they should have been left exactly as they were found.

## DIVING THE EAST COAST

That night, as the conversation drifted from one wreck story to another, we relaxed and enjoyed one of Terry's sumptuous barbecues – as good as any I have ever tasted. Somehow, we all managed to forgive our host for that non-existent breakfast.

On the second day we concentrated on the east coast, where I found the underwater scenery to be vastly different from the west. Here, the seabed slopes down to the deeper levels at a more pronounced rate, though there are many areas which still permit relatively shallow diving. There was far more kelp on this side and I came away with the distinct impression that if divers were to select the shipwreck of their choice, according to its depth, then here was something for everyone.

I was particularly interested in the story of the *Norwegian*, so our first dive was immediately off the headland – and below the 'mountain' – both of which bear her name. The scattered and twisted wreckage is well scattered but it is remarkable how much remains after 136 years underwater. Large ribs lie across a rock strewn seabed with kelp clinging to every item. Ship's plates lie like walls fallen across large boulders, allowing the diver to swim underneath with ease, where he will encounter plenty of lobsters, crabs and, maybe, the occasional wolf fish.