



Andy Jackson is a regular underwater detective - his passion is uncovering the truth about wrecks that lie at the bottom of our seas. He loves the thrill of exploring new territories and locating 'virgin' wrecks

■ WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO DIVE?

● When I was younger I was mad keen on all sorts of physical fitness but had a life changing experience when I slipped a disc in my back and was forced into a surgical solution. I came out of that looking for some new interests and I'd always fancied diving, at the time in my naivety I thought the weightless underwater world was just the thing I needed, so I turned up at a Scarborough SAC training session and was immediately hooked. My mistake was soon apparent and it wasn't long before I was lugging loads of kit around. Fortunately my back hasn't bothered me since! Touch wood!

■ WHAT TYPE OF DIVER ARE YOU?

● I think most people have me labelled as a deep diving wreckie/techie and that's probably because my passion for exploring virgin wrecks is edging me into deeper and deeper waters, but actually I'm just as happy in 10 metres filming critters and chasing scallops which is what I tend to do in the winter months. It's a funny thing but as I've become more proficient and confident I've strapped more bits of kit to myself to make it more challenging. If it continues we'll need a hiab on the RIB soon.

■ WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PIECE OF KIT?

● I have a beaten up old OMS wing that has seen some real service over the years. The bladder is now a tribute to Aquasure and I'm never without a tube in the fridge. My golden rule is to check that it will hold full inflation regularly. The other seriously important bit of it is the harness set and everything needs to be in just the right place, I've riveted the joints in the straps to make sure that it always goes back on in the same place. To get this right I've had many an hour stood in the garage wearing full kit, you have to overcome the embarrassment and mickey taking!

■ DIVE BUDDY - WHO DO YOU ENJOY DIVING WITH MOST?

● I dive with either Colin Bell or Mally Jenkinson and on the rare occasions that we are all there at the same time we dive as a three, or at least we start as a three until I manage to shake them off. It's good to have a buddy in camera shot occasionally but generally they're a pair of viz busting bar stewards and I'm better off without them!

■ FAVOURITE DIVE SITE?

My favourite dive site would have to be the site of the two K class subs out beyond May Island in the Firth of Forth. This site must be one of the windiest I've come across, I've had five expeditions to dive them, three of which didn't get further than the pub. I was determined to nail down which wreck was which and I'll be talking about this at length and showing my latest footage at the ScotSAC Dive Conference in Oban in November.

My favourite wildlife diving is in Loch Fyne out of Tarbert, this is generally confined to the winter months when the weather is at its worst but you can always dive here, there are plenty of shallow sites with good visibility and it is teeming with life.

■ BEST COUNTRY VISITED?

● I haven't travelled around much and why would I when I have virgin wrecks within 20 miles of my home. Having said that I think my favourite trip abroad was Norway diving out of Bergen on *Jane R*. It was a week long trip and the scenery was just awesome. What was most surprising was the preservation of the wrecks, they are mostly German steamers bombed at anchor in the Second World War and some of them still have masts and rigging and ventilation funnels. Nothing like that in the North Sea!

■ WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO DIVING?

● I'm motivated by new wrecks and new puzzles to solve. Each wreck has its story and I want to find out what it is and tell others about it. Video is the ultimate tool for me to do this as it brings the subject to life and is a cracking reconnaissance tool as it doesn't forget to concentrate and it doesn't forget what it's seen.

■ DREAM DIVE BUDDY?

● Don't think I have one apart from my video camera, oh sorry that's not true, Jacqueline Bisset made a serious impression on me when she starred in *The Deep* so I'll have some of that please.

■ DREAM DIVE DESTINATION?

● This hasn't been found yet but it is John Paul Jones' flagship the *Bonne Homme Richard*. There is much American interest in this wreck at the moment, we've even had the American Navy's NR-1 nuclear research submarine off Flamborough Head this year looking for her but as far as I'm aware she hasn't turned up yet. She was lost at the Battle of Flamborough Head in 1779. I'd settle for diving her on the back of someone else finding the site but you never know I might just trip over her myself one day!

■ BEST DIVE BOOK EVER READ?

● *The Silent World*, I have several copies picked up in charity shops and I can't resist them. What an adventure to have lived through!

■ WHAT BUGS YOU MOST ABOUT DIVING?

● I get really wound up about divers who rape and pillage wreck sites having no interest in the history, I have no problem with recovery of artefacts from undesignated sites but these should be declared to the Receiver of Wreck and documented so that all the clues can be pulled together to enable the site to be identified properly. I think the volume of material declared at present is only a fraction of what is recovered every year.

■ HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DIVING TO NON-DIVERS?

● "Diving" in its simplest sense is about putting your head underwater and experiencing what's beneath. Some people don't go much further than that but for others it is much, much more and it can be a whole way of life. So be warned it should be treated as an infectious disease and maybe difficult to cure in some cases.

