



## Diving the *MacKenzie* Artificial Reef

HMCS *MacKenzie* was operated as an anti-submarine destroyer escort ship from 1962 until 1972. For the following twenty years she was a training ship. She was sunk on September 16, 1995, to become an artificial reef. Now she's a home for fish, invertebrates, and other sea life; and divers find her fascinating.

The *MacKenzie* is 4 miles/6.4 km east of Sidney, about 150 yards/meters north of Gooch Island, in about 100 feet/31 meters of water. It is an area of sometimes strong current, and visibility averages 25 feet/9 meters. This pamphlet will help you prepare for your dive, and know what to expect before, during, and after.

### WARNING

The current on the vessel is usually from the northwest on both ebbing and flooding tide. Currents are strongest during large ebbs.

If the ebb at Fulford Harbour is more than 4 feet in less than 6 hours, **DO NOT DIVE THE MACKENZIE.**

If the flood at Fulford Harbour is greater than 6 feet in 6 hours, it is strongly recommended that only experienced current divers descend to the ship, and that divers and boat operators both use extreme caution. Under no circumstances should the dive boat be without an operator during the dive. Use a dive flag at all times.

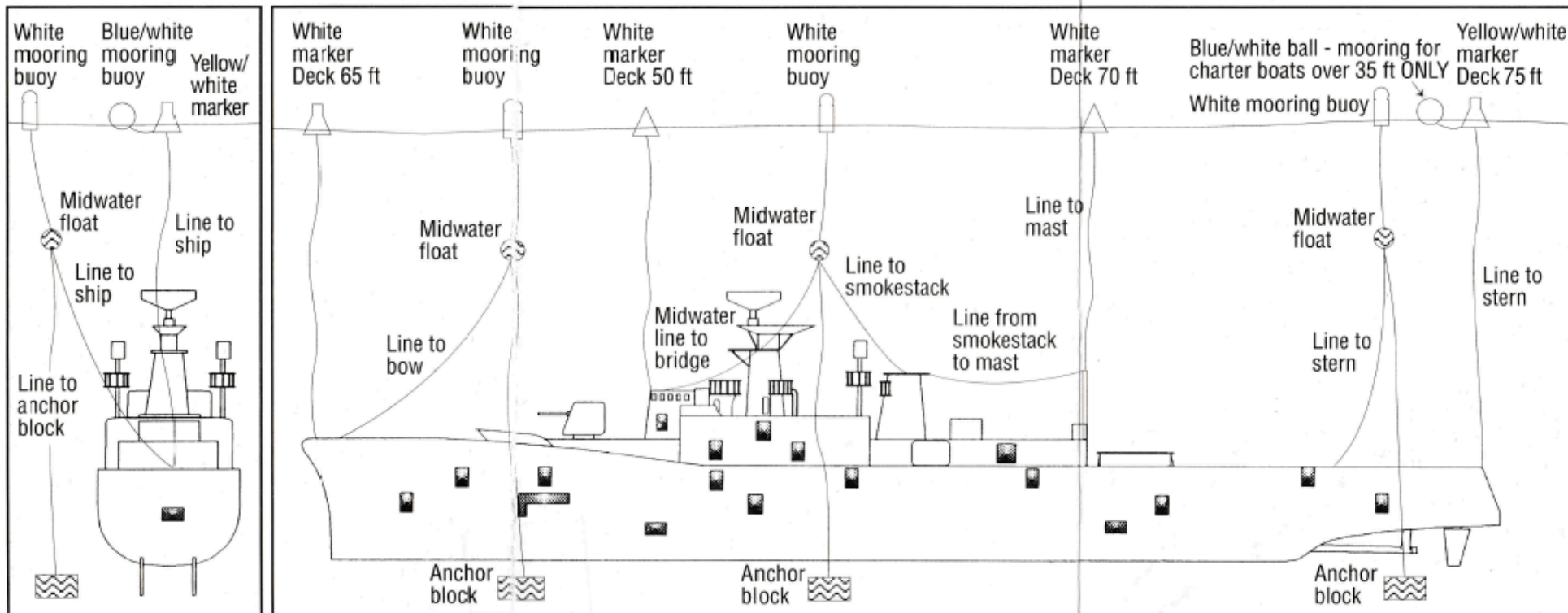


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**Artificial**  
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Supplied to divers by your local dive shop or  
dive charter operator.



## Notes for Divers

When diving the *MacKenzie*, go with someone - a buddy or dive operator - who knows the ship. Charter vessels operated by members of the B.C. Dive Tourism Association have the appropriate Coast Guard Certifications. Listen closely to the divemaster's briefing.

On private boats, check to see that the proper boating safety equipment is on board and that diver safety items such as a dive flag, drift line, first aid kit and emergency oxygen are present.

As you gear up, consider each piece of equipment. Can it get caught up on the ship? Is each piece needed on this dive? Unnecessary gear is extra drag, extra weight, and extra potential hang ups.

This vessel is subject to strong currents (see WARNING on reverse). Check the current before you enter to ensure it is not beyond your level of experience.

Once in the water, hang onto something, as you won't feel the current moving you until you are too far away from the boat to swim back. Hang onto a line at all times unless you are on the ship or the boat.

As you come down the line to the ship you will find yourself at about 55 to 60 feet if you are on the bow, 60 to 70 feet amidships on the deck, or 75 to 80 feet on the stern. Divers not wanting to go below 60 feet can explore the top of the gun, superstructure, radar platform, and smoke stack areas. The bottom is at 90 to 100 feet at the bow and 95 to 105 at the stern.

Plan to ascend on the same line you came down on. Once on the deck, orient yourself to your position on the ship so you can find the line again. As you move around the ship, pull yourself along by hand. - this protects you from the current, and keeps you from kicking up sediment that will reduce visibility for you and other divers.

It is recommended that, for your first couple of dives, you explore the outside of the ship only. You may

want to explore the bridge, but that should be the limit of your penetration.

Monitor your air supply, and check where you are in relation to your ascent line when your tank is half full. Start up with no less than 750 lbs. of air. Even in an emergency, it is best to ascend with a line, to control your speed and keep you over the ship and out of surface boat traffic. Make a safety stop at 15 feet. Watch for surface hazards. At the surface, stay on the float tag line or drift line until ready to board the boat.

Do not penetrate the ship beyond your skill level or your equipment limitations. Treat the ship as a marine preserve, and do not remove any parts or life.

## Experienced Wreck Divers

Observe proper technique. If you run line, remove it.

# Guide to Boat Operation

Consider current strength and direction before tying up or developing a dive plan. Approach the *MacKenzie* from downstream – drifting down to the mooring subjects down divers to possible hazards. Try not to use power within the rectangle formed by the mooring buoys on either side, and the bow and stern markers.

If the current is small, divers can be put in the water well upstream and drift on to the marker buoys for their descents. The boat must be kept clear of the rectangle above the *MacKenzie* while doing this. Having a pickup boat to retrieve drifting divers is much easier and safer than trying to manoeuvre a large boat among surfacing divers in strong currents.

## Mooring

Do not moor to the marker buoys (see drawing). Attach one end of your mooring line securely to your vessel and run the other end through the top of the

mooring buoy and back to your vessel. This allows for easier release if a pickup of a drifting diver is needed.

## Diver Safety

You should attach a drift line to the mooring buoy, extending 40 - 50 feet behind the boat, so that divers have something to hang on to upon entering the water. The diver should follow the drift line to the mooring buoy and descend on the mooring line. If the boat has to leave with a diver still down, the drift line gives the diver something to hang onto until the dive boat returns.

As well, there are tag lines attached to the marker buoys. These lines are for diver safety, and must not be used for mooring.

There are mid-water lines from the moorings to the ship. **DIVERS: NOTE THE POSITION OF THE LINE TO GET BACK TO YOUR BOAT.**

## Departure

When leaving the site, cast off and drift some distance away before using power.

## Traffic

There are times when there will be many dive boats around the *MacKenzie*, so that traffic and mooring buoy space become a problem. Be prepared for rafting boats together. It is suggested that, in such a case, you leave the *MacKenzie* mooring and anchor at some distance during surface intervals.

*This is not intended as a detailed map, and should not be used for that purpose. For a detailed MacKenzie map contact your diveshop or Scuba Guide Mapping, #103 - 264 West 2nd Street, North Vancouver, B.C. V7M 1C8.*

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*Co-ordination by Michael Paris, text by Kevin Vancleemput and Tex Enemark, ship plans by John Pelletreau, layout by Black Cat Graphics. Copyright 1996 ARSBC.*

