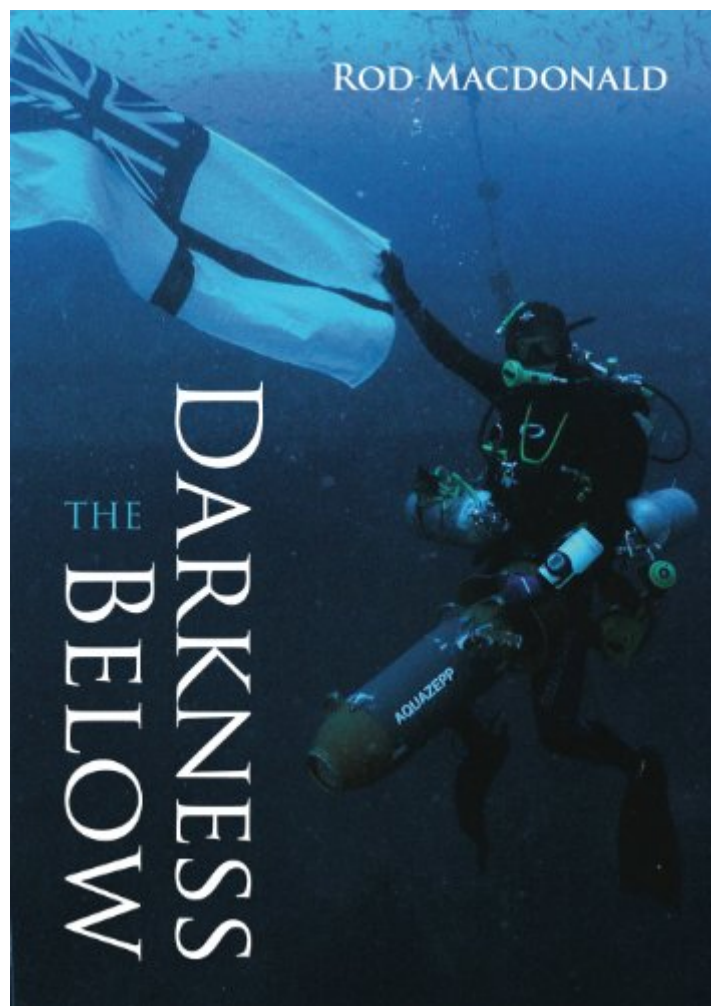


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# The Darkness Below



## Synopsis

From the best-selling author of four classic UK diving books comes *The Darkness Below* – a collection of absorbing adventures gained from a lifetime in diving. Rod takes the reader on a spellbinding and gripping journey from first beginnings as a novice scuba diver. Told in intimate detail with a beguiling sense of self-deprecating humour, he recounts epic dives on some of the most fabulous shipwrecks around the world. Terrifying first explorations of virgin shipwrecks far offshore, lost in time and enshrouded in darkness, cram the pages.

## Book Information

File Size: 11177 KB

Print Length: 232 pages

Publisher: Whittles Publishing (April 23, 2013)

Publication Date: April 23, 2013

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00CHK2HCA

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #644,170 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #84

in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Nature Travel > Adventure > Scuba Diving #261 in Books >

Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Scuba #590 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks >

Nonfiction > Travel > Specialty Travel > Adventure

## Customer Reviews

Very pleasant to read. The passion and commitment Rod shows towards wreck diving is almost unique. For tech divers (especially for those out of UK) it's a must read: opens the eyes on a new field of wrecks and shares some lessons learned

Very interesting book, learned things I never knew about the war and the number of allied ships actually sunk. Great read!

If you want to know what 'real' scuba diving is all about, look no further! Speaking as a diver of almost 40 years experience with an abiding interest in shipwrecks, there are many I have visited and a great deal more which are still on my 'Bucket List.' This diver has already visited several of both the former and the latter. Of all the books I review, I reserve my hardest comments for those about shipwrecks and diving. Being the two subjects I study in the greatest of detail, I frequently find too many would-be authors put pen to paper without understanding either subject. Thankfully, Rod Macdonald is one of that rare breed who knows these subjects most thoroughly and fully understands how to put that knowledge into a readable and engaging style of writing. In short, this is one of the most intense and exciting books about Diving I have ever had the good fortune to read and when someone of my experience finds himself saying "Wow!" it must be really good. In this work, this author takes us through his personal experiences of visits to some of the world's greatest shipwrecks - a number of which are designated 'War Graves' (the formal term is a 'Protected Place' under the provisions of a British law called 'The Protection of Military Maritime Graves Act 1986.'). It is important, therefore, to point out that, whilst all vessels are designated are (by law!) with some being out-of-bounds, this author had all the necessary permissions for his own visits. Let me be quite clear, this is no collection of small albeit exciting shipwrecks. On the contrary, we begin with an account of the 32,000 ton White Star Liner 'Justicia' lost off Northern Ireland during WW1. From there, as we follow this diver's exploits, we then visit the remains of the German High Sea Fleet scuttled in Scapa Flow in June 1919 and the magnificent wreck of the Wallachia lost in the Clyde in 1895. As this diver continues to explore the possibilities of deeper and deeper diving he is often found in difficult conditions deep underwater and often in pitch darkness. After yet more exciting wrecks from the both world wars, the author describes his indoctrination into 'Trimix' - a system of mixed gases which permit divers to venture even deeper, after which he visits the Corryvreckan whirlpool - one of the largest whirlpools in the world. And may I say, having seen the world's 'second' largest whirlpool in the Bay of Fundy, Canada (created by strong in-coming tides swirling around a particular island) I did not want to be in the water until calm had returned. From here we visit the remains of HMS Hampshire on which Kitchener died during WW1 and the 11,000 ton Liner Remuera lost off Fraserburgh in 1940. It is at this point, however, after enthralling accounts of the Liner Laurentic - with her still missing cargo of gold bullion, the 23,000 ton battleship HMS Audacious, Justicia, Empire Heritage and U 155, we discover the down side of continued, serious, deep diving as the author suffers his first 'Bend' and his encounters with fishing nets snagged on wrecks. With visits to the remains of HMS Repulse and Prince of Wales (lost to the Japanese off Malaya just 3 days after Pearl Harbour), the book continues with many more examples of the most

exciting diving any person might hope to enjoy. As I said at the beginning, if you want to know what real diving is all about, look no further. NM

This has got to be the most enjoyable dive book I have read in a long time, for some reason I missed out on his first book, *Into the Abyss*, but Rod covers this period by starting the book with a précis of his early days of diving. This section certainly brought back memories of dives using home made wetsuits and very rudimentary dive equipment. Rod then effortlessly moves us through deep air dives, his introduction to technical diving and finally into his move to rebreather diving, where naming Ewan Rowell's rebreather "Kato" brought a smile to my face. Rod weaves a golden thread through his diving career, picking out wrecks, characters and events that are all interlinked in their own ways and all form part of this fantastic story, leaving you wanting him to write another volume so that you can continue to follow the tale. Rod shares the joy and elation of his diving as well as letting you feel the apprehension of some tense moments inside deep, dark wrecks. Rod never over dramatises but I certainly could remember a few similar experiences when diving in cold, dark conditions in the same Scottish waters. For wreck detectives, this is a fantastic tale of search and discovery, guesswork and deduction as Rod turns information from fishermen and marks on charts into dives on virgin wrecks and then the painstaking work of proving the name and history of the wreck. As always, the wreck drawings are detailed and give you all you need to prepare for a dive on the wrecks. I took the book on holiday, looking forward to dipping into it between sightseeing but opened it on the plane, was instantly gripped and read it cover to cover during the flight. There isn't a dull page to be found, it entertains, informs and delights from beginning to end as you move from Stonehaven to Scapa and then to the South China Seas to follow Rod on his dives on HMS Repulse and YHMS Prince of Wales. Rod is a legend in Scottish diving and his Scapa books are the bible for anyone diving the German battle fleet. If you love diving, wrecks or just like a well written, true life adventure written with passion and attention to detail, this is the book for you!

This is a really interesting book. Full of stories and information that you don't normally come across. A good read for someone who feels that they have read so many books that nothing feels new anymore.

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