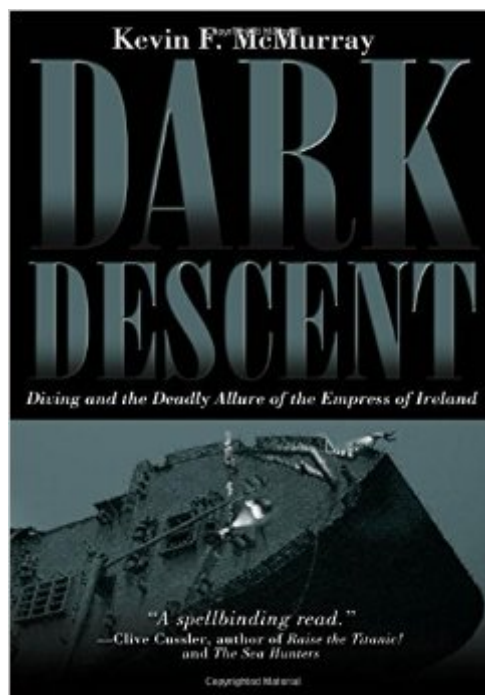


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# Dark Descent: Diving And The Deadly Allure Of The Empress Of Ireland



## Synopsis

"Dark Descent makes the reader a vicarious participant in what is a very extreme sport."âPhiladelphia Inquirer On May 29, 1914, the passenger liner Empress of Ireland was struck by the freighter Storstad and sank in fifteen minutes, taking more than 1,000 victims with her. It remains one of the largest losses of life ever in a maritime accident. At more than a hundred feet deep in the frigid Gulf of St. Lawrence, diving the Empress is like trying to navigate an unfamiliar sixty-story building lying on its side at a forty-five-degree angle, in pitch blackness with only a flashlight. In Dark Descent, Kevin McMurray takes us deep into the bowels of the lost ship, first to relive her tragic death and then to join the divers who have probed the wreck's secrets. It's an adventure from which some divers don't return. "Impressively researched. . . . For those who love the lure of the deep water and the mysteries of shipwrecks, this specialized history will be a pleasure."âPublishers Weekly "Kevin has a remarkable knack of adding life and realism. A great job."âR. W. Hamilton, Chairman of the Board, Divers Alert Network

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dark Descent: Diving and the Deadly Allure of the Empress of Ireland is a book for everyone! I am definitely not a member of the diving community, though if I were I would love the book as a guide to equipment and techniques. I am, in fact, alternately revolted and fascinated by extreme sports and the people who practice them, a combination of feelings that compels me to seek understanding in books like Dark Descent. This page-turner of a book goes a long way towards providing

enlightenment and does it in a most interesting way. Deep wreck divers are tourists! McMurray's abbreviated yet complete rendering of the Canadian ocean liner Empress of Ireland's history and the tragedy of her 1914 sinking on a routine voyage from Quebec City to Liverpool reads like a Michelin guide to an exciting historical site. Immediately one feels that reading about it isn't enough. One is compelled to visit. The bulk of the book is a history of tourism, a very difficult kind of tourism, to one of these sites. In tightly written, chronological chapters, McMurray describes all the expeditions to the Empress, as they illuminate the technical progress of diving and, more importantly to this reader, the motivations of the divers and the rivalries and sportsmanlike competition between them. Though the retrieval of artifacts provides a financial incentive for early explorers of the wreck, diving continues after the government of Canada declares the wreck off limits to salvage. Why? All tourism involves a certain amount of discomfort and risk, and it is really these that make the tourist feel as if he or she has a special connection to the past, somehow more real than the experience of reading a book or watching a program on the History Channel. In such moments of actively reaching for connection, we feel most alive. That is why we travel, why we climb mountains. The chapters of this book describe this feeling of being fully alive, fully connected to the past, as it is experienced in a unique way by each of a series of explorers over the last ninety years. As the author says so well, in describing one of his own dives on the Empress, "I told myself I was really here. It was touching a powerful story, bearing witness to a profound and heart-wrenching tragedy." For a reader not yet ready to make that ultimate trip to the bottom of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, this book provides the next best thing to actually touching this story. *Dark Descent* is a great read!

I first learned about the "Empress of Ireland" disaster through Clive Cussler's book "Night Probe!" I eventually found out more about the vessel and her untimely end. The history is well-documented here by McMurray. Outbound in the St. Lawrence River, the Empress is badly holed by a fully-loaded collier and sinks within 15 minutes, killing more than a thousand. This disaster was generally overshadowed by the outbreak of World War I and the ship was largely forgotten. But once she was found, she became a magnet for the curious and those with ulterior motives. Much like what happened to the Titanic, the Empress has been stripped of much of her gear, her inner treasures, and sadly some of her bodies. A section of the "boneyard" has reportedly been plundered by some rather morbid and sick-minded individuals. McMurray goes into great detail on the many expeditions and dives, the work by some to protect the wreck and what has been found, as well as those who've lost their lives diving on her. While the Empress may be in the St. Lawrence, it's a dive

for only the best, as this book carefully explains. This is probably the most comprehensive history of the Empress of Ireland and updates all that has happened since she went down in May 1914. It is at times dense and a slow read, but you can't take away its entertaining, yet sobering qualities.

The sinking of the Empress of Ireland after a collision in the St. Lawrence Seaway is one of the most tragic shipwreck stories of all time. The author does a fine job of chronicling the numerous expeditions to this wreck, the dangers of diving it (not for beginners) and the actual story of the 1914 tragedy. Mr. McMurray himself has dived this wreck and his first hand knowledge is evident in this well researched and equally well written book. This is a must have for the historian and the diver. *The Wreck Hunters: Dive to the Wreck of the USS Bass*

If you are a diver and/or shipwreck enthusiast then you will enjoy this book! The book is written as though you were diving with the team while the author presents historical background to enrich the journey. Not much is heard of the Empress of Ireland today, which is a shame, but this book will help you remember the grand lady and experience what I'd like to dive her. A great read!

If you are a diver, and especially a technical or wreck diver, this book will hook you right from the beginning! You won't be able to put it down. You will hear the noises of the regulators, feel the weight of the equipment, the rolling of the boats, feel the pressure and cold of the water. Well written and it shows the dedication and passion for the wreck the author has.

Absolutely amazing story told in good detail. However, the author does go off on some overly detailed explanations of people and things in the book. If it is true I now know a great deal about the nature of lightning.

I enjoyed the first book, *Deep Descent* and found it a good reference book for my technical diving students. This book was equally as good. It combines the history of the wreck as well as the history of the diving that has taken place on the wreck. It also includes some excellent information on the diving fatalities that have occurred on this wreck. If you want to learn from the mistakes of others this book will help.

not his best work good as a documentary His drama as told on the *Andria Doria* is better

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