

Fitting final journey for man who loved diving



REMEMBERED: The boat which club members, above and right, felt should bear Jeff's name
Picture right by IAN COOPER

Jeff laid to rest in his beloved sea

By **DAVE ROBSON**

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A KEEN Teesside diver has found his final resting place off Teesmouth on the wreck of a ship he knew well.

Jeff Pape's ashes have been placed on the 19th century steam ship SS Harvest, which sank off South Gare in 1889.

Jeff, of Middlesbrough, loved wreck diving and particularly knew every part of the 1,380-ton Harvest, which sank after colliding with the steam ship Regent Harvest, thankfully with no loss of life.

So when he expressed a wish to have his ashes left there, fellow Teesside Diving Club members agreed to take him.

And to reach the wreck, members travelled out in their new boat - fittingly named after the man they were paying their emotional tribute to.

The Jeff Pape has been largely funded by a £10,000 Sport England lottery grant.

And on May 11, after months of weather delays, it was launched for surely its most poignant task - to take Jeff to the Harvest for the final time.

Club chairman Paul Nesbitt placed the ashes below one of the iron ingot piles Jeff knew so well.

Club member Don Foster knew Jeff well. He said: "I remember being up in Oban and talking about a graveyard there. The conversation got around to where we'd like our final resting places and he said "I suppose the old Harvest would be as good a place as any."

"Jeff was a long-serving club member, well-known and liked, so naming

our new boat after him just seemed the right thing to do.

"And I think he would have had a laugh about where he's ended up."

Born in Gladstone Street, Middlesbrough, on September 30, 1927, John Francis Pape - his initials, JF, earned him the name Jeff - turned out to be an adventurous sort.

He travelled the world, once returning home over land from Australia by wagon.

A Boro season ticket holder, he built a boat or two, loved snooker and went all over on his beloved AGS motorbike.

But diving was his passion and he even owned his own wreck, the collier Ocean, which he bought in 2000 for £500.

Intrigued by the exploits of famous diver Jacques Cousteau, he was an early member of Teesside 43 British Sub-Aqua Club and even made his own wetsuit.

He continued diving until, aged 81, he made his last dive, exploring the SS Brightman with pal Don Foster in a depth of 26.5 metres for 25 minutes in temperatures of just seven degrees centigrade.

He died, aged 84, in August 2012, but his memory will always live on at the club boathouse, at the South Gare.

And his brother Ken, 67, who has just retired from successful diving business Sub-Aqua Diving Services, says he's sure Jeff would have been happy to end up at the Harvest.

He said: "It was a terrific idea to put him there and lovely of the club to name the boat after him."

