

FOGHORN



Underwater Archaeological Society of British Columbia

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The 2011 Royston Breakwater Project



Story: John Pollack and Rick James

Introduction: A joint UASBC / Institute of Nautical Archaeology expedition visited Royston's hulk breakwater March 19th-21st. Although Rick James' *Ghost Ships of Royston* (2004) had summarized the history of the 14 known ships and the breakwater site, the vessels had never been assessed systematically, nor were data collected or basic shipwreck forms submitted to the Archaeology Branch. With the job half-finished in this world class ship graveyard, we wanted to examine the vessels in the water, prepare the forms, and create a status report on the breakwater as a precursor to future work. Additionally we would bring some advanced survey technology to the site.

History of the Royston Breakwater Ships: The original breakwater was designed to protect the Comox Logging and Railway Company log dump and booming ground on the south-western side of Comox Bay that dates from the

Bow of the 258' Cape Horn windjammer *Melanope* (blt. 1876, Liverpool England). Foreground: the compound engine & boiler of the 1904, 96' steam tug *Qualicum* (blt. in Philadelphia, Penn.) Photo: John Pollack

early 20th century. The earliest ship was scuttled in 1936, and the last, in 1962. Many have partially collapsed due to corrosion and storms on this exposed site, but significant portions are still three dimensional, and visible above water. Sailing ships include an auxiliary schooner, a barkentine, and three Cape Horn windjammers. There are also three frigates, two destroyers, a US Navy deep sea rescue tug, two historic steam tugs, and a Norwegian-built whaler. A number of these vessels have dramatic histories, including famous convoy battles against wolf packs, U-boat sinkings, the rescue of 1000 seamen from the capsizing battleship *HMS Prince of Wales* near Singapore, and multiple evacuation trips from the beaches of Dunkirk. Many of the vessels were stripped or heavily modified before they arrived at Royston.

Eventually their deterioration caused the forest company to truck and dump rock ballast over some of the site, burying several of the vessels such as the *Forest Friend*, *USS Tattnall* and *Laurel Whalen*. The site is now abandoned.

The March 2011 Project: Our base was the Capes Escape, a restored heritage property on 7 acres originally owned by Canada's first woman archaeologist, Katherine Capes, and now operated by the Courtenay Museum. Eight INA and UASBC members joined local historian Rick James on the evening of March 18. Rick started the project with a slide show on the history of both the ships and the site.

The next day a short drive and a 300 m cruise in a donated tin boat placed us on the various wrecks. Most work involved surface snorkels or shallow dives in less than 6 m of water. We'd chosen the March long weekend due to a very low tide and the expectation of reasonable visibility. Three survey teams were formed - John Pollack, Rick James and Geoff Bell; Bill Meekel and Randy Ruygrok; Eric and Bronwen Young, while a fourth team - Jacques Marc and Sean Adams - shot photographs and examined several vessels as well.

Over the next two days each team tried to examine a ship in the morning and a ship in the afternoon. Given the number of ships, time-consuming site plans were forgone in preference for GPS readings at the bow and stern, and an overview assessment of the entire ship with selected measurements. This approach allowed us to cover the 14 ships in three days. Additionally Geoff Bell arranged for the site to be flown with 70mm aerial photography at low tide. The compress-

(Continued on page 4)

President's Report

Eric Young

Ed. Note: Please welcome Eric as the UASBC president. He was elected at the first meeting of the Board of Directors following the AGM. He is also serving as Treasurer.

Hello everyone. This is one of those interesting little tasks, writing an update as President of an organization, that I haven't done for quite a while. As I remember the real trick is to not have them all sound the same.

Whether we like it or not, the UASBC is at a juncture. This is much larger than the person who is at the helm. The forces at work in our culture always open up certain opportunities and narrow down others. To remain 'relevant' one must move with those currents.

One of the first things that you all will notice is that the format for the Foghorn will need to be changing. We aren't certain what the new skin will look like, but discussions are underway about how its size, frequency and format can evolve. These same discussions are concerned with the website, too.

A second initiative is to provide opportunities for members to visit sites that are new to them but have been seen perhaps a dozen times by longer term members. For example, I, myself, have never dove on the *Beaver*! Likewise for most of the 'standard' wrecks in the Salish Sea.

A third stream is to emphasize our educational opportunities. We have, over the last three years, offered more NAS Intro and NAS 1 courses. Just this month (May), we have two new NAS 2

grads. There are a number of teams that are active on their NAS 2 projects. This opens up the possibility for a group of between 8 and 12 people to start in on NAS 3. This could play out over a number of years and be an on-going cycle.

In late March, the UASBC was also advised by the Heritage Branch that our funding request for \$15,000 had been approved. The funds will assist the society with launching its NW Vancouver Island survey, renewing outreach material and other projects. We appreciate the continuing support of the branch in promoting our underwater heritage. Thank you!

I'll try to keep these blurbs short, but bring you the new ideas that are afloat.

Shipwrecks 2011 Report

Shipwrecks! celebrated its 25th anniversary this year, a remarkable achievement as it is one of only a handful of surviving heritage conferences in BC.

This year's theme was the maritime fur trade and Fort Langley National Historic Site was an ideal site. Built by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1827, it contributed to the ending of the maritime trade.

The lectures took place in the theatre, a timber-style building with modern conveniences such as digital projectors. Bruce Watson and Richard Mackie provided a very succinct snapshot of trade from 1740-1858.

Mystery still surrounds the 1812 loss of the American ship *Tonquin* on the west coast and Tom Beasley recalled the ornery Captain Thorne and the story of her dramatic loss somewhere on the west coast - despite decades of searching.

The opportunity to work on the historic steamer *Beaver* attracted many people to the UASBC in the 1980's and 90's and David Stone told the story of the North Pacific's first steamship and Canada's first steam-powered trading post. The

modern maritime fur trade was not missed as author Anthony Dalton recalled several of the Hudson's Bay Company ships that served in the arctic in the 20th century.



Woodward lecturer, Dr. Shelley recalled the challenges of excavating and recovering a fishing vessel from the time of Christ. It was found during unusually low water level in the Sea of Galilee. The excavation became a race against pothunters and rising waters levels. His comments reminded us of the importance of public support for archaeology from reporting discoveries to volunteering at excavations.

The UASBC would like to thank Robyn Woodward for her continuing support of the Woodward lecture.

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David Hill-Turner

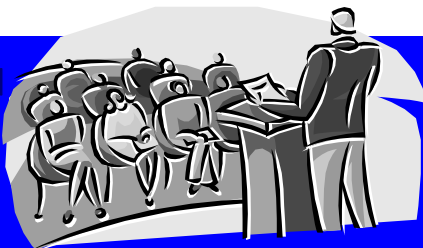
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UNDERWATER EXPLORATION SPEAKERS SERIES



Vancouver Speakers Series

Vancouver Meeting location:

The UASBC meets on the last Wednesday of the month at the Vancouver Maritime Museum, 1905 Ogden Street at

May 25, 2011

Jennifer Ingram

Dive Log of the Sea of Cortez

is an amalgamation of the video from my 4 trips to the Sea of Cortez and still photos contributed by other divers.

The first half is an identification and information section while the last half is for the pure enjoyment of the beauty of the area and the skill of the photogra-



Looking Back



Stern of the *Forest Friend* before she was covered by fill. The bow of the *Riversdale* looms in the background.

Photo: Rick James Collection

Victoria Speakers Series

Victoria Meeting location:

Victoria meetings are the second Wednesday of the month at the Maritime Museum of BC, 28 Bastion Square at 7

Saturday, June 11, 2011

ANNUAL UASBC BBQ & DIVE



UASBC ANNUAL
DIVE & BBQ:

Come and join us for
our annual Dive and
BBQ.

For time and location, be sure to check
www.uasbc.com

Summer Break

The next monthly meeting of the Victoria chapter will be on September 14. Have a great summer!

Introduction to Foreshore and Underwater Archaeology

June 26 - 26, 2011

NAS Intro is a one day course. Lectures include principles of underwater archaeology, site types, law, and basic survey technique. The practical section includes hands-on survey experience in the pool (non divers on the pool deck). This is followed by plotting of the measurements back in the classroom. NAS Intro is a prerequisite for NAS 1. The first session will begin at noon and the course will end at about 8:00-8:30 p.m. Place: Kamloops, B.C. Fee: \$90.00 plus UASBC membership. Deposit: \$50.00. Please contact: Bronwen Young, baeyoung@telus.net



Explorations Summer 2011

Nuchatlitz West Coast Expedition

June 9 - 13, 2011

Sorry. Expedition full.

Expedition to Nuchatlitz on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. The focus of this trip will be to search for and explore 5 different wreck sites along the West Coast from Nootka Island to Kyuquot Sound. The list of vessels that we will search for includes: MV Treis Ierarchai, Northern Light, Westport Straits, Louisiana & Speedway. Thursday and Monday will be travel days to Tahsis and Nuchatlitz and return. We will stay in a rustic Cabin at Nuchatlitz and make day trips to the various wreck sites aboard the MV Notorious. Cost \$600-700 per person. Limit 8 divers. Prerequisite NAS Introduction certificate. Contact Jacques (250) 474-5797 or email: jmarc@shaw.ca.

Search for the S.S. City of Ainsworth

July 8 to 11 - NEW DATES

The expedition is planned for July 8 to 11. The trip objectives will be to find (again) and film the paddle wheeler, map the location of shallow water artifacts and dive other nearby sites (ex. Proctor rail cars) as time permits. The cost will be around \$200 per person covering the vessel and food while on board. There is a max of 6 people on this trip due to vessel size. This is a very interesting trip due to the artifact field and a chance to see a Side Scan Sonar and ROV in operation to relocate the paddle wheeler.

Please advise Bill Meekel (bmeekel@shaw.ca) ASAP for more information or if you are interested.

In the News!



Check out Vancouver Island's A-Channel for a news report on the Royston project.

<http://www.youtube.com/ANewsVanIsland#p/u/2/nD5eWS63SEA>



INA member Sean Adams documents the winch of the *Comet*.

Photo: Jacques Marc.

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sor thudded away behind the house every evening while the teams completed the basic shipwreck forms. To provide some perspective as to the amount of work accomplished, an average 6 site forms are filed annually by the UASBC whereas on this trip we prepared fourteen site forms.

This rate of production was possible due to a slight change in emphasis. In some jurisdictions, the first job in broad regional inventories is to get an overview of the local wrecks, collect enough data to judge their significance, prepare a site form, and get them into a data base with an assigned Borden Number. Without this focussed approach, it can take months or years to complete the basic form, and the inventory lags behind. At Royston we concentrated on the basic forms and site descriptions; the site plans will come later.

When the field work was completed on the third day, a demonstration of principles of total station mapping was made using a modern reflectorless Nikon total station. As complex as these instruments may appear, they are high production surveying instruments and well suited for work on terrestrial and fore-shore sites.

The Future: Since this trip the Archae-

ology Branch has assigned fourteen Borden numbers, and the next step - a status report for the site - is underway. There is a great deal of work remaining at Royston, and complete documentation could absorb a decade of field trips. Of the wrecks we visited, the most significant are the Cape Horn windjammers - the 1876 iron-hulled *Melanope* constructed in Liverpool, and the 1894 steel-hulled *Riversdale* built in Glasgow. Both bows and in one case, a stern of these vessels are intact and will yield construction details with little effort. Also worthy of work is the 1904 steam tug *Qualicum*, built in Philadelphia, and containing an intact boiler, triple expansion engine, shaft and prop. Any of these vessels will yield important technical papers. A return trip is being planned for April 2012.

Acknowledgements: We wish to thank the UASBC and INA participants as well as the Courtenay Museum, the INA for the compressor and total station, the Southern Interior Chapter of the UASBC for the safety gear and Mylar, the UASBC for its financial contribution, and Geoff Bell for arranging both the boat and aerial photography. Most importantly, the site is on private property, and permission was kindly provided by International Forest Products.

First Impressions by Bill Meekel: I had previously only seen a few photos of the site and I was totally unprepared for what the site is really all about! In fact to call it a 'wreck' site is wrong since despite the age and poor condition of the vessels, it is a very significant heritage site. The UASBC and INA consider it one of the most significant maritime heritage sites on the West Coast.

The first day when we arrived at the site the vessels were still shrouded in morning fog. As the sun rose and the fog burned away, they revealed themselves. However only by diving on the ships can you more fully appreciate their original glory. Nearest to shore is the stern of WW 2 frigate *HMCS Prince Rupert* which conducted Allied convoys across the North Atlantic and helped to sink German submarine U-575. The stern is open on one end and you can clearly see the vessel's construction. She was a greyhound hunter. Her light weight construction meant she would be fast and maneuverable to protect the precious convoys. Her bow is partly buried in the breakwater but you can stand on her foredeck where sailors bravely fought during her WW 2 career. An amazing experience!

Next along the breakwater is the majestic bow and bowsprit of *Riversdale*. She was built in 1894 as a steel hulled three masted sailing ship. She looks like she is sitting at anchor waiting for her next job. From the stern side of the bow, you see the design and construction of this early steel hulled ship. While she used wind to move, her hull represents the transition from wood to steel. They knew how to build them as she is 117 years old and has served for many years in the breakwater, her bow still stands proud.

There are 12 other vessels in the breakwater each with a story. All have served long in the breakwater. The Royston heritage ship site is an incredible collection of maritime sailing history. It holds examples of wind powered wooden and steel sailing ships. There is wind, steam, coal and oil powered vessels. There are freighters, tugs and ships of war. All served Canada in times of war and peace. They were spared the cutting torch however they are fading fast as they sink below the waves of the bay. Soon they will be gone. Should we rescue what is left?