

FOGHORN



Underwater Archaeological Society of British Columbia

Vol. 22 No.6

Nov-Dec 2011



courtesy of Bill Meekel

The Kootenay Wreck Tour by, Bill Meekel

In September 2011, eight UASBC members made a visit to the Kootenays to visit some of the wrecks in the area. The first site visited were the Silverton Box Cars which is a great shore dive at Silverton. There are four rail cars remaining which went into the lake from a railcar transfer barge during a storm. One of the cars was reported to be carrying silver ingots. These were recovered later by hard hat divers.

The second site we visited was the Railcar Transfer Barge located on the west shore of Slocan Lake across from Silverton. The barge is a good example of an eight rail car transfer barge, used by the CPR to move materials such as

concentrates from the mines around the lake before the railway was installed. The barge is 197' long x 33' wide x 8' deep and is totally constructed from wood.

Even though the bow is beached on shore there is a lot to see underwater, such as the diesel engine driven compressor still fastened to the deck and the internal construction of the barge. We also had a memorial at the site for JC Schweizer who was an active UASBC member who passed away recently. A plaque was placed underwater near the Barge in memory of JC.

We next moved to Nelson to visit the Steam Tug Ymir, located on the Nelson

waterfront. The Ymir was made of wood and is 77' long x 16' wide x 6' deep. It was built and launched at Nelson in 1899 and was used to move Transfer barges around. The super structure is gone but the hull, deck planking and boiler are still in place. Directly off the bow of the Ymir is a fifteen car Railway Transfer barge in about 50' of water. This is a shore dive and the fact that most of the decking is gone means that the internal structure of the barge can be seen. This dive site also happens to be the location of the CPR shipways on Kootenay Lake. The CPR fleet of stern-wheelers, tugs and Rail barge would have been built and maintained at this location in the late 1800's up to 1930.

Our next site to visit was the Steam Tug Elco II located in the Columbia River above Castlegar. The Elco II was 76' long x 15' wide x 7' deep. It was built by the Edgewood Lumber Co in 1924 to move log booms on the Arrow Lakes to their sawmill. The vessel is a shore dive and is upside down on the bottom. The superstructure is gone, but there is a hole in the hull which allows the boiler and engines to be seen. Penetration is not recommended.

The Kootenays are a beautiful area to visit due to the mountains, historic Nelson and the mining communities of Silverton, Sandon and of course the maritime history.

These sites are well documented in the UASBC publication 'Historic Shipwrecks of the West Kootenay District of BC'.

As with all organizations, Time is a critical factor for the UASBC. We have our Past, Present, and Future. Rightly, we are very proud of our Past, but at this point our Present is focusing on our Future. I am quite excited about that future.

The new Logo appeared in September and is proudly displayed on this newsletter. It was also used to validate the NAS passports that have been issued recently, as well as on letters that have gone to government, etc. In August the decision was made to move the Foghorn to PDF format almost exclusively. While there is still provision for printed copies for those individuals that do not have email, the Society feels that electronic transfer, availability of information is the wave of the present. We will be exploring PDF format for our publications, reports and annual reports.

Don't forget the Past. At the October 19th Skype call the Executive confirmed Tom Beasley as the Lower Mainland Director. Tom is a long time member and former President of the Society. Tom has planned a fairly aggressive schedule of events for the Vancouver area over the next ten months. Keep on the lookout for the notices. The speakers and events sound exciting and innovative.

The Society is reprinting "Ghost Ships of Royston" this fall. It should be available in November at a cost of \$15. The member's price will be \$13. Since Black Cat Graphics has been key in making this happen, we have managed to keep some other past stalwarts, David and Jennifer Stone, involved.

Building for the future, the education wing of the Society has produced 13 new NAS 1 graduates. Four keen students attended in Victoria in

September and nine more in Vancouver at SFU in October.

Another new face in the Society is Keith Bossons. Keith is wearing a few different hats. He was one of the SFU NAS students and has taken on the Treasurer's position on the Executive. Keith with his boundless enthusiasm has also agreed to help Tom in the Lower Mainland by organizing the explorations/dive schedule.

Since we are moving on all fronts, the Victoria chapter is planning Shipwrecks for the Saturday, March 31st, 2012. The theme for the conference is "Polar Exploration". The provisional speaker list is great. Definitely plan to be in Victoria for this one.

There isn't any snow outside the window, yet, but this will be the last chance to wish you all a Happy Holiday season to close 2011!

Mine Myths and Cement Barges

by, Matt Bossons

After a long wait, our dive boat pulled away from the dock in Deep Cove around 10am. Joel Schurman, Glenn Farquhar, Mike Juren, Randy Roy, Tim Novak, Keith Bossons and I were diving on behalf of the UASBC to explore two sites located up Indian Arm.

Our first dive site was located only a short boat-ride from the dock. When the boat pulled up along-side a steep cliff face our team got a first glimpse at a large, door-like opening in the stone wall. It has been rumoured the hole is an entrance to a long abandoned gold mine; other rumors insist the mine links up with the Britannia Mine. None of us knew for sure whether any of these myths hold water, but it made for interesting conversation.

We entered the water in small groups and descended along an underwater wall to roughly 60'. Everyone began

exploring the area in search of mining artefacts that had been brought to the UASBC's attention by a number of sources. The teams exploring the wall between 50'-70' found little evidence of mining equipment, but after ascending up the wall to a large open slope at 30' divers began to locate artefacts.

At around 20', stacks of what could have been mining totes or mining rail-car buckets were located. The boxes appeared to be made of concrete, due to their excellent, smooth condition with no obvious signs of erosion. It was pointed out in an email from Mr. Novak that the surface of these totes, "appeared smoother than one would expect with concrete and were perhaps aluminum or steel." According to the email, the thickness of the walls of the boxes appeared to be approximately 1"-1.25". I was not lucky enough to be part of the team that

found these artifacts, but I did find a rusted gear of industrial size, although its origins are debatable.

The next site we planned to explore was a sunken barge, known as the EVC0.11. It was originally owned by Evans-Coleman-Evans Ltd and it was operated as a cement hopper barge until it sank in Bedwell Bay in the 1980s. We jumped back into the cold sea water in our original groups and descended near the wreck. When I reached the ocean floor, at roughly 90', I was immediately shocked at just how dark it was. Pitch black engulfed everything, in every direction, and silt particles suspended in the water made visibility max-out at a few feet. I turned on my light and it barely penetrated 5' in front of me – finding this barge was going to be interesting.

Glen, Keith and I hovered just above

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Underwater Explorers Speakers Series

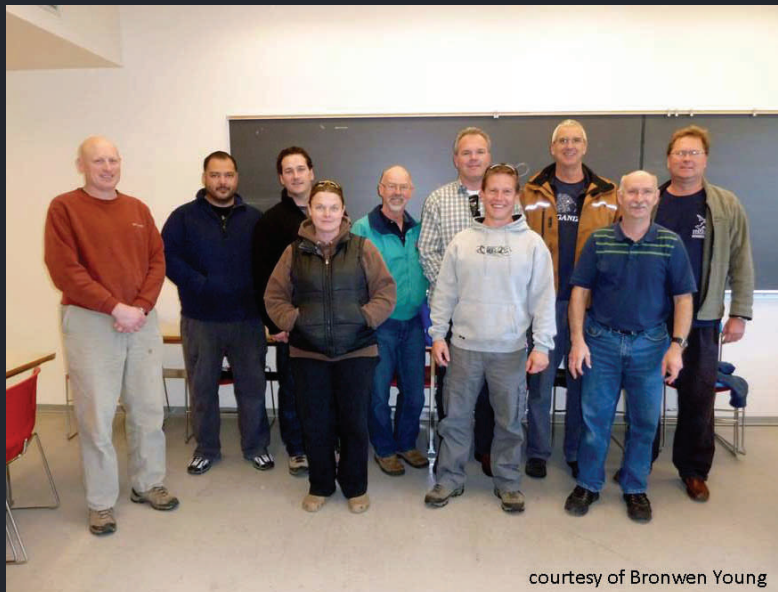
Lower Mainland - Join the UASBC in Vancouver to hear about underwater explorations from around the province and the world! Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm at the Vancouver Maritime Museum, 1905 Ogden Avenue in Vancouver. Everyone is welcome and there is no cost.

For more information about the speakers, topics, or UASBC meetings visit our website: <http://www.uasbc.com/vancouversspeakersseries.cfm>

Victoria - Or, join the UASBC on Vancouver Island to hear about underwater explorations from around the province and the world. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month, at 7:00pm in the Maritime Museum of BC in Bastion Square, Victoria. Everyone is welcome and there is no cost.

For more information about the speakers, topics, or UASBC meetings visit our website: <http://www.uasbc.com/victoriaspeakersseries.cfm>

Congratulations to the latest group of NAS 1 graduates! The UASBC has just completed teaching a combination NAS Introductory and level 1 course in Vancouver. It was presented on the evening of October 14, followed by a full day on the fifteenth until mid afternoon on the sixteenth. The location was in a classroom at Simon Fraser University and at the conveniently located pool close by. For the first time, the open water segment took place down the hill at Barnet Marine Park. Although very close by and therefore a time-saver, the park presented its challenges in terms of visibility and slope. The students proved to be a capable and enthusiastic group.



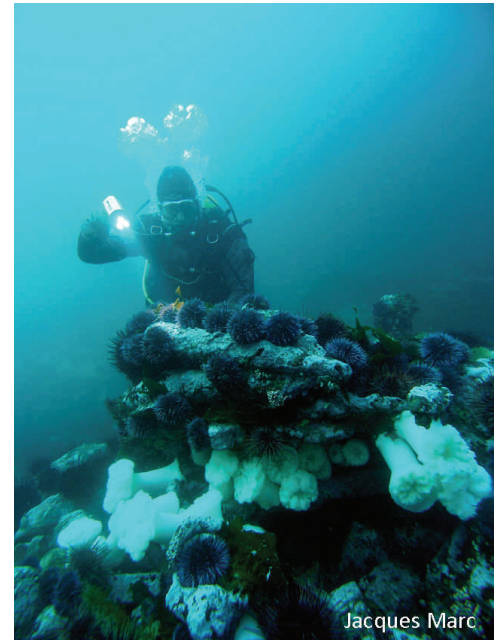
courtesy of Bronwen Young

L-R back row: Keith Bossons, Juan Carlos Bolomey, Ray LeFrense, Bob Simpson, Adam Taylor, Ray Mulder, Chris Harvey-Clark. L-R front row: Sarah Park, Sean Adams.

The UASBC would also like to offer congratulations to: John Campbell, Randy Park, Doug Maynard and Greg Nuttall for their completion of NAS 1. The course was held in Victoria on September 17 and 18 and organized by our senior tutor, Jacques Marc. It is through course participation that we are able to train new people with the skills necessary to do the search and survey work that is our mandate. All the best to all the NAS graduates and we hope to see you on upcoming projects!

You Win Some & You Lose Some

by, Jacques Marc



October 2 dawned with a relatively clear sky and no wind, perfect for our Race Rocks trip. Everyone arrived at the Ogden Point Dive Center on schedule at 7:45am keen to go diving. At 8:15am there was still no sign of Erin Bradley, charter operator. Under normal circumstances if someone is a bit late for a dive, you would say what the heck. Unfortunately, when you dive at Race Rocks the current doesn't wait. Alas, at 8:20am as if on queue Erin pulled into the shop parking lot with a big grin on his face. "Had you worried did I" he quipped. It seems he had to stop and pick up some boat gas, otherwise we weren't going anywhere.

Everyone piled their gear into the Juan de Fuca Warrior in short. There were seven of us in total: Jiri Kotler, Paul Spencer, Bob Simpson, Doug Maynard, Rob Field, Kim Berg and yours truly. Minutes later we were bouncing over the water, destination Race Rocks mystery wreck. The mystery wreck was discovered October 9, 1993 by diver Richard Smith. The site is comprised of a large pile of yellow fire bricks, five small iron anchors, several barrel shaped clumps of lime, a stern-post gudgeon, a few brass pins, and

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Win Some (continued)

countless shards of glass and china. As luck would have it there was a huge kelp forest in front of and on top of the wreck. Given that Race Rocks is a protected area, we couldn't motor our way to the wreck as this would chew up a lot of kelp. Consequently, we had to approach the wreck from the north. This proved to be a problem as we couldn't put divers directly on the wreck. As a result some people went right and some went left. Those who went right enjoyed a very pretty dive. Those who went left ultimately found the wreck and spent time exploring the mountain of bricks, looking for anything new that might help date the wreck or shed light on its origins. Unfortunately we didn't come across anything new.

What we know based on two previous finds (black glass which predates 1870 & a Weston & Weshalls Salt Jar which

dates 1845-1880) is that the wreck is early. There is speculation that the site could represent some of the contents of the Nanette which wrecked on the rock in 1860. It has been a while since I have been afflicted by Murphy. While taking my tank off I swung around and knocked my underwater camera off the seat. It hit the deck hard and severely cracked the Plexiglas housing. Ouch!

For our second dive, I suggested that we go and try to relocate the Twenty First of May wreck, a 160' Chilean barque lost off Rocky Point on December 10, 1881. The location information we had consisted of several compass bearings to key shore features. Erin jockeyed the boat around until I had all the bearings lined up. We dropped the anchor and began searching. We found the wreck, inshore of the boat position, about half way through the dive. The wreck lies on a sandy patch in amongst a rocky bottom. Quite a bit

of wood remains buried in the sand. Protruding up here and there are brass pins and copper hull sheathing. We also found a few iron artefacts of undetermined function. Near the end of the dive, eagle eyed Paul Spencer found a huge bullet on the site. Made of iron it is heavily concreted and measured approximately 1' X 5"-6" in diameter. The bullet doesn't appear to be from the wreck, but it is most definitely old. Perhaps the Fort Rod Hill Guns used the wreck for target practice at the turn of the century? I had to borrow Rob Fields camera to get a couple photographs.

As the boat was pulling away from the dive site I suddenly realized I had left my knife on the bullet when I had used it for scale in a photograph. Murphy struck again! Back at Ogden Point Dive Centre we packed our gear and everyone headed for a coffee. It had been a great day, looking on the bright side.

Barges (continued)

the bottom. Once our lights were on and our compasses were set for north, we began to move in the direction of the barge. Our advance was slow, like battered soldiers on the front line; we crept along the ocean bottom scanning ahead for any sign of our sunken destination. It was not until we were literally underneath the bow of the barge that we realized we had found our site. The metal of the vessel was rusted and orange with age. It was sitting upside down with its hull facing the world above, forgotten by most; it lies still like a lifeless body. Not everything about this barge was dead, eels and lingcod have come to call this place home, and their abundance proved the vessel still has a use, even at 90' underwater.

Both dives proved interesting and offered amazing glimpses at the underwater world of Indian Arm. Our UASBC group had a good time and look forward to getting back in the water.

Join the Next Adventure

To find out more about upcoming UASBC Explorations, Trips, Courses, and Events visit us online at:

www.UASBC.com

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Foghorn (ISSN 1198-7081) is published six times annually by the Underwater Archaeological Society of British Columbia (UASBC), c/o the Vancouver Maritime Museum, 1905 Ogden Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6J 1A3 www.UASBC.com. The UASBC is a group of volunteer avocational and professional underwater archaeologists who conserve, preserve, and protect the maritime heritage lying beneath BC's coastal and inland waters.

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