

# FOGHORN



UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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## Nuchatlitz Expedition

by: Jiri Kotler



See full photo spread on page 7

During June 7 to 11, 2012, the UASBC once again embarked on an exploration expedition to the west coast of Vancouver Island. The area of interest was in Nuchatlitz Provincial Park (NPP) and in Esperanza Inlet. This was a follow up effort on the one in 2011 that left a number of questions unanswered. The initial goals of the expedition were as follows:

- Begin a survey of the wreck of Treis Ierarchai (the Greek name likely translates into English as 'Three Hierarchs'), a freighter, off Ferrer Point (1969);
- Search for wrecks of Kailua (aux schooner) and King David (iron hulled bark) off Bajo Reef (1904 and 1905 respectively);
- Search for the wreck of Northern Light (schooner) off NPP (1892);
- Re- visit Mystery Wreck off Ensanada Island (part of NPP).

After weeks of planning a team of six Society divers met at Tahtsa Dive Charters (TDC) in Tahsis. The team consisted of Jacques Marc (expedition leader), Jiri Kotler, Holger Heitland, Bob Simpson, Keith

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## Swordfish and Barnard Castle Visits

By Ewan Anderson

Ideal conditions were forecast for six UASBC divers on May 13, 2012: sunny, warm and calm with maximum currents of under 1 knot predicted for Race Passage. The day's roll call completed, we boarded the Juan de Fuca Warrior and headed for South Bedford Rock in

Becher Bay and the remains of the Swordfish.

The iron sailing ship Swordfish was launched by Vernon & Son in November in 1864 at Liverpool, England. She was 177.1 feet long, with a beam of 28.6 feet and draft of 19.1 feet (725 gross tons). She was on her way from San Francisco to load lumber at Hasting's Mill in Burrard Inlet when she struck South Bedford Rock, stern-first, in the wee hours on November 6, 1877. The crew of the Swordfish took to the ship's boats and were eventually picked up and taken to Victoria and Esquimalt. The vessel clung to the rock, but the damage to the hull was so severe that

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# REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT *by: Eric Young*

We are into our 'On' season. Finally there is sunshine, not quite as much weather and people have come back from where ever they hide from winter. But is that the case?

The Nuchalitz Expedition was completed in early June. One day the weather was fine. The next day there was a howling wind that grounded everything. The next day there were three meter seas and the concurrent iffy stomachs. On the way home the boat's motor conked out [it seems the fuel dock was dipping into the bottom of their tank, with way too much water down there, and then the starter motor seized].

So what is the point. It really doesn't matter what anyone is trying to do these days, there is always going to be 'resistance', 'friction', 'obstacles', call it whatever you like, that will increase the difficulty of the task. The real question is, "What are you going to do about it?" I am reminded of a line that I think came from The Fringe: "... let's get down to some serious muddling through!"

The entire UASBC seems to always have more than its fair share of stuff to muddle through. I am happy to report that we had a good meeting with representatives from Archaeology and Heritage Branches at the beginning of April. Heritage related that it could no longer transfer funds to the UASBC. Archaeology said that it would step in and ask for money for us. That we should request a reasonable amount because the route they were going to have to take wouldn't look right if the amount was too small. We put together a reasonable funding proposal. We have heard back, verbally, that they can come up with about a third of our request. That's nice ... we'll muddle onwards.

I am also reminded of a conversation I had with some 'snow birds' who have a yacht in the Sea of Cortez. They related that rather than the normal mild weather in winter and then warming up to 30° or so in June, the weather was one cold front after another and then it warmed up to 40°. The west coast of Mexico has already had three named storms this year! All of this going on while we have the wettest June on record.

The world has approximately twice as many people in it as it did when most of the Baby Boomers were growing up [certainly BC has doubled its population]. I believe that the percentages of types of people are basically the same as they were 50 years ago, there are just twice as many of each type. Proportions are the same, but the raw numbers have double: twice the population in BC means there are twice as many goof balls.

When the numbers double the thing that increases exponentially is the complexity. The number and type of interactions is way up. This seems to offer explanation for why it is harder to gather people in to take part in any activity. I am not sure how this relates to the environment, but the impact is there and quite clear. Climates are always changing, but the complexity of human action/interaction must be having an effect on the variability of the climate/weather.

The new norm is complexity and variability. We all have to live with it. When I figure out a better strategy than muddling through, I'll let you know.

## Nuchatlitz Expedition *(continued)*

Bossons and Bill Meekel. At TDC the team was welcomed and briefed by Jude and Scott Schooner. After a short delay due to minor repairs on MV Notorious – our dive boat – we schlepped a mountain of equipment and supplies down the steep dock ramp (it of course had to be low tide!), including a compressor brought over from Vancouver by Keith and Bill, and loaded them into the boat. Exhausted but happy we departed Tahsis around 1700 with Scott at the helm of the MV Notorious. Our destination was Sea Watch Cabin located at NPP and owned by Brian Witt and Shannon Bailey. The boat's engine began to sputter a short distance down the inlet, but after refueling at Esperanza Mission things improved and nerves calmed down. We arrived at the Seawatch Cabin's floating dock in the middle of the harbor at 19:30. Using Brian's aluminum cuddy and our Zodiac we transferred supplies, the compressor and non-diving stuff to the Cabin (Brian had moved to the guest house for his own peace and quiet). There was no dock and both boats had to be beached high to make sure that rubber boots brought for that purpose by all were 'high' enough. Then we settled down for our first dinner of pizza a la Jacques.

### ***8 June 2012 – diving day #1***

MV Notorious and the team departed the floating dock at ~ 08:30 and headed via Gillam Channel towards Ferrer Point. The weather was relatively calm but the seas were lumpy – about 3-ft to 5-ft swell. It was thus not long before most of us started to feel the effects of the boat's motion. With brave determination we continued on and by 10:00 Jacques marked the likely position of Treis Ierarchai's stern at a depth of about 65 feet. Given the sea conditions the marker was too close to the breakers for comfort so Scott manoeuvred the boat farther away from the rocks while everybody got ready. Then in quick succession the buddy pairs of Bob and Jiri, Keith and Bill, and Jacques and Holger dove in. The idea was to give everybody a chance to familiarize themselves with the wreck. An update of the initial 1993 wreckage layout would then be carried out during a second dive. Everybody saw some of a number of large remaining pieces (e.g. a stern, an engine, heat exchangers, a boiler, hull plating etc.). The surge was strong and could be felt as far down as 40 feet (plus).

In due course Scott managed to safely pick up everybody from water and quickly headed out into the open. The wreck had been partly salvaged in early 1970's. Large chunks of the hull had been dragged overland to Tongue Point and left there on the beach. The plan was to inspect those pieces and return in the afternoon to the site for a second dive. While at the beach we measured some of the wreck pieces to estimate how much of the wreck had been salvaged and how much of the 600-ft plus wreck may still be under water.

After lunch we again headed out towards the dive site. By this time however the wind picked up causing cross waves over the swell. Given our morning collective indisposition we decided to call it a day and returned to the harbor. We transferred the empty tanks to shore, took turns running the compressor and settled down for our second dinner of fajitas a la Jacques.

### ***9 June 2012 – diving day #2***

We departed the harbor by 08:20 and headed out into Gillam Channel. It became clear very early on that diving anywhere on the outside would be not safe due to sea conditions. The swell and cross waves were greater than 3 meters (somewhat higher than the day before) so the decision was made to visit Queen Cove and Little Espinosa Inlet. The new plan was to dive the 'Garden' at the Inlet's entrance and then carry out a search in Nuchatlitz Harbor. On the way to the Inlet we stopped at Queen Cove to follow up on rumors that pieces of Treis Ierarchai may also be there. At the same time we inspected remnants of an old fish salting plant (saltery) with a wooden fishing boat within its ruins. Along the Cove shores we did not find, to our disappointment, anything that would resemble pieces of a freighter.

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## Swordfish and Barnard Castle Visits *(continued)*

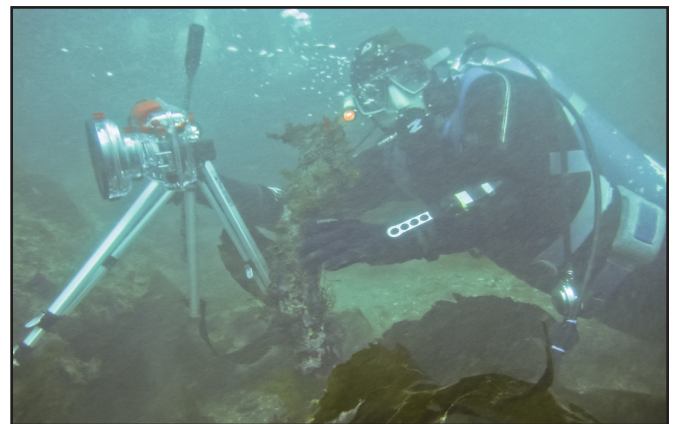


she was eventually declared a total loss. Salvage steamers recovered everything possible shortly after the wrecking.

Today's UASBC site visit was one of many Society visits over the last 25 years, so the site is familiar, especially to our dive leader, Jacques Marc. However, the wreckage has not been mapped and as we approached South Bedford Rock we noted that the coordinates for the wreck lay a few hundred metres south of the wreck's actual position. Jacques assigned each dive buddy team to mark sections of the wreck with floats, so that the Warrior's skipper, Lyle, could get accurate GPS fixes. Descending from the boat a few metres off the southeast side of the Rock, I quickly understood what makes mapping Swordfish so difficult: a thick forest of kelp and some strong, but inconsistent currents.

The wreckage stretches from an anchor and two mast tubes in shallow water next to the Rock, main sections of hull-plating across a large ledge in about 12 m of water and hatch combings and other debris on several small sloping ledges down to at least 30 m. Jacques also pointed out that a second cannon can be found at this site – this cannon and the one recovered by Pearson College are much older than the Swordfish and are thought to have been carried as ballast. Once in the water, it took me a few minutes to get my bearings and after fighting my way out of the kelp, I plunged over the edge of the wall to inspect several small sloping ledges between 20 and 35 m. Not seeing much at these depths and realising that I'd become separated from my buddy, I worked my way back up to the main debris field. A large section of hull plate lies across the uneven main ledge, making a small cave, which shelters plenty of marine life, but little in the way of interesting artifacts. Further exploration to the west and a little shallower brought me into a persistent, surging current. Realising my time on the Swordfish

was over, I let it fly me away from the wreckage and out past the west end of the Rock, where I was picked up. It turned out that the current kept everyone busy – no floats were launched and little in the way of new information was gathered on this trip. After a brief (but very worthwhile) dive through the "tunnel" at Swordfish Island near Pedder Bay, we arrived at Bentick Island and the wreck of the Barnard Castle. The Castle was a collier, launched in 1878 at Sunderland, England. While carrying coal from Nanaimo, she struck Rosedale Reef (Race Rocks) early in the morning on November 20, 1882. Unable to make it back to Esquimalt, she was beached in Pilot Bay on Bentick Island. Salvage began the next day and continued for several years before the Barnard Castle broke up and disappeared. We dropped a mark on the wreck's coordinates, but experienced hands noted that the mark appeared to float south of the position indicated by familiar marks on shore. It wasn't until Jacques and Holger were underwater that our skipper saw the line unspooling from the UASBC float. Those two had a long underwater swim, while the rest of us followed their bubbles, enjoying a leisurely surface paddle to directly above the Barnard Castle! Despite over a century exposed to the destructive applications natural and man-made forces, a lot remains of the wreck and more or less in the same place. The current was strong, but following in the lee of large sections of hull, bulkheads and boilers we had a fairly easy swim. A 30-minute dive (at 10 – 12 m) was just enough time to mentally map most of the features appearing on the 1990 site map and explore some of the smaller openings. At the stern we met Holger posing for Jacques's camera by some steering gear and the Castle's spare wheel. The UASBC plaque is also located near here – the next visitors should bring a scrubbing pad to clear the film of algae!



## Trip Report: Commodore Straits *by: Will Baxter*

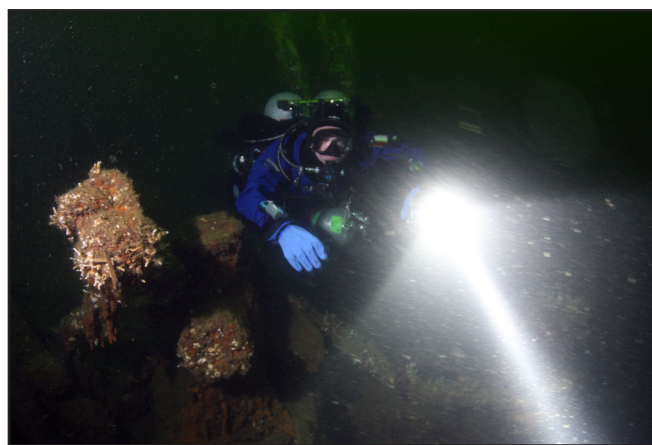
On a sunny warm weekend in March, a small boat full of Canadians, two Texans, and one Seattleite departed on a research trip to relocate the wreck of the Commodore Straits. The Commodore was a steam tug built in 1907 in Vancouver to move barges of logs up and down the British Columbian coast. She was 36 meters long, 8 meters wide, and had a draft of 4 meters. Not a small ship by any means, especially in 1907. In 1942 the tug was sold by it's original owners, The British Columbia Mills Timber and Trading Company, to the Straits Towing and Salvage Company. Seven years after the sale her name was changed to Commodore Straits. In December of 1955 she was sent out on duty to pick up a tow of logs. During the motor to the tow, she struck Fraser Rock and began sinking by the stern, there were 10 crew on board. After a successful rescue attempt of all 10 crew, the ship sank.

The water was glassy and spirits high. Upon arriving to the coordinates given, the first team was sent in with scooters and decompression bottles. Immediately upon descent to 36 msw the team, which consisted of Jono Gormick and Will Baxter, found the wreck. They sent up a signal marker to tell the boat that they had found the wreck. Jono and Will then scootered around the wreck taking note of the angle and depth that the wreckage extended to, roughly 45 msw. The ship had sunk upon a pinnacle and then fell upside down in it's final resting place. The hull of the ship had caved in and you could see inside the hold. There seemed not to be much there. The deeper part of the wreck consisted of the steel boiler housing and steel steam stack that were being taken over by lingcod and anemones. The boiler housing had to have been 6 meters tall and wide and towered over the rest of the wreck. It was easily the most imposing feature of the wreck. Just the bolts alone were 4 inches across!

After 25 minutes on the wreck Jono and Will began their ascent. During their decompression stops they noticed the second team of Laurynn, Kees, and Chris descending to survey the wreck. When both teams had surfaced they exchanged notes and agreed to comeback and take video and photos of the wreck the next day. In the mean time, Jono, Will, and Kees decided to do a different kind of exploration dive on a slope in 45 msw. It turned out to be nothing but sand and a few sea stars. That night the team celebrated their find with food, drinks, and hot tubbing at the hotel.

The next morning brought the team, with one additional member, local GUE Instructor Alan Johnson, back to the wreck to photograph, video, and survey the deterioration and size of the ship. However, Mother Nature was not so kind this day. The wind had picked up and the temperature had dropped. While the sun was still shining, it was not nearly

as pleasant as the day before. Gear was loaded upon the dive vessel and the line was cast off. Motoring to the sight was not as easy as before. The waves, over 1 meter high, were making the dive boat an uncomfortable place for the divers. Tossing about, Jono and Alan struggled to get their gear on and get in the water. When they were finally in the water, the wind had pushed the boat half a kilometer from the intended splash site! Luckily they had scooters and made their way down the descent line. All was squared away for the next team to go in. They, Chris and Will, quickly got in their gear with the help of Laurynn and Kees and, with the boat in position, jumped in the



water and descended. Down they went to the mid-point of the ship and immediately photos were being taken. Unfortunately, the camera was being finicky and only got off a few good shots before Chris decided to stow it and just enjoy the ship. Laurynn and Kees, the last team in the water, shot video of the entire dive and documented the wreck quite well.

As all three teams resurfaced and gathered on the boat, it was decided that, due to the weather, it was time to call it a day. The boat motored back to the dock and the gear was unloaded.

With five dives and over two hours on the wreck of the Commodore Straits, the team had come back with photos, video, and survey data that no one had ever done. It was a very successful trip and a fun one. I can only imagine what wreck the UASBC will have us explore next!



## Nuchatlitz Expedition *(continued)*

At Little Espinosa Inlet we waited for an ebb tide and then dove a beautiful rock wall – the ‘Garden’ – covered with sea life of all kinds. There was a plenty of water and some of us dropped down to 90 feet while the ebb carried us towards the Inlet’s entrance. The turning tide prevented us from passing through it and made it easy for Scott to pick up everybody. The return trip to Nuchatlitz Harbor across Gillam Channel was quite bouncy since the wind had not abated and we could clearly see the white ‘teeth’ of breakers on the outlying islets. Our second dive of the day was more in line with the expedition’s goals. At the harbor entrance we dived a search pattern just west of an abandoned fueling station and towards a spar buoy M46. Records indicated that wreckage of either a barge or of a schooner may be in that area. Jiri and Bob went first, followed by Bill and Keith, with Jacques and Holger going in last. The latter pair discovered what appeared to be a part (perhaps a side) of an old barge, only a couple hundred feet from the buoy. A few initial measurements were taken and GPS coordinates were recorded. And at that point everybody was glad to be heading back to our floating dock. There we repeated our routine with empty tanks transfer, airing out of dry suits and compressor operation. Then we settled for our third dinner of spaghetti a la Jacques.

### ***10 June 2012 – diving day #3***

On the last day of diving we again got away from the dock shortly after 8:00 destination Ferrer Point. Reaching the entrance of Gillam Channel things looked promising. The seas had dropped down to about 1.5 meters. Everybody seemed to have gotten their ‘sea legs’ and tried valiantly to suppress memories of the earlier trip. However, about a mile off Ferrer the wind began to pick up and we decided that in the prevailing conditions it would not be safe to pick up the divers, so turned around (for the second time) and headed back to Nuchatlitz.

We decided to explore the N-E shore of the westernmost island of the Nuchatlitz where the seas were somewhat calmer. Scott manoeuvred the boat into a sheltered bay where we all geared up. Once outside the bay and on Scott’s cue the buddy pairs quickly dived in. After swimming through numerous gullies and kelp fields everybody eventually found the sandy bottom at about 80 feet. We followed a very distinct boundary between the shore rocks and the sandy bottom in N-E direction, while keeping our eyes peeled for any evidence of underwater history. However, none was found and we headed into the harbor for lunch.

For our second dive we split the group. Holger, Jacques, Keith and Bill headed for remnants of the barge found the

previous day to gather further data. Jiri and Bob dove in front of an abandoned First Nation settlement to examine remnants of a dock said to have been initially anchored by two old cannons. The bottom was found to be muddy and strewn with a plenty of modern junk often associated with docks. However if cannons had indeed been used for that purpose they were long buried deep in the muck. Later on the group also examined the area next to the old fueling dock but it was found completely devoid of any materials or man-made objects. That was somewhat puzzling given how busy the area must have once been!

Back in the harbour we left most of the dive gear on board and headed ashore for our last dinner. This time we were joined by Brian and everybody lauded Jacques for our gourmet meal of roasted ham, sweet potatoes and veggies!

### ***11 June 2012***

We cleared our stuff from the Cabin in early morning. The plan was to return to Tahsis as fast as possible since Keith and Bill wished to catch the 17:45 ferry from Nanaimo back to Vancouver. We departed the dock by 07:30 but did not travel too far. The boat engine quit by the time we got to Rosa Island. We anchored while attempts were made to fix the problem. After a couple of hours the efforts were abandoned and we towed MV Notorious back to the floating dock with our Zodiak. Brian was kind enough to take Bill and Keith (and their gear) to Tahsis with his aluminum cuddy first. The rest of us waited for a water taxi from Esperanza Mission that Scott was able to contact and arrange for our return to Tahsis. For the nimble taxi boat it was a relatively fast trip and after reloading our cars we departed TDC by 1300. Our expedition once again confirmed that the best laid plans for west coast diving are still subject to the vagaries of weather. We were not able to accomplish the initial plan but were able to add to the understanding of underwater history of the area nevertheless.

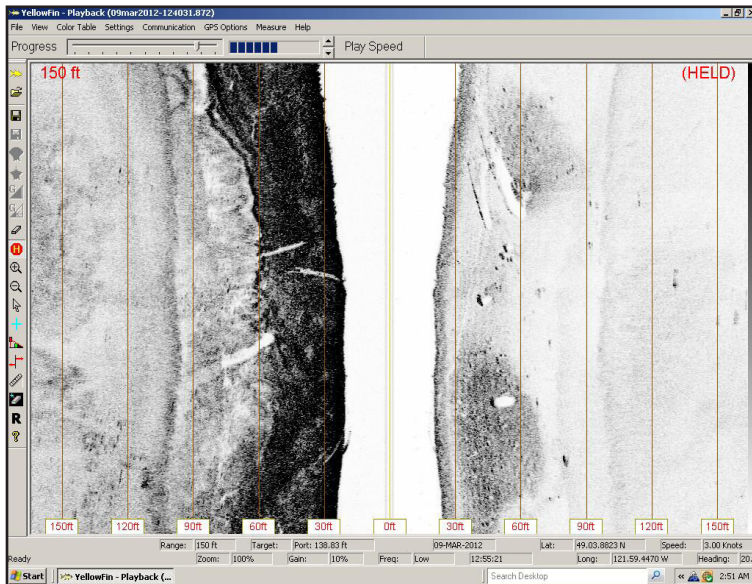
# Cultus Lake - a day of side-scanning by: John Campbell

A few weeks ago I set off on my first side scanning adventure with Jacques Marc, Keith Bossons and Mike Clement. Mike was kind enough to lend us his equipment and expertise; and Keith was gracious in allowing us to use his boat for the expedition.

We started by setting off from the dock to calibrate the sonar. It was a good day to be on Cultus Lake, the water was calm and there wasn't too much traffic. Soon we had the necessary calibration done.

We took several passes by the area known for the Bailey bridge panels and boats just to see what they looked like and to get a proper GPS location on them. We crossed the lake towards the opposite side where the military training area use to be. Along the route we saw some interesting man made targets on the bottom in approximately 130-140ffw to dive at a later time.

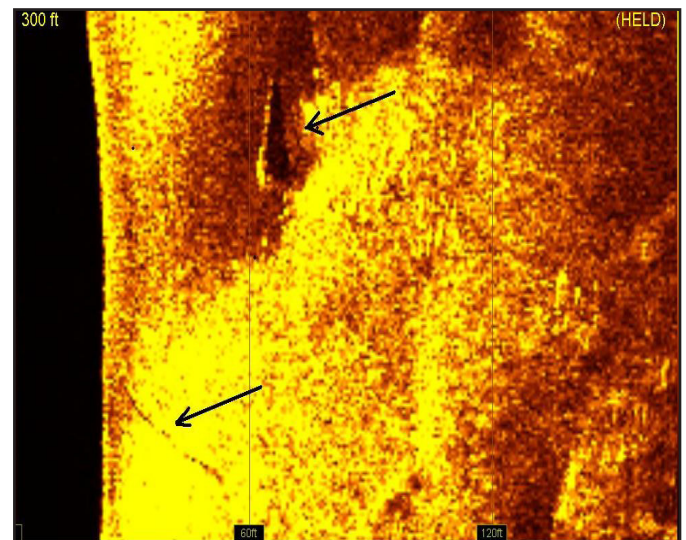
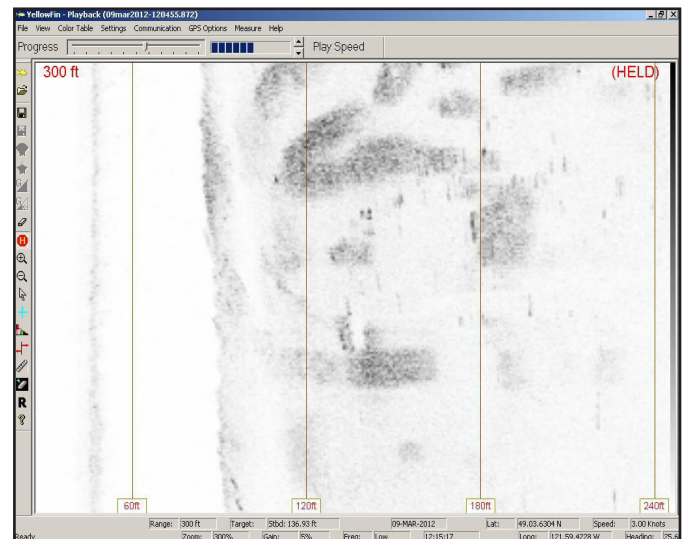
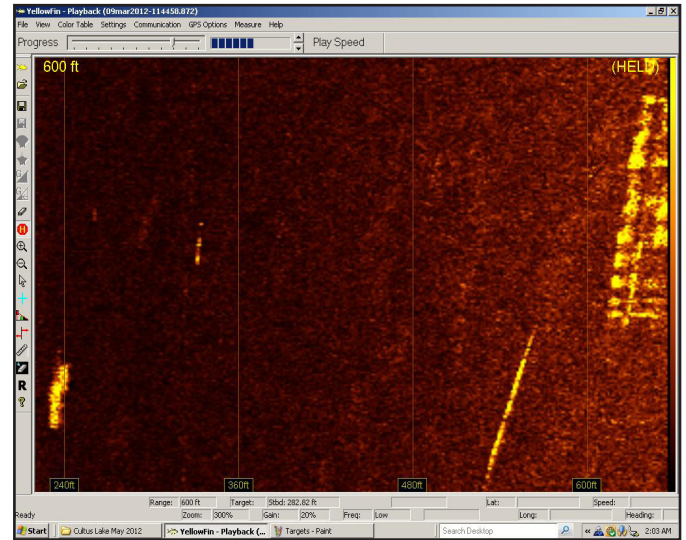
We got to the other side of the lake and paralleled the shoreline in anticipation of finding something. Luck would not be on our side this day; we found some interesting tar-



gets but nothing that screamed come look at me NOW! So much for that tank or military jeep I was hoping to locate.

We moved over to the other side of the lake again and went to map the old Austin that was close to shore. Unfortunately the tow fish got snagged on a piece of discarded nylon ghost line attached to a mooring and damaged the fibre optic cable. We were done for the day.

It was a great learning experience and certainly a lot more work than I had ever anticipated. I hope to again be involved in such operations as I think it is important that we use the technologies at our disposal and search out some new sites to explore. There are many more mysteries yet to be discovered.





## Message from the editor *by: Matthew Bossons*

First off, I would like to express my apologies for this issue of the Foghorn being a little behind schedule - and slightly rushed.

I agreed to take on this project roughly a month ago after arriving back from a month long trip to Southeast Asia. Between sleeping off jetlag, powering my way through three summer jobs and still trying to find time to see friends and my girlfriend this project was a real handfull.

That all said, I'm really looking forward to having some fun with the Foghorn and taking the publication to new places. I just recently recieved my diploma in journalism and would like to take much of the information I have learnt over the past two years and put it to good use making the Foghorn an even more enjoyable read.

If anyone within the UASBC has any suggestions, concerns or questions please feel free to contact me at [bossonsmatthew@gmail.com](mailto:bossonsmatthew@gmail.com).

Remember this publication relies on it's readers to fill it pages with stories, photos and reports - so please keep them coming! I look forward to getting to know many new faces throughout the organization during my time as editor.



*Taken on the Nachatlitz expedition by Keith Bossons.*

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