

An Experience of a Lifetime Exploring the Wreck of SS Coast Trader Remotely

written by,
Jacques Marc
Explorations Director



Coast Trader at San Francisco 1937.

Image Courtesy San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park A01.37.080.

On June 2nd I had the opportunity to participate remotely on an Oceans Exploration Trust ROV dive on the wreck of the SS Coast Trader. The dive was sponsored by NOAA, to investigate and identify this wreck and to determine if there is a threat from bunker C fuel still contained in its fuel tanks. Participation was by signing

in to the nautiluslive.org web page for video feed and the Nautilus cruise science chat room to communicate. The role of the Science Chat is to facilitate communication between scientists on board Nautilus and Scientists Ashore during dives. Very cool to say the least! I sat in my den in front of my computer and was able to view

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President's Message

by: Bronwen Young

I have been the president of UASBC for a year. It has been an interesting experience and one that I have been happy to do however at this point, I have decided to step down and let someone else take the helm. It is a self imposed demotion and I will now take on the role of 'backup' as Vice President. We are very lucky to have Keith Bossons of the Vancouver Chapter taking over as our new president. Keith is exceptionally competent and enters into job with enthusiasm, and a vision for UASBC. Many thanks to Keith for taking on this position.

I am very pleased to say that we have been offered a contract by Heritage B.C. It is an agreement to write Statements of Significance concerning six wrecks for which we have most of the data collected already. Statements of Significance concern heritage and cultural value. They answer the questions why and how are things important. They can be easily accessed on line at the BC Heritage site and if you do this, you will find a list that includes everything from houses and historical buildings to trees and ships. The contract pays well and the funds we receive will be put to very good use such as facilitating explorations.

UASBC will be starting off the Gulf Islands project in September. We have done some work in the past however there is considerably more to do before the material will be ready for publication. The goal is to produce the next in our series of booklets. It will be a collection of Gulf Island wrecks. The project will be lead by Explorations Director Jacques Marc. He will be looking for teams of divers to work on one or two sites at a time. NAS 1 may be required. The area is easily accessible so much of this can be staged as day trips. It is an excellent opportunity to come out and be part of something that will record a segment of our marine history. I have found that the good feelings of working with a goal in mind and as part of a team are fun and fulfilling. (Sitting around with friends at the end of the day with coffee or a beer is only a small part of this...).

It has been an honour being president of UASBC. I will continue helping to make the Society a success and look forward to working with Keith and the rest of the executive.

An Experience of a Lifetime (cont'd)

and talk with Nautilus and the Inner Space Center in Rhode Island as the dive progressed.

The SS Coast Trader (formerly the SS Point Reyes) was a 324-foot freighter built by the Submarine Boat Company, Edison, New Jersey, for the U. S. Shipping Board in 1920. The Coastwise Line Steamship Company purchased her from the government in 1936 and home-ported her in Portland, Oregon. The SS Coast Trader had been under charter to the U.S. Army since the beginning of World War II (1941-1945). On Sunday, June 7, 1942, the SS Coast Trader was en route from Port Angeles to San Francisco carrying 1,250 tons of newsprint. After leaving the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the ship, steering a non-evasive course, turned south. Lookouts were posted fore and aft to watch for enemy submarines but they didn't spot the I-26, which had been shadowing them at periscope depth since Neah Bay.

At about 2:10 p.m. there was a violent explosion inside the ship, which blew off hatch covers, sent 2000-pound rolls of newsprint 50 feet into the air, and toppled the main mast and radio antenna. The torpedo hit the ship on the starboard side in the stern. The crew successfully launched the port-side lifeboat and two large cork rafts. Some of the men had been injured in the explosion and needed help getting off the ship. Fortunately, the sea was calm and the crew evacuated the ship without difficulty. First Officer E. W. Nystrom and other crewmen in the lifeboat reported sighting the conning tower of a

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An Experience of a Lifetime

submarine 200 yards from where the ship was sinking, but it did not surface. At 2:50 p.m. the SS Coast Trader sank slowly, stern first, in 93 fathoms of water, as the crew watched.

The Coast Trader's final position was entered into the United States Automated Wreck and Obstruction Information System (AWOIS) and plotted on hydrographic charts based on the crews reported sinking location. On October 15, 2010 the Canadian Hydrographic Service discovered an uncharted wreck during a survey of the Tofino Basin off Vancouver Island. A comparison of the multi-beam image to a photograph of the Coast Trader confirmed without a doubt that they had found the wreck of the Coast Trader.

While I was attending the Society of Historical Archaeology Conference in Seattle in January 2015, Jim Delgado mentioned that NOAA would be doing some deep water survey work off the West Coast and asked about coordinates for the Asian pot wreck. I said that it would be a long shot as we didn't have a firm coordinates for the pot wreck. I did offer up the CHS multi-beam image of Trader.

He added it to the things to explore list for the survey.

On Tuesday June 2nd at 11:00 AM PDT the Nautilus deployed its two Remotely Operated Vehicles, Argus and Hercules to explore Coast Trader. The vehicles were deployed in tandem. Argus is attached to the ship



Deck gun in stern debris field. Courtesy NOAA/Ocean Exploration Trust.

and Hercules is connected to Argus. This configuration permits Argus to hover above, while Hercules works off a 30 meter tether ensuring that Hercules doesn't get caught up in stuff.

It only took about 10 minutes for the ROVs to reach bottom. Hercules used sector scanning sonar to seek out the wreck. The wreck was determined to be oriented along a 346 degree heading with the bow facing to the north. The ROVs approached from the west to intersect the wreck. The first images of the wreck came into view at 11:35. The video showed broken hull plating and the top of a fallen mast. We quickly determined that the ROV had hit the wreck on the port side near hold No. 4. Hercules was piloted forward inspecting the hull integrity. About amid-ship it climbed up to superstructure level 16 meters off the bottom. A china bowl was visible on the deck as was the base of a compass. Moving toward the centerline of the ship we could see the stack hole and then two ventilator shafts. The ROV dropped to the bottom again on the outside to inspect hull integrity. By 3:10 we had reached the bow dodging several trawl nets en-route. The bow was super cool. The two anchors are still locked in their hawse pipes. On the deck is the anchor winch. Forward of the anchor winch was the ships bell. Hercules zoomed in on the bell but no name was legible. The survey continued by moving down the starboard side. Just aft of



Anchor windlass on bow of Coast Trader. Courtesy NOAA/Ocean Exploration Trust.

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SHIPWRECKS MARITIME HISTORY CONFERENCE 2016

*Written by
John Middleton
UASBC Director
Vancouver Island Chapter*



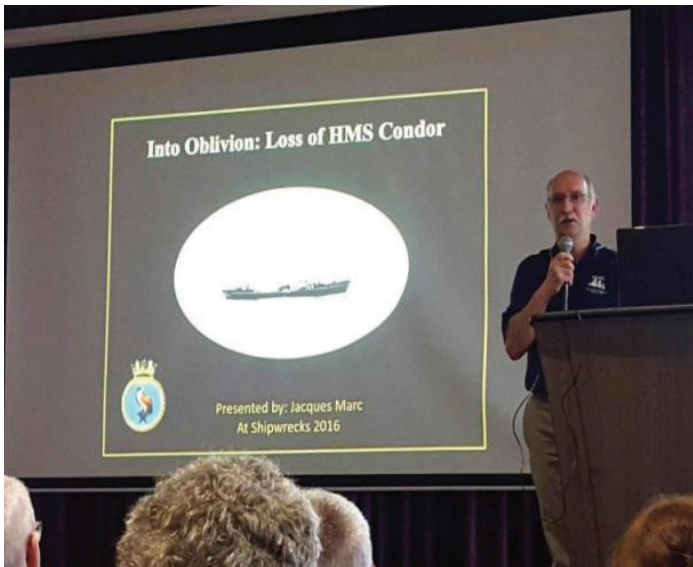
Dr. Tim Ball talking on Drakes Secret Voyage

If you're into maritime history and mysteries then the *Shipwrecks Conference* at the Canadian Forces Base Pacific Fleet Club on Saturday April 16 was the place to be. The UASBC holds a *Shipwrecks Conference* every year and has done so for over 35 years alternating between the Island and the mainland. This year the theme was "*Spanish Galleons, Chinese Junks and Other West Coast Maritime Mysteries*", and there certainly is no shortage of mysteries off our coast what with missing ships and unexplained occurrences. The weather was perfect for the maritime setting of the Fleet Club and many thanks go to the Admiral's Steward, Chad Kendall for being our sponsor and to Lindsey Johnson the Fleet Club Event Manager for making it all run so smoothly. Floor to ceiling plate glass windows, stretching the full length of one wall gave an unobstructed view across a wide veranda onto the waters off Esquimalt with Brothers Islands in the foreground and the "Royal Roads" anchorage beyond. By the 9 am start time, over 60 people were settled into their chairs ready to begin the first of 6 Day Session presentations.

After a brief introduction by UASBC president Bronwen Young, Dr. Tim Ball, a noted environmental consultant and columnist took to the podium. His topic was "*Sir Francis Drake's Secret Voyage*". Tim had worked with Sam Bawlf on his book of the same name, contributing his research into historical weather patterns to help make the case that Francis Drake had travelled up the BC west coast under secret orders from Queen Elizabeth I to search for the Northwest Passage. The story goes that Drake's logbook and charts were edited and changed to hide this voyage because of the fear of retaliation by the Spanish who considered the Pacific a "Spanish lake". One mystery related to this voyage was the disappearance of 21 of Drake's crew members who did not return to England. One theory is that they met with ill fortune while sailing back home onboard a captured Spanish vessel.

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Shipwrecks Maritime History Conference 2016(cont'd)



Jacques Marc discussing the mystery of the HMS Condor

The second presenter of the day was UASBC Explorations Director, Jacques Marc, talking on the topic "*Into Oblivion: Loss of the HMS Condor*". Imagine opening the newspaper tomorrow and learning that a Canadian Naval vessel bound for Honolulu from Esquimalt Harbour had gone missing with all hands on board. That is exactly what happened to the HMS Condor. Other than a couple of pieces of flotsam found up the west coast, the vessel and her crew of over 100 sailed off into the blue and was never seen nor heard of again. Reports of a vessel in distress during high winds off Cape Flattery at about the time of the Condor's travels are the only inkling of the fate that might have befallen her. A side scan search off of that area for any remains on the ocean floor may be the only way to resolve this long standing mystery.



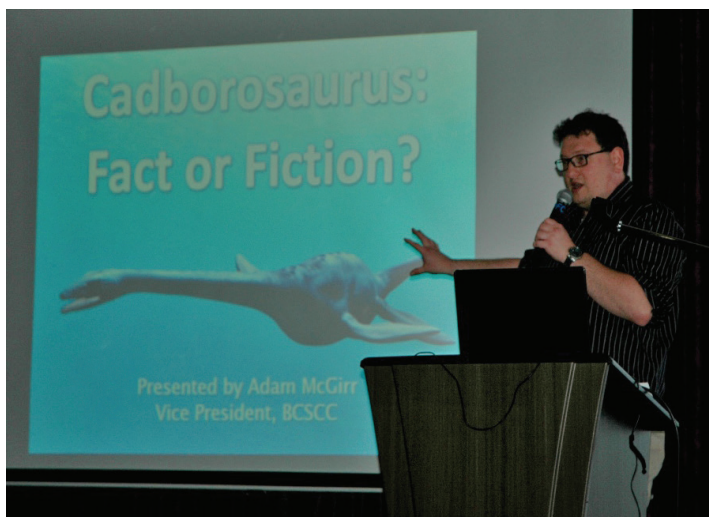
Grant Keddie Recieves Speaker Gift

The third speaker of the morning was Grant Keddie, Curator of Archaeology at the Royal BC Museum for over 40 years. His topic "*Cultural Connections between Polynesia and British Columbia*" showed us that real progress is being made in establishing connections between Pacific cultures and our own west coast. Grant talked about how the revolution in the field of DNA analysis and the work being done in cultural sequencing (relative dating using typological features) is making real progress in establishing connections between Pacific cultures and the west coast of North America.

Lunch time gave everyone a chance to get outside and enjoy the sunny weather, socialize on the expansive waterfront deck and grab a bite to eat, after which the afternoon session commenced.

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Shipwrecks Maritime History Conference 2016^(cont'd)



Adam McGirr speaks to Cadborosaurus

First up after lunch was Adam McGirr, Vice President of the BC Scientific Cryptozoology Club (BCSCC) talking on "*Cadborosaurus: Fact or Fiction*". Most of us are familiar with stories of Caddy and Ogopogo, and tales related to these elusive creatures go back thousands of years in first nation's oral history. Adam gave us an entertaining and scientific analysis of what we actually know and don't know about these and other "cryptoid" sightings. Are sea lions or elephant seals swimming in unison the source of many so-called sightings or is there really something out there which has yet to be properly documented? The mystery continues and maybe many of us would just like it to stay that way!

Tom Beasley has been one of the driving forces behind the UASBC since his term as president 1986 to 1990. He is currently the Vancouver Director as well as sitting on the boards of the Vancouver Maritime Museum Board and the Underwater Council of BC. Tom's topic was "*Chinese Exploration to the Pacific Northwest 1500 to Present*". It's almost inconceivable that a civilization

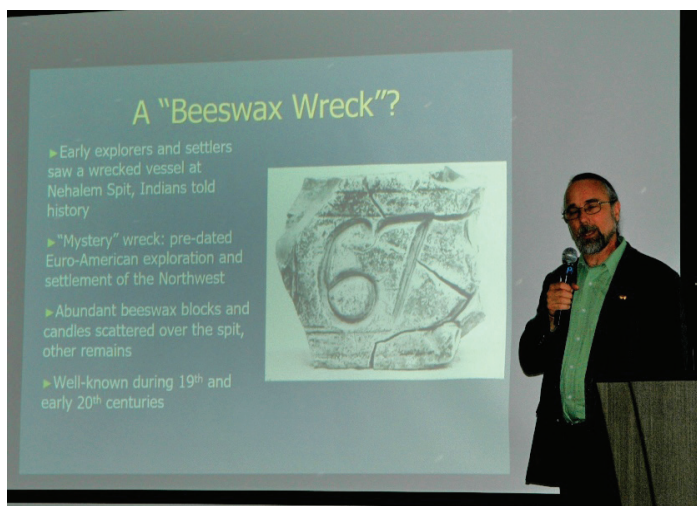


Tom Beasley receives his speaker gift

as advanced as the Chinese empire did not at some time in its long history send vessels either intentionally or by accident to the West Coast of North America. If so, why has there so far been no definitive physical evidence of their visitations? We do know that over 100 Japanese and Chinese fish boats are documented to have drifted across to our coast in the past 100 years or so. The museum in Prince Rupert has one such vessel on display. It is widely believed today that evidence of ancient Asian travelers along this coast is out there somewhere just waiting to be found. A deep water search scheduled for later in 2016 may just find the first concrete evidence of such visitations.

The final speaker for the Day Session was Scott Williams, Cultural Resources Manager for the Washington State Department of Transportation who gave a tantalizing account of the "*Nehalem Bees Wax Wreck*". This wreck on the Oregon coast has been known since the time of Lewis and Clarke and is thought to be a Manila Galleon which ran afoul of the treacherous waters off the Oregon Coast after a grueling 5 – 6 month voyage from

Shipwrecks Maritime History Conference 2016^(cont'd)



Scott Williams talks about Nehalem Bees Wax Wreck

the Philippines. Scott's account of the horrendous conditions and high mortality rate amongst the crews of these galleons, which over a 300 year period made over a 1000 such voyages, was hard to imagine. Other than bits of flotsam and lots of bees wax, the ever shifting sands conspire to hide the final resting place of this wreck from Scott's archaeological team.

The bar opened at 5:30 pm and dinner was served at 6:30 pm. After an excellent Fleet Club dinner, and with the sun slowly setting over the Sooke Hills, everyone took their seats and Robyn Woodward, herself an archaeologist and long time member of the UASBC, introduced the keynote speaker Edward Von der Porten. Edward, a noted archaeologist and maritime historian, was sponsored by Robyn to come up from California to talk on the topic of "*Ghost Ship: The Manila Galleon San Juanillo of 1578*". Edward has studied the remains of this vessel, which is scattered over the sands of Baja California for many years and has documented an amazing array of Chinese pottery and other artifacts. The mystery still remains as to what



*Evening Keynote Speaker
Ed Von der Porten*

exactly happened to the vessel and if in fact it is the San Juanillo or some other Galleon. Edward continues his work to try to answer these questions.

Shipwrecks 2017 will be held on the mainland and is sure to offer another slate of interesting speakers, so stay tuned for future updates!

**For the
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Please refer to
WWW.UASBC.COM**



Front of superstructure on starboard side. Courtesy NOAA/Ocean Exploration Trust.

the foredeck, a spare anchor could be seen on the deck beside hold No. 1. As the ROV moved toward the ship centerline it became evident that the hatch coming around hold No.1 was sloping downward towards hatch No. 2. The ROV worked its way down the starboard side until it encountered the wheel-house superstructure. Here there was a huge piece of trawl net and a poly/nylon line 17 meters long. This obstruction forced the crew to recall both ROVs and re-set them. When they returned to the wreck the camera picked up the hull at the start of hold no.3. We hadn't moved more than a few meters when a huge gaping hole was visible in the side of the hull. This was clearly where the torpedo had hit the ship, as the edges of the hole were bent outwards from the explosion.

After exploring the torpedo damage, Hercules moved aft to examine the stern. As the ROV rounded the stern area, it encountered a pile of rubble. The stern was obliterated. The group consensus was that because the ship sank stern first, the already damaged stern was driven into the mud bottom and the

weight of the settling ship was too much to bear so the stern exploded becoming a mass of rubble. The prop and rudder are believed to be buried. In the debris pile we could see pieces of winches, bollards and even a deck gun that had been intended to protect the trader. After exploring the stern another attempt was made to look at the superstructure. However, again trawl nets made it too treacherous.

In retrospect SS Coast Trader is intact from the bow to the aft of the superstructure or the start of hold No.3. Aft of this point the hull has fractured along a crack and has rolled to port. The poop deck aft of hold No.4 is completely gone and probably lies amidst the rubble of the stern. As for the oil in the ship. The stern tanks would have ruptured when the stern imploded after striking the bottom so are almost certainly empty. The forward tanks are at in the bottom of the ship and the integrity of the hull forward looked sound, so the oil in that area is probably safe for now.

All in all a fascinating day. Thanks to Jim Delgado for the opportunity to participate.

Dive & Exploration Trip

Dive or not to dive that was the question?

by
Dean Driver

On Saturday, May 7th 2016 the UASBC embarked on an exploration to the east side of Vancouver Island. The area of interest was the site of the Zephyr off the east coast of Mayne Island. The team consisted of Jiri Kotler, John Middleton, Paul Spencer, Dean Driver and Exploration Director Jacques Marc. The team was welcomed at the Tulista Boat Launch in Sidney by Gordon and the Juan de Fuca Warrior. The weather was clear and sunny but the wind reports over the last few days had wind gale warnings. Gordon had done his homework



and assured us things were a go for our trip.

The Zephyr was the second vessel surveyed by the UASBC. The first was the Panther (Clipper) in 1977. The Zephyr was a 19th century sailing ship that was employed to move quarried limestone blocks and columns from the Nanaimo's Newcastle Island to San Francisco to supply the building of the San Francisco Mint. The ship sank in a storm on February 13th 1872 in the midst of driving snow storm and rough seas. Two lives were lost that day. The storm placed heavy damage on the ship due to difficulty navigating ship away from the rocks with the weight of the limestone cargo.



Twin

limestone
slabs from
the Zephyr
greet



young visitors to the playground in Maffeo Sutton Park in Nanaimo, BC. Limestone column at Newcastle Island was one of two aboard Zephyr when she sank.

We arrived at the wreck site and encountered 4-5 foot standing waves. One minute things seemed manageable and the next minute large swells that would prohibit a diver from safely re-boarding the vessel would roll through. We decided that it would be best to abort the dive and exit the area.

Our Plan B was to do a dive on the east side of Prevost Island in search of the historic vessel "Emily Harris" History has it that she blew up in Trcomali Channel near Montague harbour. The Emily Harris was the first steamer built entirely in British Columbia and was also the first to be equipped with a propeller as a means of propulsion.

On Monday August 14th 1871 the Emily Harris was travelling from Nanaimo to Victoria with 60 tons of coal when she blew up. Captain Frain and the Chinese cook were lost. The engineer and three Indians survived. Their tales of what happened conflicted and search parties could find no evidence of the vessel. We started our search near the marker at the north end of Prevost Island and headed south.

Once in the water, visibility was very poor as a result of a healthy plankton bloom. The poor viz meant losing your dive partner or your sense of direction was high. We broke off into two groups, about 500m apart and made our way south along a 50-60ft depth. Once down

the visibility was less than 10ft. We proceeded slowly resisting the back current (drift). No evidence of any wreck material s was found despite careful inspection. We covered a 1 kilometer distance along the shore.

After conducting our search, we motored over to the site of the GB Church artificial reef wreck. We took an hour topside, drifting and enjoying the calmer seas and warm sunshine. After a lunch break we reentered the water to dive the GB Church. The plumose anemones, giant pacific mussels, red kelp, barnacles, and many vibrant crustaceans and fish have made the wreck their own. The visibility was better – perhaps 15-20ft max – but still quite dirty.

We returned to port and jockeyed with with Fishing Derby anglers to get in to the boat launch que. The day concluded at Tim Hortons where we enjoyed a cup of coffee and chatted about our dives.



Photo of the G.B. Church courtesy of the Artificial Reef Society



For NAS 2, Gary and I are exploring our local Powell River history underwater. We are researching local knowledge and meeting some interesting people with fascinating stories about the past.

Foghorn (ISSN 1198-7081) is published quarterly 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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