

Unidentified wreck in Pend Oreille River, Idaho

By: John Polack, Brian Nadwidny & Chris McNaughtony



Drone Photo of an Unidentified Wreck in Idaho's Pend Oreille River

Photo by Austin Smith

Recent low water levels revealed a new discovery in the Pend Oreille River of northern Idaho. Residents alerted the Dover Museum and Dover Historical Society of the new find, and Chris McNaughton of Spokane, Washington, formed an assessment team including Canadians John Pollack (UASBC and INA Research Associate) and Brian Nadwidny (UASBC). The 7 March 2024 reconnaissance assessment found a seventy five foot flat-bottomed, propellor-driven steamship in shallow water that was a chilly four degrees Celsius. The hulked vessel has lost its upper hull due to severe winter ice damage, but the hull bottom and chines are intact. The drone image seen in this article was taken by Austin Smith, and an assessment report has been prepared for various Idaho organizations involved.

The Annual Pilgrimage to Barkley Sound

By: Jacques Marc

The UASBC traveled to Bamfield on Friday 5 April intending to dive several wrecks on Saturday and Sunday. The group included David Haslam, Dennis Werkman and Eugene Shalamov from Vancouver while Jiri Kotler, George Silvestrini, Kail Pawson, Leila Bautista, Chris Mills, Paul Spencer, and Jacques Marc hailed from Victoria.



2024 Barkley Sound Dive Participants on the stern Deck of the MV Reef Island

Photo by Jacques Marc

Instead of taking the more scenic backwoods route via Lake Cowichan, Paul and Jacques decided to take the recently constructed highway from Port Alberni, which proved to be a wise move. The Bamfield road has been completely rebuilt and is now seal coated the whole distance from Port Alberni to Bamfield. The travel time from Victoria is now 3 ½ hours versus the former 4 ½ hours. Paul and Jacques got into Bamfield by 1530 and met David checking out the luxurious log cabin. The rest of the team arrived by 1800, just in time for dinner.

On Saturday the team rose to partly cloudy skies and what appeared to be reasonable sea conditions. All divers boarded the MV Reef Island operated by Julie & Erin Bradley and left the dock at 0830.

As Reef Island passed through the Deer Group of Islands the sea conditions looked favorable for a run visit to the *Vanlene*. The team was on station at 1000, and an assessment of the swell as being at one meter confirmed that the dive could be executed. Erin steered into the lee of an island as the divers suited up, and then motored over to the site. The divers entered the water, descending overtop of the *Vanlene*'s engine. The spring plankton bloom caused the first forty feet of water to be murky. Visibility became clearer below forty feet, but the water was fairly dark. Paul and Jacques made a beeline for the stern, following the propeller shaft out until hitting the stern hull. It appeared as if most of the stern has now collapsed, although there are still large pieces rising from the bottom. After spending about twenty minutes at between eighty to ninety feet, Paul and Jacques moved back into the shallows inspecting the large boiler and then moving up to the bow area. They

spent the final part of the dive on the large deck portion in about thirty feet of water. Upon surfacing the divers found the weather had changed considerably. There was a strong onshore wind and the swell height had increased. It was a bit challenging getting everyone back on board.

Once everyone was back on board, the team headed over to dive the HMCS *Thiepval*, which wrecked in more protected waters. Erin stationed the Reef Island directly atop the wreck and Jacques was able to drop the shot line on the rock just above the wreck. Everyone, successfully got on the wreck and spent a good forty five minutes exploring it. The *Thiepval* is amazing – one can find different things each dive. Jacques was unable to find the dining china that seen last year, but the divers did find a large brass valve that no one had seen before. It is also clear that the *Thiepval* is now falling apart more rapidly. Several large hull plates that were in place last year have fallen, although it remains a pretty wreck covered in plumose anemones. Erin had no problem picking up the divers on this site.

About halfway back across Imperial Eagle Channel one of the Reef Island's engines failed. Erin felt that it was a fuel problem and would check the fuel and filters once back at the dock.

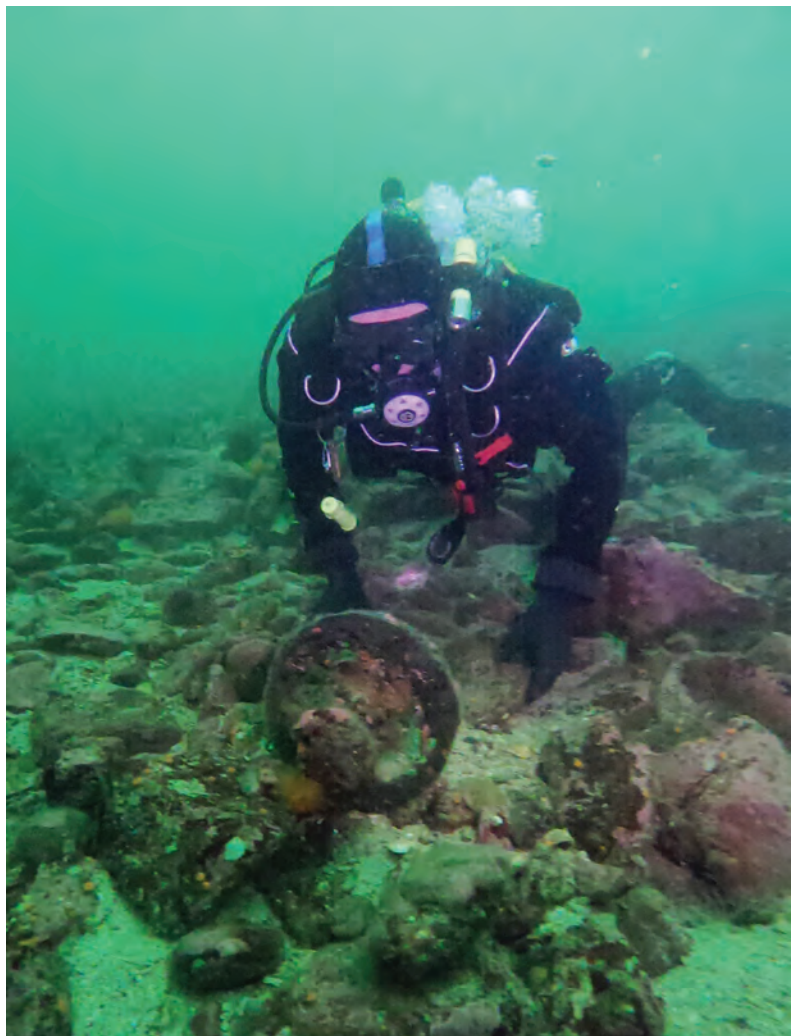
The team was back at their accommodation by 1600. Erin loaded the tanks that need air on to the Juan de Fuca Warrior (his other boat)and headed for his dock. The team was just finishing up diner when Erin showed up with bad news: he had been unable to diagnose the problem with the Reef Island and the second stage on his large air compressor had also failed.

The team brainstormed and decided if Erin could fill 3 of the aluminum 80's with his small compressor, then everyone would have air to do a single dive on Sunday. Since the Reef Island could not be fixed in time, Erin would use the Juan de Fuca Warrior for the dive and make two trips.

On Sunday morning six divers boarded the Juan de Fuca Warrior and ran out to the *Orpheus* site. Jacques put a shot line down and he and Paul went in first to ensure everyone would get on the wreck. It was a great dive: there was less plankton, and the sun came out providing lots of available light at eighty feet.

After touring the wreck a couple of times, Paul and Jacques swam into the shallows to look for the anchor. They spent about ten minutes swimming back and forth in ten foot visibility in about twenty five feet of water. Jacques surfaced while Paul stayed on the bottom determined to find the anchor and as luck would have it, he found it in eighteen feet of water! Once everyone had surfaced and embarked on the Juan de Fuca Warrior, Erin transited back to Grappler Inlet and the second wave of divers headed out. They were back by 1230 and had a similarly great dive.

All in all, it was a great weekend. The UASBC will be doing more work in Barkley Sound in the next couple of years, so expect to see more trips to this area.



Paul Spencer with an Orpheus Artifact.

Photo by Jacques Marc

Evolution of Diving & Diving Technology in BC

By: John Middleton

“There are old divers and there are bold divers, but there are no old bold divers,” is the cautionary saying many seasoned divers quote to new divers. On Saturday 20 April 2024, over sixty divers and maritime history enthusiasts gathered at the Royal Colwood Golf Club in Langford to listen to a varied range of speakers talk about the evolution of diving and diving technology in British Columbia.

UASBC explorations director Jacques Marc opened the Day Session with a look back at the life of British Columbian diver and author Fred Rogers. Fred started diving in the 1950s and authored books such as “Shipwrecks of British Columbia” and “Historic Divers of British Columbia.” More than anyone, Fred helped the UASBC to locate and document many of the Province’s shipwrecks.

After a coffee break, UASBC President Keith Bossons welcomed everyone to the conference and then turned the floor over to well known Victoria dive shop owner and dive gear manufacturer Frank White Jr. Frank took the group back to the early days of local diving, when in 1956 his father Frank Sr. opened White's Dive Shop. Frank also talked about the start of White's manufacturing in 1958 and its evolution from making basic wetsuits to the successful Fusion drysuit. Having been sold to Aqua Lung several years ago, the company was recently reacquired by Frank Jr.



Frank White Jr. Speaking at Shipwrecks

Photo by Jacques Marc

Prolific author and past editor of *Western Mariner* magazine, Vickie Jensen then took the podium. She shared stories from her recent book *Deep Dark and Dangerous* about British Columbia's subsea pioneers including Phil Nuytten of Newtsuit fame and diver Al Trice who was involved in building the first Pisces sub. Vickie's stories really made one realize what a global impact British Columbian businesses have made in the world of undersea exploration and technology.

Everyone enjoyed lunch on their own and reconvened at 1315. The next speaker was Doug Pemberton, past president of Vancouver's Pescaderos Dive Club, who spoke about former dive clubs around British Columbia that have come and gone over the last forty years or so. Doug also shared his collection of dive club badges and talked about how social media seems to have taken the place of a lot of dive clubs as a way for divers to connect.

Next, the Fleet Dive Unit (Pacific)'s Chief Petty Officer First Class Rob DeProy provided an overview of the history of the Pacific and Atlantic Fleet Dive Units. He also talked about the type of work that Clearance Divers do, including explosive ordnance disposal. It was interesting to hear about the dive gear employed, which includes everything from Mark IV and Superlite 17B diving helmets to hot water heated suits and rebreathers.

And last but not least, diver and world-renowned sculpture Simon Morris told the group about his fifty year career working for dive gear companies including Brooks, BARE and Shearwater. But it was his passion for sculpting which led to his unique contribution to the underwater world that divers enjoy. Over the years he has created some amazing undersea statues such as the nine foot tall bronze mermaids at Mermaid Cove on the Sunshine Coast and also the Caribbean's Grand Cayman, to name just a few.



Royal Colwood Golf Club Dinner Venue

Photo by Jacques Marc

After a great dinner catered by the Royal Colwood, longtime UASBC patron and sponsor Robin Woodward introduced 2024's keynote speaker, Rod Fleck. While his day job is that of attorney and planner for the city of Forks, Washington, his passion is maritime history and genealogy. Rod recounted his meticulous research into the lesser-known wreck of the Russian American Company schooner the *SV Nikolai*. Alexander Baranov, the Russian American Company's manager, tasked this vessel to sail from New Archangel (now Sitka) and set up a trading post to the south of Vancouver Island.

Unfortunately, on 1 November 1808 a storm drove the *Nikolai* ashore, wrecking it near the mouth of the Quillayute River and stranding the crew of twenty two on the inhospitable northwest coast. Historians owe the account of the survivors' ordeals to the ships officer Tarakanov, who told of clashes with local tribes, capture, enslavement and eventual rescue after two years by Captain Thomas Brown of the American fur trade vessel *Lydia*. An interesting side bar to the story of the *Nikolai* is that it was originally built on the island of Kauai for King Kamehameha. The wreck of the *Nikolai* has yet to be found and the search for it continues to this day.



Rod Fleck receiving his Keynote Speaker Gift from sponsor Robyn Woodward.

Photo by George Silvestrini

At 2130 the evening came to a close and all participants returned home with their heads full of amazing stories of shipwrecks and the early days of diving in British Columbia! Stay tuned for Shipwrecks 2025, in Vancouver!

Please refer to
WWW.UASBC.COM for latest Updates!

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