

## John Pollack (1949-2025)

By: Tom Beasley



John with his trusty Inflatable "Blind Fish".

Our friend, fellow UASBC member, former UASBC President, scientist, and explorer extraordinaire died on October 14, 2025, at age 76 after a short illness.

John was a leader who impacted maritime archaeology, caving and exploration across Canada and beyond.

Born in Fort Benning, Georgia, John immigrated to Canada following a short stint in the US army. He worked for 30+ years as a research forester for the province serving in Prince Rupert, Smithers, and Nelson. As a cave explorer, he took part in expeditions around the world.

In October 1989, John contacted me to help find the City of Ainsworth (1898) in Kootenay Lake. The phone call led to a UASBC expedition in April 1991 which located the wreck and led to 2 subsequent ROV expeditions which documented the wreck at 360'.

John went on from the City of Ainsworth to lead expeditions for the UASBC in the interior of BC, culminating with the Historic Shipwrecks of the West Kootenays in 1999. That publication, edited by John, documented 13 shipwrecks and 3 other sites. John went on from there to document other interior shipwrecks and then to a multiyear expedition funded by the Institute of Nautical Archaeology and others to document the shipwrecks of the Yukon River. His Yukon work will be

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# Shipwrecks 2026

## Military Wrecks in BC & Around the World

Presented by:  
The Underwater Archaeological Society of BC  
March 28, 2026

### Day Session

#### Cedar Hill Golf Club

1400 Derby Rd, Saanich, BC  
Registration 08:30  
Price \$ 45.00

### Dinner & Woodward Lecture



*The USS Yorktown and  
Devastator wreck  
Investigations.*  
Russ Mathews, President  
Air/Sea Heritage Foundation

Cedar Hill Golf Club  
No Host Bar 5:00 PM  
Dinner 6:00 PM  
Price \$60.00

For more information and to purchase  
tickets using PayPal visit  
[WWW.UASBC.Com](http://WWW.UASBC.Com)

### Day Session Lectures

#### Military Wrecks of BC

Jacques Marc, UASBC Explorations. Dir.

#### Hampden P5433 Lost & Found

Paul Spencer, UASBC

#### Wrecks of Louisburg Harbour & HMCS Thiepval Survey

Charles Moore, Consulting Archaeologist

#### Total Surprise: sunken ships of Chuuk Lagoon

Ewan Anderson, UASBC Com. Dir.

#### Deepwater Exploration of HMCS Canada

Guy Shockey, UASBC Director

#### Diving USATS General M. G. Zalinski and City of Ainsworth

Brian Nadwidny, Explorers Club

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# New UASBC Presidents' Spring 2026 Message

*by: Holger*



*Hello Everyone,*

It is a great honour to serve as incoming President of the UASBC recently celebrating 50 years of dedication to finding, surveying, documenting and educating on the underwater maritime history of British Columbia. There are too many people to thank for giving their time and energy to fulfill our mandate. It is remarkable that this has been accomplished entirely by volunteers and members who have contributed financially. There is no reason to believe that we cannot carry on for another 50 years. Certainly, underwater technology and how we deliver our message will evolve and improve in the future.

I need first to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by our past president, Keith Bossons, who has served in this role for 9 years, almost 20% of our history. Thank-you Keith and family for your time and commitment to this project! You have put us in good stead for the next 50 years!

The Shipwrecks conference of 2008 in Bamfield was my first exposure to the UASBC. My family had recently moved from the Sunshine Coast where I was fortunate to have dived several shipwrecks, some documented in one of our many publications, although I had no knowledge of the UASBC at the time.

I was instantly hooked on our organization and began as a member participating in many expeditions, notably those on the Central Coast and the West Coast of Vancouver Island. Our exploration schedule is posted online and, in this newsletter, and our UAD course, Underwater Archaeology for Divers (a BC specific course) provides skills development in surveying.

While I am not much of a diver these days, the UASBC presents many non-diving opportunities to participate in research, writing and administration, all necessary functions in a volunteer organization; we welcome your help in carrying the load.

This year's Shipwrecks conference "Military Wrecks in BC and Around the World" is being presented at the Cedar Hill Golf Club on March 28. Tickets are available online at [UASBC.com](http://UASBC.com)

Check the website for our monthly Speaker Series for interesting presentations and diving networking.

And mentioning a website, please know we will launch our new upgraded website later this year which promises easier shop purchases of membership, apparel and publications.

*Best regards and safe diving,*

*Holger*

*UASBC President*

Please refer to  
[WWW.UASBC.COM](http://WWW.UASBC.COM) for latest Updates!

# Robert Grenier (1937-2026)

By: Charles Moore



Archaeologist Robert Grenier died on Jan. 3, 2026. He was 88.

Photo by Bruce Tilley

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John Pollack *(continued)*

published soon by INA, with final edits by Dr. Robyn Woodward.

John's exploration career was and will continue to be recognized. In 2020, the Canadian Geographic magazine named John as one of the top 90 Canadian explorers of all time. That same year, the Explorer's Club's Canadian Chapter awarded him the Stefansson Medal. At a Celebration of Life for John on December 6, John's widow, Kathie, received the Royal Canadian Geographic Society's highest award, the Camsell Award, posthumously for John.

John served on the RCGS Board and its Exploration Committee for many years, bringing common sense, and a love for adventure to the RCGS's work across Canada and into many stories.

John had boundless energy; and insatiable curiosity; a scientific mind and a get it done attitude. He connected dots and made things happen and seem easy. One of his favourite expressions was "Everyone take deep breath and count to ten".

The adventure continues. More stuff to be found and documented, and stories to be told.

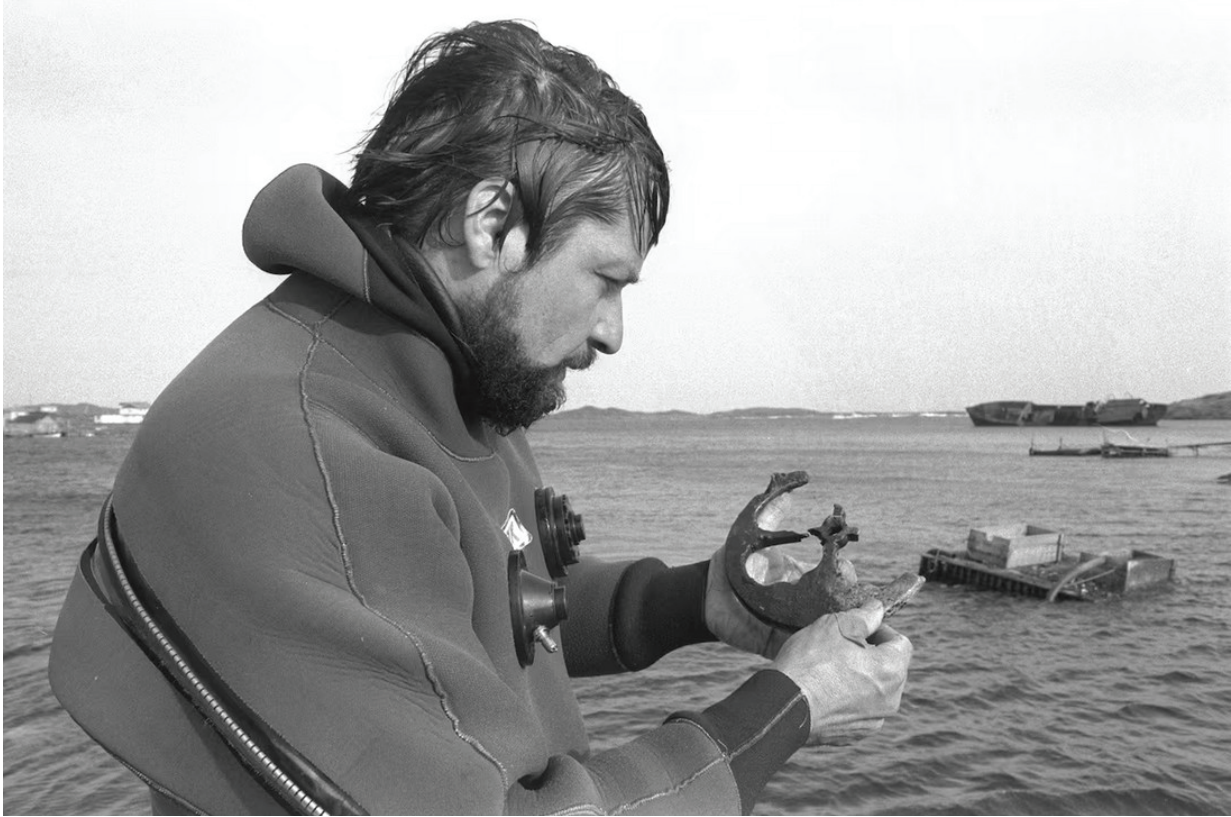
In January, we lost a great man in underwater archaeology. The case for “father of marine archaeology in Canada” could be made for Robert Grenier, but like other “fathers” there were those who went before, and those who worked in lock step to support their accomplishments. Robert was the visionary who could lead the team. He was the one armed with the intellect and charisma to work the levers needed to secure institutional and financial support to push the discipline to levels not achieved before, and likely not to be repeated. For most of his years with Parks Canada, he was the Chief, or Chef, of the Underwater Archaeology Unit. To me, he will always be Chief, the Chief Marine Archaeologist in Canada, or (inspired by our recent Olympic moment) our nautical Chef de Mission.

I do not remember which Society of Historical Archaeology conference I met him at, but it was likely my first, in Reno, where of all things to find there, we found a great Basque Restaurant. He was keen to meet another West Coast Canadian going through the Nautical Archaeology Program at A&M (on the heels of Chris Amer). My thesis topic may have been a little too West Coast for him, however, and it was a few years before I was hired on to the unit (some of that long process as well as a last-minute interview by Robert are tales better told at a bar than in print!). By then, the UASBC’s Montague Harbour Project had come and gone. Montague was a Project that Robert acknowledged was the most significant underwater archaeological project in Canada at the time. I would never hear him say that again about any project that was not run by Parks!

Robert may be seen by some in the avocational archaeological community as being unsupportive of their work. It is true he was wary (with good reason) of most underwater archaeological groups from a time when collection was almost universally more important than preservation. I had the good fortune of being hired at Parks when Robert’s point of view towards avocational archaeologists was becoming more positive. I was one of the young archaeologists in the unit charged with teaching the introductory NAS course in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Alberta. For a while, I was able to make contributions to the Foghorn, and the newsletters of SOS and POW in Ontario. For Robert, the UASBC was germ, and his hope was we could seed the coasts of Canada with it as an example. As it happened, with tightening budgets and frankly limited positive results from the outreach, the focus shifted back to in-house technical work, particularly the mammoth task of completing the Red Bay Report.

Robert’s great life-work and passion was of course the Red Bay Project, and by extension all things Basque. He even looked the part of the stereotypical Basque mariner, broad of shoulder but with a low centre of gravity; he is easily pictured in the stern of a chalupa (whaleboat) steering oar in hand on the crest of an Atlantic swell. It was a Basque whaling ship thought to be the San Juan which sank in 1565 that was discovered by Robert’s team in 1978 when Robert was 41. The results of that remarkable find unfolded in the wake of his drive and inspiration through the remainder of his life, beginning with seven seasons of underwater work in the frigid waters of Labrador. I was fortunate to have contributed for some of the 20-odd years of the “second dig”, Robert’s term for the painstaking post-excavation analysis of artifacts and the virtual reconstruction of the ship remains. Another of the several vessels that were found in the vicinity, the nearly intact chalupa (No. 1) was reassembled once its timbers were out of conservation in 1998, and it became part of the interpretive displays in Red Bay (now a World Heritage Site). A replica chalupa has since been built by Basque traditional boat builders and navigated along the Côte-Nord to the Labrador shores. The five-volume report published in 2007 is a benchmark in nautical archaeological reporting. It is fitting that just two months before Robert’s death, a replica of the whaling ship, constructed over the preceding decade with meticulous attention to the archaeological record and named the Alboala after a unique construction feature documented in Red Bay, was launched in Pasaia, Gipuzkoa, Spain.

Robert Grenier was made an officer of the Order of Canada in 2004. But like many notable Canadians, he probably achieved greater recognition for his work, particularly for the Red Bay Project, from the international community. He



Robert Grenier holds the remains of a navigational astrolabe recovered from a 16th century Basque wreck in Red Bay harbour

Photo Courtesy of Parks Canada

was a respected member of the Advisory Council for Underwater Archaeology for many years. He was unable to achieve federal legislation for the protection shipwrecks in Canada (it remains the only G7 Nation to lack such legislation), however, as chair of the UNESCO scientific committee on the protection of underwater cultural heritage, Robert helped draft the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (ratified by nations around the world, if not by Canada).

My personal recollections are of a gentle man whose charm was rooted in a generosity of spirit (only sometimes overruled by his professional drive). He and Caroline made their home available to my visiting in-laws following the birth of my first son. And of course it was no ordinary home, Robert had salvaged massive timbers from an 18th century barn for its walls and roof beams that held the structure together like, what else, a ship. He had done much of the work himself, I believe, including hauling the timbers in his restored c.1948 2 ton truck to his overlook of the Gatineau river valley.

Despite his Jesuit training and ordered intellect, he seemed to thrive in chaos. After a thief broke into the Parks building through Robert's office window, the attending officer commented, "my gosh, the place has been trashed". He had to be assured that the mountains of paper and toppling stacks of books were all in place, as far as anyone could tell. I have not missed Robert's "by-the-way" late Friday afternoon requests to put slides together for a weekend lecture. But I do miss the Chief dearly along with the passing of brilliant era of marine archaeology in Canada that he personified.

# The Tug Queen: Diving a Working Wreck in Victoria Harbour

By: Rachel Huber



Dive Crew at James Bay Boat Launch prior to diving wreck.

Photo by Becky Butt

Some wrecks announce themselves with scale or spectacle. The Tug Queen does neither. She rests beneath one of the busiest stretches of water in Victoria Harbour, easy to pass over and just as easy to miss.

That was part of the draw.

This dive marked my first time in the water with the UASBC. I'd tried to join several boat dives the year before, but timing and logistics never quite lined up. This one did. It was a rare 'fun' dive organized by Leila, with George, Rory, Kail, Craig, and Jacques also in the water. Not a survey or documentation push, but a chance to return to a known site and see how it had changed over the decade.

The Tug Queen was launched in 1914 and spent most of her life as a working tug — a live aboard vessel built for towing, manoeuvring, and the everyday labour that keeps ports running.

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Tug Queen as a tow boat.

Photo Courtesy by Capt. Bob Sheret

In December 1993, she was deemed a navigational hazard after sinking near Fisherman's Wharf. Rather than attempt a complex recovery, the harbour master opted for a simpler solution: the tug was towed around the corner and deliberately sunk near the Heli-jet landing, where she now rests in relatively shallow water.

Despite sitting just offshore from cruise ship terminals and the Heli-jet base, the Tug Queen is rarely explored. Access requires specific permissions from Transport Canada and the Victoria Harbour Authority, and the site isn't part of the regular recreational circuit. The UASBC last visited the wreck in 2013.

I've spent years diving wrecks in the Caribbean, around Tobermory in Ontario, and in Howe Sound here in BC, but I'm only just beginning to explore the wrecks around Vancouver Island. The Tug Queen stood out immediately — not because of what she promised, but because of what she didn't. There was no map to follow, no recent dive reports to lean on, and very few expectations. It felt like a modern-day scavenger hunt.

We had five divers and two tender operators on the day, plus two divers in the water on scooters. The boat divers dropped in from a tender, planning to return the same way — the surface swim from shore to wreck being too long and exposed.

Our group entered near a piling that had been marked as the wreck. It wasn't. Instead, we spent the first part of the dive swimming in brighter, shallower water, moving between pilings and boulders alive with seaweed and anemones taking advantage of the light. It was interesting terrain, but after about fifteen minutes it was clear we were still searching. The entire bay was heavy with fine silt, easily stirred by fin kicks and the constant movement of harbour traffic overhead. Then the obscure shape of the Tug Queen emerged. We came onto the wreck at the rudder — the shallowest point — before continuing deeper along the structure.

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Queen Propeller. Photo by Rory MacKenzie



Leila B looks through wreckage. Photo by Rachel Huber

The wreck lies on a sloping sand and mud bottom, down by the head and resting on her port side. The stern sits shallower, around 30 feet, while the bow drops deeper, reaching 60 feet in places. I didn't have the chance to dive the site in 2013, but that earlier dive has become an important reference point. When Jacques and other members visited the wreck that winter, they reported that the wooden hull was already heavily deteriorated, though key components — including the prop, engine, and fuel tanks — were still contained within the structure.

More than a decade later, the ongoing breakdown is unmistakable. Portions of the wooden hull have collapsed further, leaving behind the wooden backbone of the vessel, exposed machinery, scattered elements, and a handful of remaining swim throughs into what were once working spaces. The bow, built with metal plating, has held its shape more stubbornly and rises intact from deeper water, offering a clear contrast between materials and how they weather time underwater.

At slack tide, conditions were calm and forgiving. Shafts of natural light still reached the wreck, but everything carried an emerald cast until a torch cut through it. Dive buddies were easy to see nearby; distance disappeared quickly. It was the kind of dive that rewarded slowing down.

I tend to notice seaweed wherever I dive — it's simply how my brain works these days through GetKelp.com — and the Tug Queen offered plenty to look at. More than twenty species of red, green, and brown seaweed had colonized the wreck. Walking stick kelp traced much of the remaining structure, softening its industrial lines. Ribbed kelp, sugar kelp, and flashes of bright rainbow kelp added colour throughout. Crabs moved through crevices, coralline red algae crusted exposed surfaces, and patches of orange biofilm and iron loving algae clung to the remaining metal.

The rudder told a more specific story. Sea lettuce, various red seaweeds, and strands of walking stick kelp had settled across it, and the growth had to be carefully cleared before it could be measured — a reminder that even in a busy urban harbour, marine growth moves quickly. George and Jacques noted that the propeller may have been brass (the kind of detail that doesn't always survive on accessible wrecks) which could help explain why it stood out.

With a planned bottom time of roughly 45 minutes, there was no sense of rushing. I found myself lingering over algae coated machinery, tracing shapes whose original purposes were no longer obvious, and peering into openings that hinted at how the tug once functioned. Curiosity replaced expectation.

Upon surfacing, a Heli-jet lifted off from shore beside us. The sound snapped us back into the surface world. The RHIB picked us up and ferried us back to shore, underscoring just how active this stretch of harbour is — and why diving the Tug Queen requires planning and permission despite her central location.

The Tug Queen isn't a showpiece wreck. She doesn't offer sweeping swim throughs or dramatic silhouettes. What she offers instead is a chance to return to a working vessel, to see how time and life continue to reshape it, and to be reminded that some of the most interesting wrecks are the ones that ask you to look a little harder.

I left the water wishing for more time. More time to look closely at the structure, the life evolving with it, and how it will continue to change. Now that the Tug Queen has been revisited, those details become the starting point for the dives that follow.

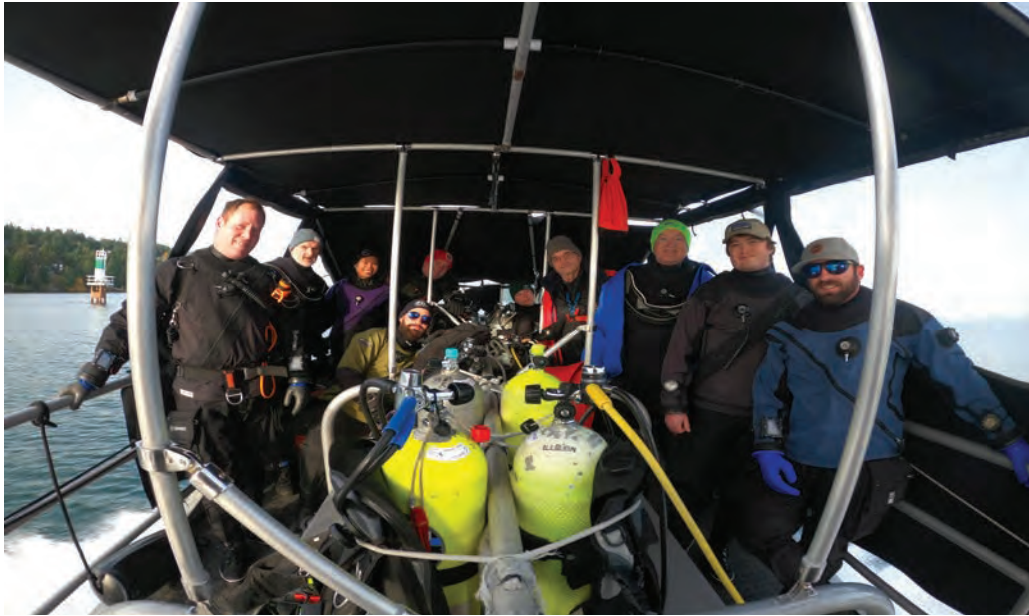
# Trip Report

## Handley-Page Hampden Bomber (P5433) & SS Trebla

By: Kail Pawson

### Divers & Crew:

Keith Karlsson (Captain), Jacques Marc (Expedition Leader), Craig Bellamy, Kail Pawson (Writer), Paul Spencer, Leila Bautista, Jiri Kotler, Tom Crisp, George Silvestrini, Chris Mills, Leslie Anne St. Amour, Grant MacDonald



Dive Group on way to Hampden Dive.

Photo by J Marc

### Dive One – Handley-Page Hampden Bomber P5433

The day November 9, 2025, was clear and crisp as we departed the Tulista dock in Sidney. Our captain, the legendary Keith Karlsson, set our trusty ship The Indie due north and pushed the throttle full. The divers chatted and discussed dive plans on the way as The Indie wrapped around Swartz Bay, narrowly clearing a rapidly departing BC ferry. Many divers were bound for their first gravesite dive, and the mood aboard reflected this—serious, respectful, yet ambitious.

Grant MacDonald and I set up our cameras and discussed survey goals with our fearless leader Jacques Marc as we neared the first dive site. Tom Crisp, alongside Chris Mills, conducted their pre-dive rebreather checks as the final preparations were made.

Jacques set the shot line, and Tom and Chris entered the water first to verify placement. With no movement observed, Grant and I descended second and deployed an SMB, confirming the line was positioned near the site. The well-placed

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shot landed near the aircraft's propeller, resting on the nearly flat sandy bottom amidst a rocky bench surrounded by large boulders. The mysterious yet fascinating remains of the aircraft lay around the prop and scattered in a linear pattern into the surrounding terrain - each component suspended in a profound unbroken stillness.

The aircraft's remains belong to Handley-Page Hampden bomber P5433, a twin-engine medium bomber built in Canada and assigned to RAF Operational Training Unit No. 32 at Patricia Bay in 1942. On 14 March 1943, the aircraft entered a spin during low-level night-flying exercises and crashed into Saanich Inlet. Only the pilot's body was recovered; the remaining crew were never found.

*The four airmen lost were:*

- *Pilot Officer Allan W. Hunt, RAAF (recovered)*
- *Pilot Officer Reginald K. Manttan, RAAF*
- *Pilot Officer Grant L. Hall, RCAF*
- *Sergeant Howard S. Piercy, RCAF*

A previous UASBC dive team, consisting of many of the same members present on this trip, laid a commemorative plaque near the aircraft's propeller on Saturday 9 November in 2024 to honour the fallen airmen; it was observed during this dive to be intact and clearly readable.

Visibility was clear though the water was dark, lending an eerie stillness to the scene. The dive profile ranged from 26–29 m, with water temperatures hovering between 9–10°C. Grant focused on still photography while I captured video, and Tom conducted photogrammetry to fill in gaps from previous UASBC surveys.

As we surveyed the propeller, three shoe soles lay scattered nearby - petrified in time on rock and sediment. Hovering slowly above them created an unmistakable connection to a wartime moment long past. This wreck, though undeniably beautiful, is both eerie and wondrous. Knowing you are diving a gravesite changes everything; history ceases to be abstract and becomes profoundly human.



Leila & Leslie Anne with Hampden Landing Gear.

Photo by J Marc

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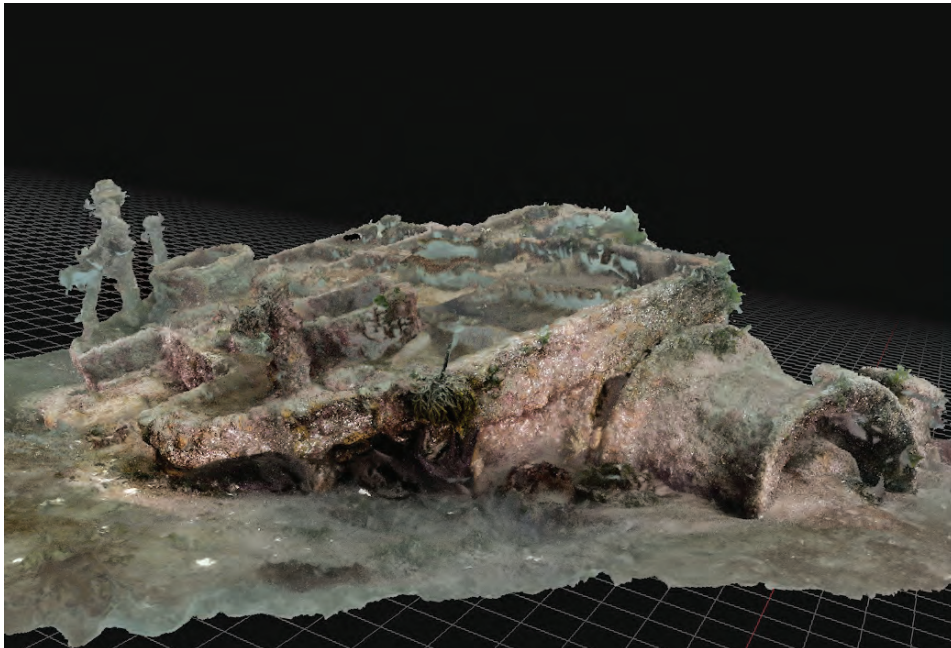
The surrounding topography resembled a hill perched on the edge of a canyon descending into darkness. From the propeller we moved to the landing gear resting on the lee side of the slope, making multiple passes to ensure thorough visual and photogrammetric coverage. After approximately 45 minutes, we ascended back to The Indie, completing minor decompression obligations and leaving the fallen airmen once more to their final resting place.

### **Dive Two – SS Trebla**

Our second site, the Trebla, lay in stark contrast. As we approached, it was hard to believe a ship of such size rested below us as The Indie nearly beached on the sandy shoreline of Cordova Spit.

Originally launched in 1868 as the Santa Cruz, the wooden-hulled steamer served for decades along the Pacific Coast before being rebuilt, and renamed Trebla (Albert spelled backwards), and converted into a tug-freighter operating out of Victoria. Her final voyage ended in 1924 when an engine-room fire forced the crew to abandon ship; she drifted onto Cordova Spit and sank in the shallow waters of Saanichton Bay, with all hands surviving.

Once again, Tom and Chris entered first, Tom deploying his full photogrammetry setup to document the boiler and other remaining structures. Grant and I followed, heading north-east in search of remnants of another lost wreck, the Skookum I. The seabed dropped gradually from 5 m to 22 m, but no additional wreckage was located. Visibility was limited to roughly 3 m, with suspended sediments and a water temperature near 10°C.



Photogrammetry Model completed on the Trebla towing winch.

(c) Tom Crisp

Returning south-west, we encountered the Trebla's surprisingly expansive remains. The boiler, fuel tanks, what seemed to be part of her bridge, and towing winch, were all remarkably intact though hidden from the surface, which was very odd given the shallow depth. We spent nearly an hour surveying the site, unencumbered by decompression requirements, before surfacing with a reasonable amount of gas left in our tanks.

Back aboard, high-fives were exchanged, Keiths' remaining cookies were consumed, and Captain Karlsson guided us safely back to Tulista dock – a mere 5 min boat ride away. A few members later gathered for well-earned beers, reflecting on a day that seamlessly blended archaeology, history, and human connection.

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