

FOGHORN



UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA VOL. 26 NO. 3 THIRD QUARTER

Back to the Queen

by: Jacques Marc



In January of 2013 the UASBC conducted a dive on the MV Queen, in Victoria's inner harbour, to check it out.

The Queen was a 30 metre live-aboard tug that sank at Fishermans Wharf December 15, 1993. Deemed to be a navigational hazard, the harbour master had it moved around the corner and sunk, just off the Heli-jet landing site, in 35 feet of water.

On our January dive we found the wooden hull to be heavily deteriorated, but that the prop, engine and fuel tanks were still inside the hull.

In August, I was corresponding with Charles Moore, a UASBC Member and Archaeologist with Golder's Consulting Ltd., when the topic of the Queen came up while discussing a research project. Charles mentioned that during the summer a fuel tank had bobbed to the surface in the vicinity of the Queen wreck. He went on to say that he (Golder's) had applied for a site alteration permit so that the Harbour Commission could remove the tank as it might contain pollutants.

However, when they went to retrieve the tank it was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Mysteries of the Alvera

by: Bill Meekel

In a remote part of Shuswap Lake, east of Kamloops, in 29 m of water lie the remnants of the tug Alvera. There is no doubt about the name of the wreck, since the name is still quite clearly painted on the transom. The mysteries around the wreck are more to do with the circumstances of its sinking.

The vessel was burned to the waterline, so the decks, internal timbers and cabin are all gone. The engine and transmission are still in place. The really strange issue is the rear hold which makes up the transom and fan

tail of the vessel. It was found full of rocks! Was this ballast or an effort to ensure the vessel sank once the fire had done its job?! The rear hold was not affected by the fire and is still intact. The prop is also missing. So was the vessel purposely sunk since it was 27 years old when lost in 1951? Then why was the engine and transmission not removed prior to sinking? Surely these would have had some value. Maybe the loss was an accident but then why was the rear hold full of rocks?

The vessel is known to local divers but only

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Editors Message *by: Matthew Bossons*

Sadly, following last editions record setting 10 pages, this edition is a dismal six in length. I've said it before, and I'll say it again - this publication is ran on the content of it's members, so if you enjoy it and want to see it be a success - then contribute. The delay in this issue was largely in part to the fact I had zero content, I can't publish a newsletter without material! If you find yourself on a dive, be it for fun or as part of an expedition, send me off a short story or some photos, anything is appreciated - bossonsmatthew@gmail.com.

I would also like to post a reminder about the photo contest that is going on now until December, below are some of the details:

The contest will consist of three categories:

Best static wreck photo:

Judges will be looking for a good quality image of a wreck explored in BC waters. Composition of this photo can include divers, flora or fauna although it is not required. This is the only photo category that does not need to be taken during a sanctioned UASBC dive.

Best wreck surveying photo:

For this photo divers are required to be in the image and they must be actively involved in surveying the wreck. The picture must be taken during a sanctioned UASBC dive.

Best above water photo from a UASBC dive:

This photo is an above water photograph. It can be from dive prep or clean up, or just a good looking group of divers hanging out and having fun! Be creative and remember these photos must be from a UASBC sanctioned dive.

****Submissions deadline is December 15th, check previous Foghorn eiditons for futher information - or contact me directly****

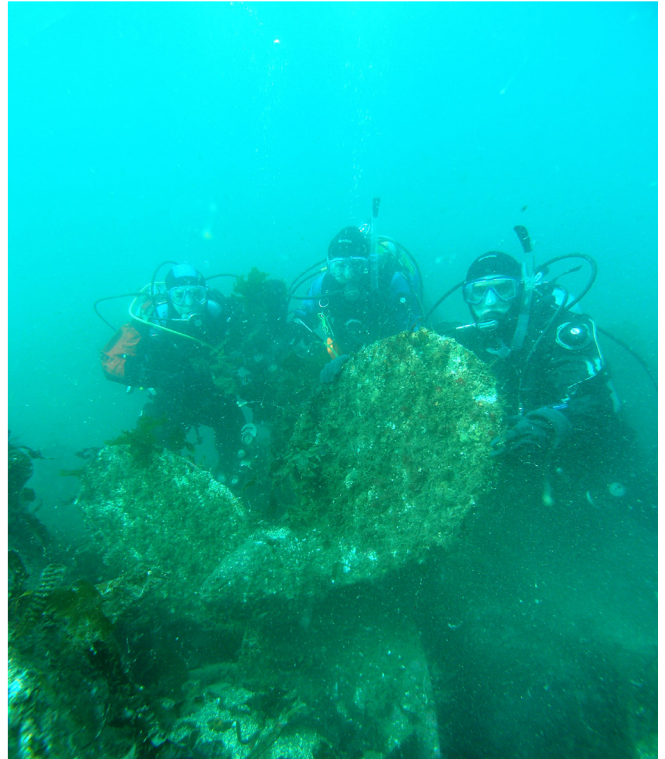
Back to the Queen *(continued)*

gone. Charles asked if we had been on the site recently and had noticed anything different. I said no, but that he had just given me a great idea for a fall dive.

I let the local membership know and four of us, Bob Simpson, Dean Driver, Jiri Kotler and I, hopped in the water on October 6th.

The tanks we documented in the winter were all still in their rightful places. We swam away from the wreck in a number of different directions but didn't find anything that resembled a fuel tank. Victoria harbour does have a few derelict fish boats on the bottom. I suspect that maybe the fuel tank drifted to the site from a different location. The fact that we didn't find it suggests that it drifted away in the same manner that it arrived.

After our short but successful dive, we retired to the Swiftsure Pub for a well deserved coffee and soup where we discussed our dive observations. to check the site out. We found no change in the wreck what-so-ever.



Gambier Wreck Found

by: Matt Bossons

The Gambier Island 'mystery wreck', as it had come to be known, had proven elusive for a past UASBC expedition to locate - but that all changed this summer.

On two separate occasions I have been fortunate enough to dive on the newly discovered wreck. Its ghostly figure proved breathtaking, even underwater - where stolen breath seems decidedly dangerous.

The vessel is wooden hulled and roughly 109 ft. in length. Loose cable and wire dangle from overhead - creating a spider web-like mess of potentially risky swimming. The wreck sits in, at its deepest point, 120 ft. of water, while the wheelhouse sits in roughly 80 ft.

No name was visible or decipherable to any member of the past two expeditions, so finding the vessels history of use may prove difficult. A friendly woman, who lives in the bay the wreck is located in, approached us after a dive a few weeks back to inform us that the boat anchored there when her husband purchased their property in 2000. There were rumours that someone purchased the ship with plans of restoring it for use in movies and that it simply 'disappeared' one night.

The wheelhouse has two large steel doors that make accessing the room very difficult. One door refuses to move, while the other can be opened with considerably effort. Inside the long forgotten room appears to sit one remaining chair, a RADAR console - a minimum of 30 years old according to my brother, and a VHF radio.

Reasonable degradation of the starboard side of the hull has exposed an open galley, or possibly a walk around, beneath the wheelhouse.

This dive is with good reason one of the more spectacular wrecks in the area. It is untouched, unmapped and waiting for exploration. Another benefit, but also a large risk, is the fact it was sunk randomly and quickly - meaning it hasn't been heavily stripped, like you may find on an artificial reef wreck.

This will be a wreck that will likely yield our attention for the near future, with lots to see and study.

See Page 5 for photos.

Mysteries of the Alvera (continued)



a 35 hp gas or diesel (?) engine on board. The owner was listed as Rolf Bruhn from Sicamous. Mr. Bruhn was probably well known in the area since one of the Shuswap Lake ferries (Scotch Creek to Sorrento) was named after him.

The sinking date is reported to be April 10, 1951. A visit to the Kamloops Museum to search through the archives was fruitless. It was expected that with an accurate sinking date that the Kamloops Sentinel newspaper of the day would have an article about the loss of the vessel. Vessels such as the Alvera were an important part of the lake transportation system of the day. This also included numerous sternwheelers and other service vessels such as the Whitesmith. Thus the loss of such a vessel would probably have been very significant to the families and businesses around the lake and the story of the fire and loss would have made it to the papers.

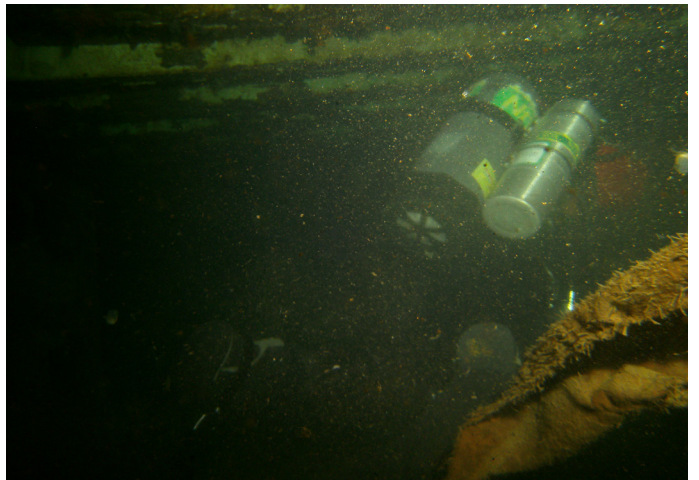
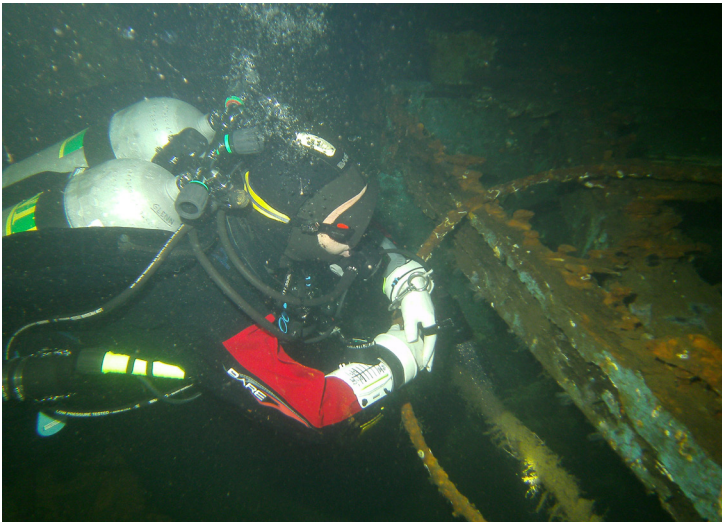
very rarely visited due to the difficulty in accessing the site. However local divers know next to nothing about the wreck. The vessel is near the Narrows on Shuswap Lake. However there is no road access and the nearest boat launch is 7 km away.

However a recent review survey of Canadian Maritime vessels has located some info about the vessel. The registration number is 151202. It was built in 1924 in Steveston, BC and the hull was all wood. The unburned stern section is still in good shape and the vessel had some very nice lines. So the vessel had to be transported by land to the BC interior location where it spent part of its life. It was 10 metres long, 2.8 metres wide and 1.3 metres deep. It had a gross tonnage of 11 tons and had

The above photo of the bow looking rear ward gives an idea of the depth of the hull and how much of the vessel was consumed by the fire. The search for more information will have to continue in Sicamous, a little closer to home. A visit is planned to the archives in Sicamous to learn more about Mr Bruhn and his vessel the Alvera.



Gambier Wreck Photos



Upcoming dives

Sunday November 10

Southern Vancouver Island – New information has come to light regarding the possible location of

several railway cars off Sidney Spit. We will go to the reported location and search for the

remains. We will do a second dive on the GB Church.

Both dives are suitable for basic open water divers.

Cost \$80 per person. Limit 8 divers.

Contact Jacques (250) 474-5797 or email: jmarc@shaw.ca.

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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Vancouver Speakers

Shipwreck Diving in Ontario

Wednesday, October 30, 2013 - 19:30 - 21:00

Speaker: Keith Bossons, underwater explorer

Title: Shipwreck Diving in Ontario

Description: photos from a 2 week dive trip to the premiere shipwrecks in Ontario

