

Cowper Search & Bedwell Harbour Reef Net Site Exploration

By Ewan Anderson



Chris Locker with small admiralty type anchor. Photo by Ewan Anderson.

UASBC divers had a busy weekend in mid-September, with two back-to-back expeditions in the Southern Gulf Islands. On Saturday, September 14, conditions were at last favourable to dive on the east side of Saturna Island to search for the wreck of the Cowper, a sailing ship built in Massachusetts in 1854 and wrecked near Tumbo Island in late November, 1869. The Cowper is referenced in contemporary newspapers as a clipper ship, but we have been unable to track down information about her construction and she does not appear on any list of New England clipper ships.

The Cowper served as a worldwide freighter during a 16 year career on the seas. In 1869 she was sold and sailed for Nanaimo to serve in the coal trade between

Vancouver Island and San Francisco. Cowper made a total of seven trips – one round trip per month – between Nanaimo and San Francisco before her wrecking near dawn on Sunday, November 21. On that morning, the fully loaded ship struck a reef northwest of Tumbo Island and settled down onto the rock. The captain and crew set out in the ship's boat for Victoria from where HMS Boxer was dispatched to help. Salvage began almost immediately the following week, although there were still plans to save the ship for several more weeks. On December 17, the Cowper is reported to have disappeared from the reef.

Almost 150 years later, a small group of divers from the UASBC loaded up the Miss Emily at Tulista boat ramp in

Sydney. On board were Jiri Kotler, Bob Simpson, Paul Spencer, Chris Locker, skipper Lyle and me the recorder. After arriving just before slack tide, Jiri, Bob and Paul jumped in first and surveyed the top of the reef, east-southeast towards Tumbo Island. Chris and I jumped in with our DPVs after the first group surfaced, starting our survey from Cabbage Island and following the 18 m deep contour for approximately 1.5 km to the west-northwest. Team 1 jumped in again for the third dive of the day – following the top of the inner reef, swimming east-southeast. By the time of their dive, the currents had picked up and the three divers quickly scattered like leaves in a strong breeze!

We did not manage to locate the wreck of the Cowper, but members of both dive groups spotted some iron or steel pins scattered just downslope of the top of the outer reef, approximately 1 km west-northwest of Cabbage Island. The DPV divers also located a small admiralty type anchor and chain at the bottom of the reef, downslope of the other finds. Underwater visibility at all depths was astounding – easily in excess of 20 m. There is plenty more ground to cover at this site, but given the strong currents and exposure to the weather, choosing the best days to dive will continue to be a challenge.

On Sunday, September 15, an even smaller group of divers loaded the Miss Emily again at the Tulista boat ramp. With me were Jiri, Warren Bush and Damien Harabalja, and Katie Hughes from the UVic Legacy Art Gallery. In overcast and flat-calm conditions we sped off for our dive site – and made it a few hundred metres before stopping to witness the spectacle of two huge sea lions feeding on a large halibut or skate. Just your typical West Coast animal encounter!

After this interruption we made it to Bedwell Harbour on Pender Island and the location of a traditional reef net fishing site – st'áis – located at the entrance to the harbour. Reef-netting was an important fishing method used (uniquely) by the Coast Salish. It involved setting complex nets between two canoes along constrictions in migration routes of salmon. Thousands of salmon could be caught per day using this method. This method and a variety of other very effective indigenous

fishing methods were banned by the government over a century ago. Katie Hughes is gathering material for an exhibit on this traditional fishing method, and she had commissioned the UASBC to get some underwater video of this particular site.

Trained to spot pieces of wood and iron from 100-year-old shipwrecks, us divers were challenged to untangle the underwater mystery of a millennia-old fishing site. The sea floor is rocky and uneven, and covered in rocks; hundreds and hundreds of rocks varying in size from softballs to basketballs. Kelp covers the bedrock and rock piles alike, and the underwater visibility was very poor. We surfaced after first dive with far more questions than answers. Undaunted, Katie suggested that perhaps most or all of the rocks we saw were once used as anchor stones for canoes and reef nets, and her enthusiasm for our descriptions of the confusing underwater jumble inspired us to make a second dive. This time we focused on capturing video showing the site's ambiance (kelp flowing in the current, piles of unmodified stones, and divers exploring – salmon-like). We also took more time to examine individual rocks, looking for cultural modifications which might indicate anchor stones designed to have been retrieved after use.

The dives on this new-to-us kind of site were definitely interesting. I think that further exploration of other reef net sites, and some opportunities to learn more about the current resurgence in this fishing practice from Coast Salish nations would increase our appreciation of these sites.

2020 Spring Exploration Dive Schedule

Saturday, February 8th Southern Van Isle

We will try another attempt to dive on the iron bark Swordfish, wrecked on South Bedford Island in 1877. Our second dive will be at the Smyth Head Reef Net site where we hope to lay down a baseline in an effort to make sense of the possible Reef Net layout. This dive is suitable for all open water divers. We will depart from Pedder Bay.

Charter \$90 per person. Limit 8 divers.

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

Saturday, March 21st South Van Isle.

We will dive the wreck of the Iroquois as a kick off to re-inventorying South Vancouver Island wreck sites.

Our second dive current permitting will be off Dock Island looking for aircraft pieces.

Iroquois is a deep dive with potential current. Divers must have logged a minimum of 4 dives to a depth of 110 feet to participate. We will depart from Tulista Boat launch in Sidney.

Charter \$90 per person. Limit 8 divers.

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

Sunday, April 5th Central Island

We will dive the wreck of the Alpha a 220 foot iron steamer that wrecked on Chrome Island December 15, 1900.

Our second dive may be on the tug Anna Foss which sank in Deep Bay in 2016.

This dive is suitable for all open water divers. We will depart from Deep Bay near Bowser.

Charter \$90 per person. Limit 8 divers.

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

April 2020

Okanagan Landing Exploration - This project was re-scheduled to 2020. The plan is to search the eastern shoreline around Okanagan Landing using side scan looking for artifacts and the hull of the SS Aberdeen which was beached around OK Landing.

Contact Bill: billmeekel@gmail.com for more information or to join the group.

Saturday, May 9th - Southern Van Isle

Trip to search for the wreck of the sailing barque Rosalia, lost off the southern tip of Discovery Island in March 1868. Our second dive will be on the wreck of the tug Storm King wrecked on Trial Island December 17, 1941. This dive is suitable for all open water divers. We will depart from Cattle Point.

Cost: \$90.00 per person. Limit 8 divers.

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

May 2020

SS Minto, Arrowhead and Beaton Arm Explorations - This project will again be using sidescan and magnetometer. The mag work in 2019 did identify a deep target in 500 ft of water. There is also a plan to use the search gear around the Arrowhead and Beaton townsites looking for targets such as the steam tug SS Yale and paddlewheeler SS Nakusp.

Contact Bill: billmeekel@gmail.com for more information or to join the group.

June 2020

Kootenay Wreck Tour - This trip will a chance for UASBC members to dive some of the wrecks in the Upper Arrow Lake (SS Bonnington and Nakusp waterfront), Slocan Lake (SS Slocan and Silverton Box cars) and Kootenay Lake (Proctor rail cars and SS Ymir).



**THE MARITIME
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

Serving the Pacific Northwest and Beyond

Columbia River Shipwreck Conference

Columbia River Maritime Museum, Astoria, OR

February 08, 2020.

The event will include presentations and project updates on shipwrecks in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.

Keynote Address:

The Final Frontier: Maritime Archaeology in the Extreme Deep

Dr. James Delgado, PhD, Underwater Archaeologist

James Delgado has been actively working in the final frontier, both in manned submersibles and remotely operated vehicles for decades, including two missions to Titanic, and a range of other projects that included the first tele-presence-enabled deep water archaeological excavation of a shipwreck in the Gulf of Mexico. In this wide-ranging presentation, he will take us on a journey to a number of sites to address tele-presence and the potential of shipwreck archaeology in the final frontier. Among those wrecks are SS Ituna, lost off California en-route to Oregon, and the freighter Coast Trader, lost to Japanese submarine attack in the Straits of Juan de Fuca, both wrecks he investigated with Dr. Robert Ballard's Ocean Exploration Trust on the E/V Nautilus.

Tickets for MAS/CRMM members will be \$30 USD

and for non-MAS members will cost \$45

To purchase your ticket visit the MAS Website.

<http://maritimarchaeological.org/>

SHIPWRECKS 2020

Maritime Archaeology on the West Coast

Date: March 28, 2020

Location: Cedar Hill Golf Course, 1400 Derby Rd, Victoria, BC

Day Session

Cost \$40.00 Registration 08:30 AM

Topics & Speakers

Ancient Sea Gardens (Clam Gardens)

John Harper, PhD, Marine Geologist

Reef Net Fishing: The Underwater Perspective

Ewan Anderson, RPCA, Consulting Archaeologist

U/W Excavations and Resulting Finds in Esquimalt Harbour

Tom Bown, RBCM & Rob Field, RPCA, Consulting Archaeologist

Historic Shipwrecks of the Southern Gulf Islands

Jacques Marc, FRCGS, Explorations Director, UASBC

Drowned Landscapes of the Continental Shelf

Quentin Mackie, PhD, Anthropologist, Uvic.

Maritime Archaeological Society Activities in Oregon.

Chris Dewey, President, Maritime Archaeological Society,

Dinner & Woodward Lecture

Inside the Franklin Expedition: Exploring the Interior of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror.

Marc-Andre Bernier, Manager, Parks Canada Underwater Archaeology Services

Location: Cedar Hill Golf Course

No Host Bar 6:00 PM

Price \$50.00

To purchase tickets using PayPal visit WWW.UASBC.Com

To pay the old fashion way contact: John (250) 743-4495 or Jacques (250) 474-5797

email: josa@telus.net

Sponsors: UASBC, Aqualung Canada, and Wilson Diving



We are looking for additional sponsors. If you have any ideas contact Jacques or John.

Deep Cove Barge

By: Jacques Marc



Bollard and Railway Tracks at bow of Barge.

Photo by J Marc

Organizing local shore dives can be a little bit like the Victoria Hop on Hop off tourist bus. You never know how many divers will show up. I didn't expect a big turnout for the Deep Cove Barge but it was important to provide a dive opportunity for UASBC members in November. Despite being advertised on the UASBC website slide show, only four people signed up. As November 10th approached, that number dwindled to two. Gabe Hill was keen to see the wreck, so I told him it was a go. We met at the end of Setchell road on queue at 09:30. Gabe brought his friend Marcus, so our numbers swelled to three.

We suited up and headed for the shoreline, which is a short walk from the parking lot.

Upon entering the water Marcus found he could not stop his regulator from free flowing, so aborted the dive. We were back to a single buddy pair. I set a compass course for the day marker at the end of the Deep Cove Marina wharf and we started our 150 meter swim. After about 10 minutes we arrived at the barge in 45 feet of water. The story of

the barge is a bit of a mystery. It was moored in Maple Bay for years. In the 1970's it was moved to Deep Cove to act as breakwater. In already poor condition, it sank within a year of arriving at Deep Cove. The UASBC did a preliminary survey on the barge in the early 1990s. We found it was 62 meters (203 feet) long by 12.7 meters (41.5 feet) wide and it had three sets of railway tracks on it. Gabe and I explored the bow to start. It consists of a large steel end piece which would have been used to for docking. The three sets of tracks are defined still extant on the bow piece. After exploring the bow we travelled down the port side of the hull. At the stern in 42 feet of water we found a trim/ballast tank and a steering quadrant and rudder. We next worked our way across the stern and travelled back to the bow through the middle of the wreckage. En-route we swam through schools of shiners and saw several good sized Ling Cod. Back at the bow we set our return course for Setchell Road. I hadn't been on the barge for 3-4 years and found it to be a leisurely 40 minute dive.

Underwater Explorers Speaker Series Victoria 2020

JANUARY 8

Dive Free Like A Fish!

Chris Adair – Free diving Instructor/owner of Bottom Dwellers

Chris Adair has been free diving the waters of British Columbia his whole life. He is a certified free diver instructor through Performance Free diving International. He now pursues his passion for free diving by teaching others and offers many courses through his company “Bottom Dwellers” based here in Victoria. Come and hear about the art and science of free diving.

FEBRUARY 12

Exploring Antarctica

Jiri Kotler- UASBC Diver and Explorer

This will be a presentation on a visit to Antarctica by Alex & Jiri Kotler on board of MV Plancius during February 2019. It covers encounters with wildlife, pictures of pristine scenery, snap-shots of history and other adventures while on land and at sea.”

MARCH 11

Diving Medical Emergencies

Andrew Britton – Dive master and BCEHS Unit Chief

Andrew has been training divers for many years and is also a unit chief with the BC Emergency health Services. He will talk to us about the types of diving related medical emergencies which divers can find themselves involved in and will also relate some of his own personal experiences from his work.

**The UASBC Victoria Chapter meets at
The offices of Terra Archaeology
45 Bastion Square in Victoria
at 07:00 PM
The 2nd Wednesday of the month**

A Report from the Field – The Smyth Head Reef net site and the wreck of the Barnard Castle

By Rob Field

On the blustery morning of October 20th, 2019, a group of UASBC's finest was not available so another group went out. Led by Jacques Marc, joined by stalwart, reliable, and solid divers Jiri Kolter, Paul Spencer, and Ewan Anderson. New to the UASBC divers, Jim Dixon and Jason Cook; and lastly, your correspondent, Rob Field.

We launched from Pedder Bay with Erin Bradley as skipper operating the Juan de Fuca Warrior. Our goal to dive the wreck of the Swordfish, located just off the mouth of Becher Bay. As luck would have it, the tides would not cooperate that morning, forcing us to our second proffered dive location, an ancient reef netting site in Becher Bay. This site was initially recorded by archaeologist Norm Alexander Easton in 1985 and again by Charles Moore with Golder Associates April 5-7 2009.

We set anchor onto the sand bottom between two natural reefs and rolled over the side as three dive teams, assigned to locate the reefs and keep an eye out for stones and boulders that "stood out" essentially anything that was different than the regular bottom topography, including smoothed out, pecked, and ground individual stones and isolated clusters of stones.

The dive went extremely well, we splashed into minimal current with exceptional visibility at all depths in the water column. Further, we were treated to excellent surface exposure as the kelp and seasonal marine growth were largely absent.

Shortly into the dive, Jacques swam over to my team, signaled us to follow and zoomed off at a speed that would challenge the average harbour-seal.

We followed Jacques to one of those "eureka" moments (Figure 1). There before us was a brilliant artifact sitting upright on the sea-floor clustered amidst a circle of reef-net stones. After a nods and fist-bumps, we commenced shooting video and stills of the find as Jacques watched from a distance, smiling behind his regulator.



Figure 1: Jacques Marc proudly showing a perforated stone anchor, easily the discovery of the day.

Photo by Rob Field.

Continued on page 9

Once we were satisfied that we had taken enough stills and video, we signalled to Jacques, who swam over and replaced the anchor-stone to its original in situ position, prone on the sea floor (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Perforated anchor stone laying flat on the seafloor

Photo by Rob Field.

We surfaced after about 50 minutes of surveying for more artifacts and features. Jim and Ewan descended again to get a better position on the anchor stone, then we recovered our marker, pulled anchor and motored out of the sheltered bay and into the rolling seas of Juan de Fuca Strait; next stop, the wreck of the Barnard Castle in Pilot Bay!

The wreck site of the Barnard Castle is testament to the success of the UASBC in terms of public education and conservation. The preservation of the wreck can largely be credited to the UASBC placing a series of seven interpretive plaques around the site. Each plaque describes different aspects of the site and history off the ship and sinking event. The wreck lies in a very

exposed location in Pilot Bay which made our dive challenging in the surge and shifting currents on the site. The wreck has changed little since I last visited it about 5 years ago (need to check my log). The visibility was poor at about 6-10 feet (2-3 metres), however the collapsed deck, stern tube and boilers were easily identifiable.

For more information on the Barnard Castle, look at the UASBC publication: *Historic Shipwrecks of Southern Vancouver Island*.

After completing our dive on the Barnard Castle we travelled back to Pedder Bay and retired to the Pedder Bay Marina to discuss our discoveries and sip on a well deserved Shipwreck Pale Ale.

UASBC Presidents' message

Winter 2019

by: Keith Bossons

Hi Everyone,

Well this will be the last Foghorn for 2019.

The Society has had a busy year with a lot of accomplishments. The South Gulf Island project is pretty much wrapped up and the Shipwreck report is written. It is currently being edited and we should hopefully have it printed in time for the Shipwrecks conference. This will be the first new publication that the UASBC has produced since Central Coast Report was published back in 2010. A big thanks to Jacque Marc and Warren Bush for all their hard work in writing the report and to all those that participated in the diving and data collection.

Our Shipwrecks Conference will be in Victoria this year on March 28, 2020. Keep an eye out for more details early in the new year.

The UASBC Board of Directors met for a planning meeting in Victoria this past October. We spent a day sharing ideas and trying to shape the direction of the Society for the next few years. With the Gulf Island project wrapping up we will be looking at new project activities in 2020. Our Explorations Director, Jacques Marc, is working on the dive schedule for 2020 so if you are interested in participating keep an eye on the web site for details once available.

If anyone of you are interested in getting more involved in running the society or participating in explorations activities, please let me know. We could certainly use another person or two on board of directors to bring some new ideas and help spread out the workload a bit.

In closing I would just like to wish everybody a happy holiday season.

I hope to see you all out at a UASBC event in 2020.

All the best
Keith Bossons
UASBC President

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

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