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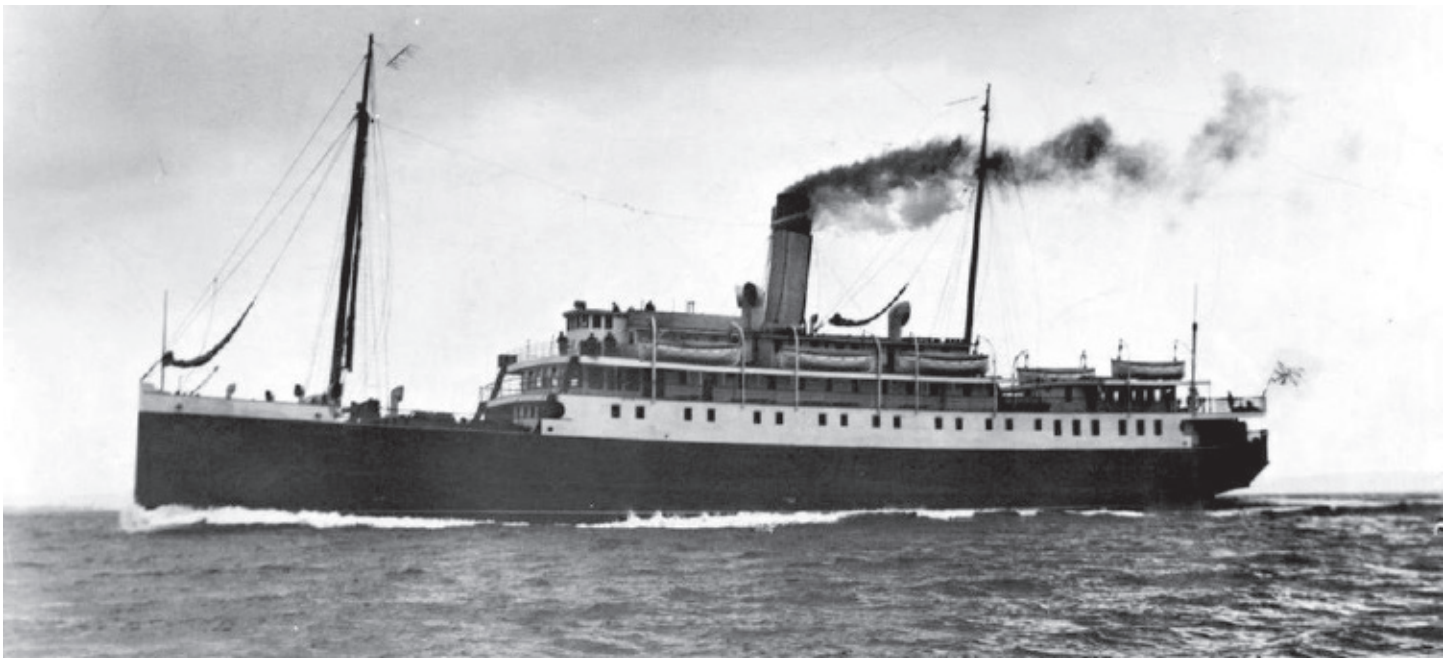
UASBC Underwater Archaeological Society of BC

Underwater Archaeological Society of British Columbia Vol. 34 No. 2 Second Quarter

The Princess Sophia
A Wreck to Remember

By Jacques Marc



Princess Sophia underway. Courtesy: BC Archives G-03759

A dive on the tragic Princess Sophia has been on my bucket list for years, and a friend Annette Smith in Juneau had regularly offered to put me on it. October 25, 2018 is the centenary of her sinking and as such, I felt it a fitting time to make the trip. My wife Jeanette decided that she wasn't interested in sitting around on a small boat for 5 days, so I asked Paul Spencer if he would be interested. There was no hesitation on his part.

Our departure date May 30th came up quickly. Jeanette drove Paul and I to the Victoria airport at 03:45AM as our flight to Juneau via Seattle was at 05:20. Argh! Our short Horizon Air hop to Seattle was on time. When we arrived at Seattle Custom's we were asked the usual questions. When we replied that we were going diving in Alaska the Customs Officer looked at us a bit perplexed. He said most people head south. The remainder of the trip went as planned and we arrived in Juneau at 12:30 local time where Annette picked us up. Our first stop was to get tanks and weights for the dives.

Thursday morning arrived early, the alarm going off at 05:30. We were at the boat by 7:00 and by 8:30 we were on site at Vanderbilt Reef. The weather gods were watching over us. The water was flat calm and there was no current despite some of the largest tidal

Continued on page 2

The Princess Sophia - A wreck to Remember *(continued)*

exchanges of the year.

We were anxious to get in the water, but we first had to wait for some local divers to put a marker on the wreck. Finally at 10:00 AM Paul and I rolled into the water and started our descent.

The first 40 feet of water were mucky with plankton not unlike at home.

At 50 feet we got under it and what a sight to behold. The bow of the Sophia was there in front of us covered in brilliant white Plumose anemones from top to bottom.

The Canadian Pacific BC Coast Service had the Princess Sophia built in England especially for the Victoria, Vancouver - Skagway route. Built of steel, she was 245 feet long and called a "pocket liner" because she offered amenities like a great Ocean Liner, but on a smaller scale.

Her licensed passenger capacity was 500 people.

The Victoria Daily Colonist describes Princess Sophia upon her arrival at Victoria, BC May 21, 1912.

Forward on the upper deck is a finely built and appointed observation room.

The smoking room, set by itself in a deckhouse on the upper deck aft, is excellently and comfortably appointed. Forward is a spacious social hall, with a piano, and there are staterooms handsomely finished at either side. The dining room is aft on the main deck. It seats 112 people is finished in mahogany with maple panels.

Princess Sophia smoking lounge. on upper deck

Courtesy: BC Archives j00144

Princess Sophia set sail from Skagway at 11:00 PM on October 23rd 1918 with 344 passengers and crew.

After passing Battery Point, a short distance south of Haines, the steamer ran into a blinding snow-storm which continued down Lynn Canal until she ran on to Vanderbilt Reef at 3:10 AM on the 24th

A May Day was issued immediately upon the grounding. The first rescue vessel the 85 foot SS Petersen arrived on scene at 09:00 AM. Captain Locke aboard the Sophia had the life boats swung out, but was fearful he will lose passengers if there was an attempt to launch the lifeboats in the rough seas.

Princess Sophia Hard Aground on Vanderbilt Reef.

Winter & Pond Photo, ASL-P87-1702

Rescue plans are postponed until the morning of the 25th. On October 25th the winds are worse, but the vessel is solidly on the reef so there isn't a lot of concern. By this time the 200 foot rescue vessel SS Cedar is is standing by and is able to communicate with the Sophia by wireless. Both Captains agree that there is little hope of rescue until the winds abate. The SS Cedar retires to the lee of Sentinel Island. At 4:50 PM the Cedar receives a distress call from Sophia "Taking on water and foundering, for God's sake come and save us". At 5:20 the telegraph operator sends one final

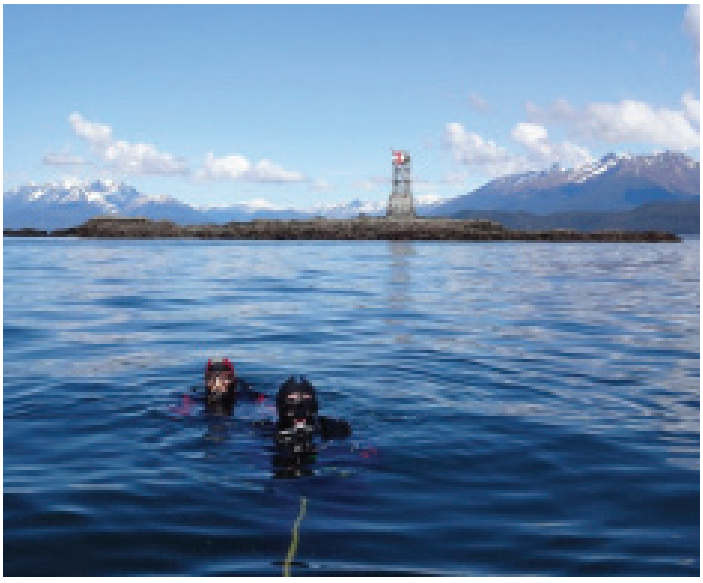
Continued on page 3

The Princess Sophia - A wreck to Remember *(continued)*

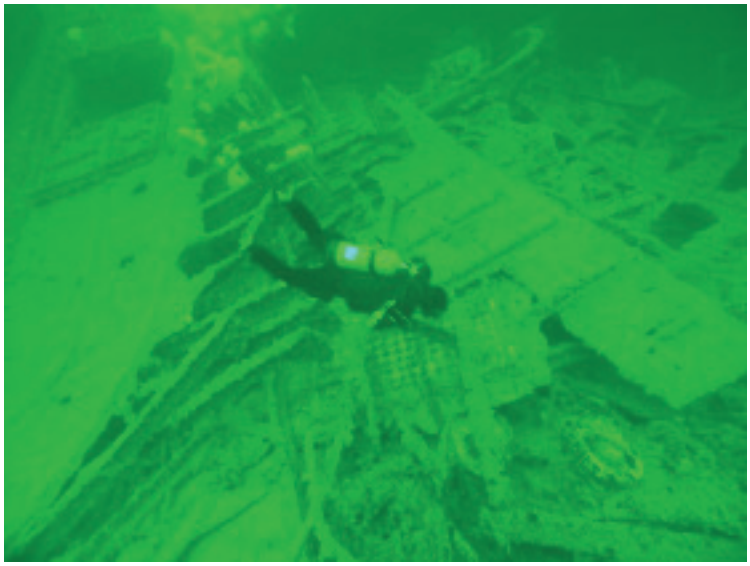
message " for Gods sake hurray water coming in room". The strong northwest winds and large waves spun the Sophia around on the reef tearing a hole in her double bottom and she sank with the loss of all passengers and crew.

After taking in the bow, Paul and I make a beeline for the stern. It lies in 130 feet of water and is the deepest part of the wreck. There we saw the rudder and one fluke of the propeller. The rest was buried in the sediment. After viewing the prop we climbed back up to deck level and explored the amidships as we make our way back to the bow.

In all we had six fabulous dives on the Sophia. She lies well heeled over on her port side, with much of her contents spilling out and raveling down slope producing an unrecognizable jumble of ship bits. She is intact along the keel but the hull has deteriorated and fallen in at the boiler room and again at the forward hold. Amongst the jumble amidships we could see toilets, sinks, bathtubs and well as deck winches. The mast which was the only visible vestige of the ship after she sank, lies in situ just down slope from the bow.



Vanderbilt Reef on a calm day. Photo by Annette Smith

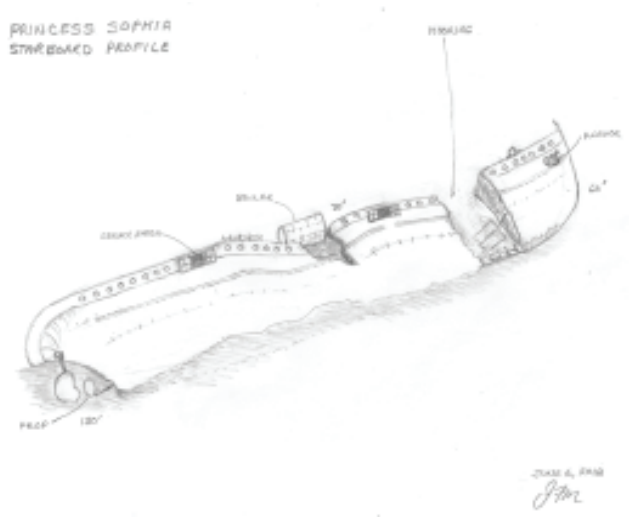


Paul Spencer swimming over wreckage amid-ship. Note the tiles and toilets in the wreckage. Photo by J. Marc

The Sophia has never been surveyed and most sport divers don't always know what they are looking at.

Because I like to be able to put context to a site I took a stab at drawing what I saw.

It is a start but she really needs to be documented in a more serious manner.



Princess Sophia starboard profile by J. Marc.

A special Thank you to Annette Smith for hosting us.

Searching for the Wrecks of Discovery Island

By Warren Bush

UASBC divers ushered in the 2018 summer exploration schedule on 10 June by searching the waters surrounding Discovery Island for the elusive Rosalia. If divers successfully located the wreck, they had a secondary objective of diving the known location of the Fanny to assess its condition. Both vessels went aground while being towed out of the straits by the steam tug Isabel after two separate towing hawsers parted during a "severe sou'easter" in March 1868.

Personnel rallied at Victoria's scenic Cattle Point for 0800, and loaded the stalwart Juan de Fuca Warrior with dive gear. After completing the requisite UASBC paperwork and vessel familiarization, the participants embarked Warrior and transited the short distance to Seabird Point on the south shore of Discovery Island. The weather couldn't have been better - bright sunshine and fifteen degrees with moderate winds from the Southwest. The team consisted of: Jacques Marc, Jiri Kotler, Ewan Anderson, George Silvestrini, Paul Spencer, Rob Field and Warren Bush (the indomitable Erin Bradley skippered the Warrior).

Rosalia was a 280-ton barque that went aground near Seabird Point on 19 March 1868. The master, one Captain Endiza, had loaded 150,000 feet of lumber at Burrard Inlet's Stamp's Mills and was bound for the vessels home port of Honolulu. Fanny was a 896-ton Quebec built, British flagged sailing vessel skippered by Captain Arthur, who had loaded 1,330 tons of coal at Nanaimo and intended to transit to the ship's home port of San Francisco. The tug Isabel, piloted by 'Captain Pamphlet' made fast Rosalia in Burrard Inlet on Wednesday 18 March, and the same afternoon encountered Fanny and offered his services to her. By late Wednesday afternoon Pamphlet had attached a towing hawser from Isabel's stern to Fanny, and a second towing hawser led from Fanny's stern to Rosalia. The motley flotilla sailed south through the Strait of Georgia, Boundary Pass, and Haro Strait, but around 2330 on Thursday 19 March a "severe sou'wester suddenly sprang up and continued until daylight with scarcely any intermission." Victoria's Daily Colonist reported that "shortly after the gale commenced the Rosalia's hawser parted and after beating about…struck on Discovery Island. The Fanny continued a short distance with the Isabel, when her hawser also parted, and before sail could be set she, too, was driven on Discovery Island." 19 March 1868 would not have been a high point in Captain Pamphlet's towing career. Both wrecks settled into the rocky outcroppings surrounding Discovery Island where local salvers relieved the stricken vessels of cargo and useful items. Fanny lay undiscovered until the UASBC successfully located the wreck in 1988. The society located the site of the Rosalia the following year, but exact coordinates were not recorded. The site of the Rosalia eluded a UASBC trip to find her in 2012.

Juan de Fuca Warrior off Discovery Island. Photo by Ewan Anderson

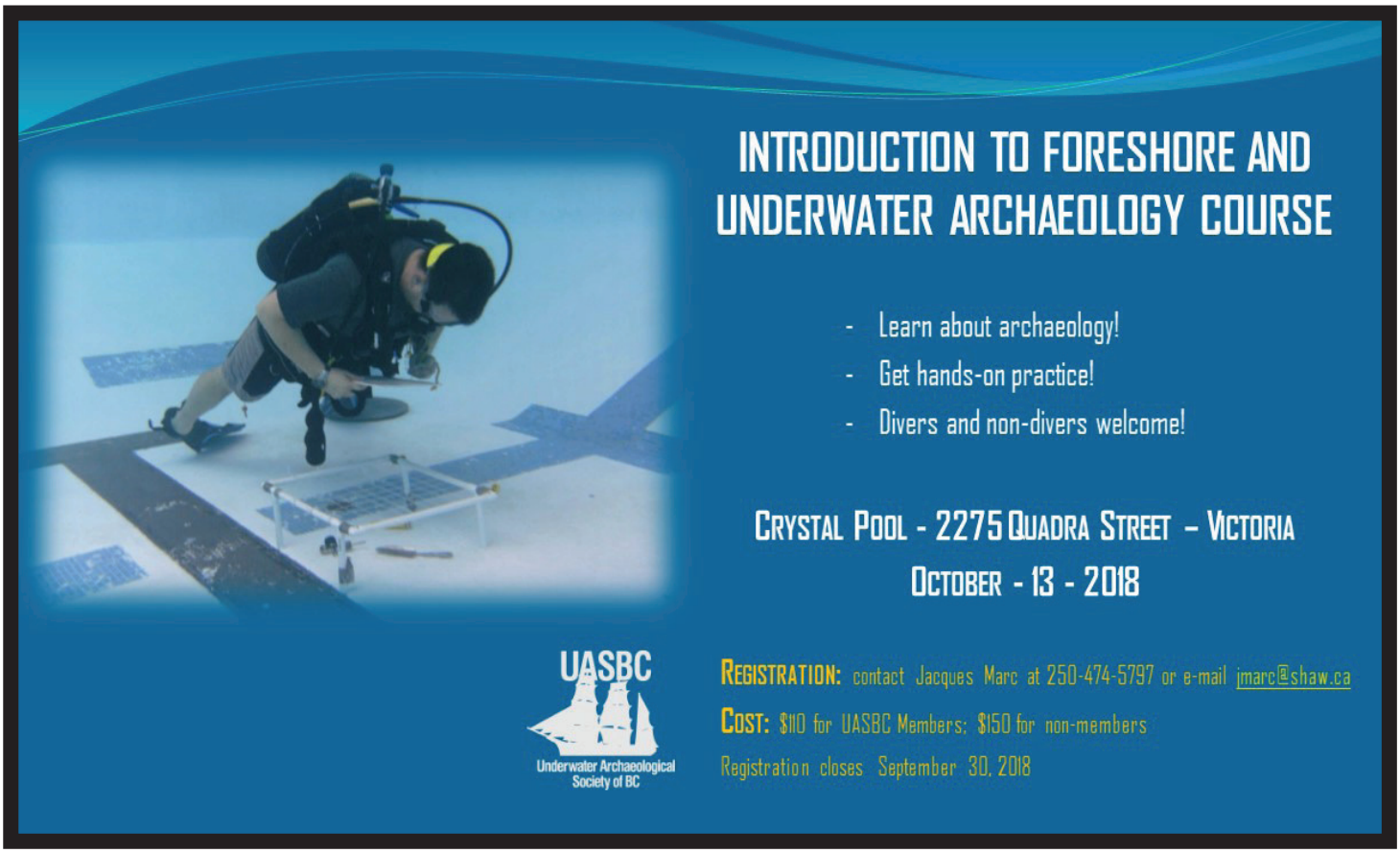
Continued on page 5

Divers preparing to search for Rosalia Photo by J . Marc

Warrior took position to the west of where UASBC unsuccessfully searched in 2012, and the seven divers scoured the area. The team assessed visibility at approximately 6 meters, and the area is home to a significant amount of bull kelp, which doesn't make locating objects particularly easy. The divers located a few of Rosalia's brass drift bolts, although other remnants of the wreck remained elusive (including the anchor, which the 1989 expedition located). However, the trip resolved the previous uncertainty surrounding the site's exact location.

Warrior then motored along the shore of Discovery Island to its eastern side, and took station on the site of the Fanny. The divers descended and explored the site, using the large chain to navigate between the three distinct sections of the wreck: the bow, midship, and stern sections. Similar to the Rosalia site, a significant amount of bull kelp made interpretation difficult - but hey, it's not every day that you get to dive a 162 year old shipwreck, complete with one of the only cannons ever located on a west coast wreck.

Jacques with a few of the brass drift bolts found on the Rosalia site Photo by Ewan Anderson



Presidents message Sept 2018

by: Keith Bossons

Hi everyone,

I hope you have all had a wonderful summer. As we move into the fall period we are beginning to ramp up activities for the rest of the year. Jacques has published the fall diving schedule and I encourage everyone to get involved with the project activities. We will also be attempting to put an ROV on a target we believe to be the Cowichan latter this month.

We are constantly in need of people to help us with organizing activities or getting involved in a leadership role, so if you would like to get more involved with the Society, please reach out to me.

Check out the website for speaker series dates and other events. The 2019 Shipwrecks conference will be in the lower mainland this year and we are just starting to plan for that event. More to come on that in the near future.

All the best
Keith Bossons
UASBC President

Explorations Schedule Fall 2018

Saturday & Sunday - September 15 & 16
A small group will accompany Mike Clement to McCall Bank to check out a recent Hydrographic Service find with a ROV. The goal is to determine if the wreck is the Union Steamship Cowichan?
If the target is the Cowichan we hope to do a live dive on it by submarine in early 2019.

Sunday - September 23rd
Gulf Islands - We will travel to Gabriola Reefs to try relocating the remains of the sailing ship Thrasher which grounded on Gabriola Reefs in 1880. The UASBC found pieces of the wreck in the late 70's. We tried getting out there last spring but were not successful so we will keep our fingers crossed and try again. We will depart from Chemainus. Charter $90 per person. Limit 8 divers.
Call Jacques (250) 474-5797 or email: jmarc@shaw.ca

Saturday - October 20th
Southern Vancouver Island – We hope to continue our search for the wreck of the elusive SS Enterprise in Cadboro Bay. The Enterprise was lost in 1885 after being in collision with the sternwheeler R.P Rithet. There is one small piece of the bay that we have not yet searched. We will do a shore dive to search for the wreck. This dive will require a couple hundred meter swim but is suitable for all open water divers. This is a shore dive so there is no cost to participate.
Contact Jacques (250) 474-5797 or email: jmarc@shaw.ca.

Sunday - November 18th
Gulf Islands - We will visit the wreck of the Del Norte to continue the photo-grammetry work and site mapping. Our second dive will be to search for the steamer Mary Hare lost off Reid Island. The Mary Hare was a small coastal steamer that grounded and then burnt
In February 1896. Charter $90 per person. Limit 8 divers.
To register contact Jacques Marc (250) 474-5797 or email: jmarc@shaw.ca.

PLEASE REFER TO WWW.UASBC.COM FOR THE LATEST UPDATES!

Victoria Chaper Exploration Speaker Series 2018

Wednesday SEPTEMBER 12
Tour - 443 Maritime Helicopter Base - Pat Bay
Major Dale Arndt, Operations Officer with 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron at Pat Bay will be conducting a tour for us of their new $104 M Maritime Helicopter Base and fleet of helicopters.
As this is a secure military facility, we will need to provide Dale with the names of everyone who would like to go on this tour one month in advance so that we may all get vetted and approved for the tour. If you are interested in going on this tour, please RSVP by email no later than midnight Saturday August 12/18 so that I may include you on the list of names to be submitted to Dale. I will forward meeting time and location as we get closer to the tour date.

Wednesday OCTOBER 10
Talk- Surveying a PBM Mariner using Photogrammetry
A huge 7 crew WW2 patrol bomber sank in 1949 after striking an obstruction in front of the Seattle Boeing Seaplane ramp at the south end of Lake Washington. The PBM Mariner currently rests in 80 feet of water in deep silt. The Navy has attempted salvage twice and both times personnel were injured in the attempts. Kees Beemster Leverenz who is a GUE dive instructor will talk about their recent dives and photogrammetry survey of this historic wreck. He will also talk about other ongoing documentation projects which he is working on.

Wednesday NOVEMBER 14
Talk - Princess Sophia Tragedy
On October 25, 1918 the Canadian Pacific steamer Princess Sophia was lost along with 344 passengers and crew on Vanderbilt Reef in Lynn Canal Alaska. This proved to be the worst Shipwreck disaster on the West Coast and is often called the Titanic of the West. In the spring of 2018 Jacque Marc the UASBC Explorations Director had the opportunity to visit Vanderbilt Reef and dive this tragic wreck.
He will recount the story on how Sophia was lost and will share what it is like to dive her today on her 100th anniversary.

Wednesday, DECEMBER 12
Talk – 19th Century Chinese Ceramics and Large Ocean Jars.
Grant Keddie Curator of Archaeology at the Royal BC Museum will provide an overview of the ceramics and other items used by 19th Chinese immigrants to B.C. , as well some of the large mystery containers pulled up in fishing

The UASBC Victoria Chapter meets at
Swan's Hotel & Brewpub
506 Pandora Street in Victoria
at 07:00 PM
The 2nd Wednesday of the month

PLEASE REFER TO WWW.UASBC.COM FOR THE LATEST UPDATES!

"Archaeology Day 2018"

By Ewan Anderson

The UASBC was one of several groups who participated in Archaeology Day at Point Ellice House in Victoria on Sunday, July 22. We couldn't have asked for better weather to hang out in the Point Ellice House gardens, and an estimated 400 visitors during the four hour event must have agreed! Jacques Marc, Murray Maffey and Ewan Anderson took turns showing off some of the UASBC's artifacts, answering questions about BC's maritime heritage, and testing the public's underwater archaeology skills.

Visitors to the UASBC booth were from all walks of life: young and old, tourist stepping away from their cruise ships, locals who paddled their kayaks from Selkirk Water or the Upper Harbour, and even some professional archaeologists. Activities at our booth included a mini-excavation requiring visitors to don some dry gloves (and blackout masks, if they were brave enough!), retrieve artifacts and use them to identify the wreck and answer a host of questions. Astute investigators and budding archaeologists were able to determine it was a wreck very much like the Robert Kerr, one of the most well-known wrecks in the Southern Gulf Islands! At the other side of the booth, people tried their hand a drawing artifacts using an authentic UASBC drawing frame and underwater slates.

In addition to our Point Ellice House National Historic Site hosts, the event also featured booths from the Archaeological Society of British Columbia, the Burnside-Gorge Community Association, the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria, the Royal British Columbia Museum and the Hallmark Heritage Society. It was hungry and thirsty work too! Luckily, Moon Underwater Brewery and Saltchuck Pie Company were on site with refreshing beverages and tasty snacks."

UASBC Display at Point Ellice House Archaeology Day. Photo by Ewan Anderson

Looking for artifacts in the sand box. Photo by Ewan Anderson

YOGN82: Mustered Out

The YOGN-82, (The YO stands for “Yard Oiler” while the G stands for “Gasoline” and the N signifies her lack of engines) was built in 1944, when there was a lack of steel. It was 1 of 22 unpowered B7 A2 concrete ships built by Concrete Ship Constructors of National City, California, US.

June 23, 2018 was a sunny summer’s day where cheers, boat and car horns echoed. There were some tears and mixed emotions as twelve warning horn blasts, a quick boom and wisps of smoke bellowed up from the old concrete-hulled ship, the YOGN-82. Her 75 years of above water service came to an end as her new underwater service as an artificial reef begins. She sank in 11 minutes and thirty seconds from detonation. The YOGN-82 was a local Powell River tourist attraction when it functioned as part of a breakwater for the local paper mill, but is now effectively “retired”. Her final resting place is located just off the Willingdon Beach Breakwater.

This unique moment was special for locals as most of them have had personal stories attached to the “Breakwater Hulks”. The sinking was the first time for a lot of people to witness the sinking of a ship. It also allows people who have never had an opportunity to board her and look around; to do it with the aid of a SCUBA certification and some gear.

The idea to sink YOGN 82 was rekindled by Fred Chinn who was the Catalyst Mill Manager, Howard Robbins of the Artificial Reef Society of B.C. and Gary Lambeth of Salish Sea Dive in Powell River. This new group would facilitate the sinking of the YOGN-82. What makes an event like the sinking of the YOGN-82 memorable is the community of professionals and volunteers. Their generosity and expertise that made it happen.

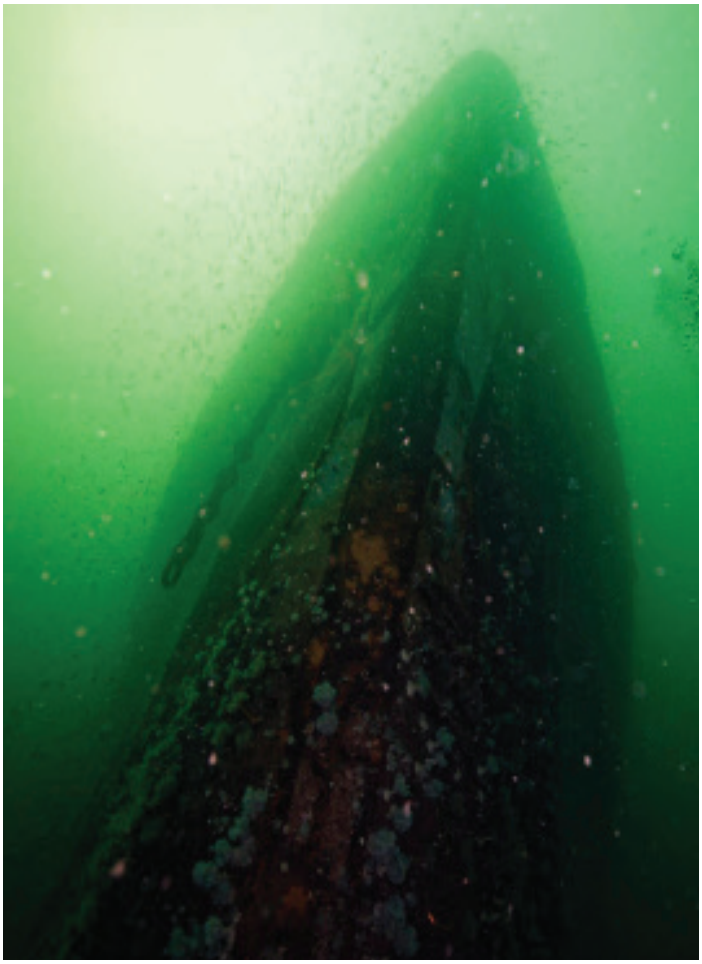
It has been 2 months, since the sinking the YOGN-82 and it has adjusted nicely and is now a fully-fledged artificial reef already filled with abundant marine life. Her hull and decks are filled with schools of perch, various different groups of sea anemones, sea urchins, Ling Cod, Irish Lords, a hungry salmon and recently a pod of Orcas who were feeding on the bountiful sea life; a sanctuary and habitat providing shelter and safety for so many varieties of creatures, not to mention a beautiful dive site for those of us that live above the water.

YOGN82 sinking after explosive charges detonated

Editors message

Anji Smith & Gary Lambeth

YOGN82 deck



YOGN82 bow

YOGN82 text & photos by Anji Smith

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