

Final Southern Vancouver Island Project Dive

By: Jacques Marc



SVI Group Photo

The UASBC completed an inventory of shipwrecks around Southern Vancouver Island in 1990 and published the results in the publication “Historic Shipwrecks of Southern Vancouver Island.” Thirty-five years have now passed since that project was completed. In the intervening years, the UASBC has found new sites and learned new information about past sites. As such, we felt it appropriate to update and reprint the original shipwreck publication. We started the work to update the report in 2019 and completed the final official dive as part of the SVI Shipwreck re-inventory project on October 5th.

The final dive was completed by Paul Spencer, Leila Bautista, Jiri Kotler, Chris Mills, Grant MacDonald and me. The goal was to collect a few final measurements on the Nanette site at Race Rocks for the site plan. The group met at Pedder Bay Marina at 08:30 and boarded the Miss Emily Lyle Berzins charter boat. It was a spectacular fall day. The sky was clear and there was no wind. In fact, I was sweating in my neoprene drysuit because it was 20 degrees out.

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It is a short 20-minute boat ride from Pedder Bay to Race Rocks. We arrived early for the 10:00 AM predicted slack. At 09:30 the current began to slow up. We placed a shot line on the wreck so everyone could find it, donned our gear and were in the water by 09:45. The underwater vis was spectacular. I could see the bottom clear as day 25 feet below me.

Each team had been assigned a mission. Jacques and Paul were to continue taking bearings and distance measurements to the gully wall on the north side of the anchor pile. Jiri and Leila were to do likewise on the south side of the site. Grant and Chris were to relocate and photograph as many artifacts as possible.

After 35 minutes the current began to pick up, and it was time to surface or get swept out to sea. Everyone had a successful dive and our mission was accomplished,

As we travelled towards our second dive site, the Barnard Castle wreck we were treated to Humpback whales feeding in Race Passage. Lyle explained that as the current changes it creates upwellings which brings feed to the surface where the whales forage.

As we were watching, it appeared that the sea lions were harassing the whales. You could see them nipping at them. The whales would raise their tails and slap them down trying to deter the sealions, but the sealions were too nimble to get hit. After a while the sealions seemed to tire of their game and moved on and the whales carried on feeding.



Humpback whale foraging at Race Rocks

Photo by Leila Bautista

After our whale encounter we headed to Pilot Bay at Bentinck Island to dive the steamship Barnard Castle.

We haven't been on this site in 3 years. The goal here was to see how well the kelp had grown back since we pruned it for photogrammetry. Upon descending on the wreck, it became abundantly clear that there were no negative consequences to our kelp cutting operation. The wreck had a healthy crop of laminaria leaf kelp and bull kelp. I toured the group around to look at a few of the little-known features of Barnard Castle. We looked at the engine crankshaft pieces, looked at the remnant of a ship's wheel and photographed a small porthole still on site. We also cleaned off several of the U/W interpretive plaques. At least 3 of the 8 underwater interpretive trail plaques have flooded and are no longer legible. They will have to be replaced at some point in the future. The main plaque is still in good shape and completely legible. After 45 minutes most divers were back on the surface.

It was a quick trip back to Pedder Bay where most of the group grabbed refreshments and took some time to discuss the days diving. It was an excellent way to finish off the SVI project.

Warren and I must complete a bit more writing, but the goal is to get a new SVI publication out by the spring of 2026.

Remembering John Middleton

1947 - 2025



It is with great sadness that I learned of John Middletons passing on August 30, 2025.

John served as UASBC South Island Director from 2002 until 2025. He was the driving force behind the South Island Chapter arranging chapter meetings, getting speakers, organizing dives, and coordinating local events. He was the glue that held the local chapter together.

I first met John in 2001 when he came out on one of our South Island dives. On this occasion we swam across Enterprise Channel between Trial Island and McMicking Point, in search of the tug Velos lost in 1895. It was a 300-meter swim across the channel with a bit of current thrown in. At the end of the swim, John was exhausted, and I didn't think we would see him again. He was the first to sign up for the next trip, which happened to be diving West Coast Trail wrecks.

John was born in Otley, England on June 18, 1947. He spent his formative years in Colwood and Victoria graduating from St. Louis College and UVic before settling into a career with the provincial government, retiring in 2006 from the Ministry of Social Services. John lived most of his life at Shawnigan Lake where he built a log house with the love of his life, his wife of 53 years Sara.

John was an active member of the Royal Marine Search and Rescue, and I recall on a few of occasions, getting a call from John to say that he had ben called out to participate on a search.

I don't think John had been with the group for more than 6 months when the South Island Directorship came up. John naively asked what the job entailed. I said all you have to do is chair the local meeting and find speakers. John didn't think that would be difficult and volunteered to take it on for a 2-year term.

He received the UASBC Volunteer of the year Award in 2006 for his contributions and service. In 2025 he received an exemplary service award for his 22 years of service and for going above and beyond.

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John Diving at Spring Bay



John Presents Dr. Phil Nuytten with his speaker gift at Shipwrecks 2012.

John dove regularly with us for the first 8 years of his directorship. In his later years he would help with NAS courses assisting in the pool and helping students with their plotting work. He also frequently served as a safety diver on course dives.

John was very passionate about our BC Maritime History and loved to share the stories with anyone who would listen. The two of us organized many Shipwrecks Maritime History Conferences. John also coordinated our participation in events like Archaeology Day at Point Elice House and a booth at the Canadian Underwater Conference. Each spring he also organized a year end Chapter Dive and BBQ.

John and I did a lot of things over 24 years, and I got to know him quite well. He was an explorer, always curious about what was around the corner. He was reliable. If he said he would do something, it would be done. He had perseverance. Finding speakers for meetings over a 22 year span requires a lot of perseverance.

John, we thank you for your contributions. If it wasn't for your dedication the South Island Chapter may not be in the solid position it is in today.

John was a good friend and will surely be missed by friends and family alike.

Jacques

Shipwrecks 2026

Military Wrecks of BC & the World

Draft

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
Price \$60.00

For more information and to purchase
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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

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Alternatively Contact: Craig (204) 590-5278
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Captain Nemo Club 2025

The Captain Nemo Club recognizes cash donations received by the UASBC during a year.

The categories are assigned dependent upon the amount of the contribution.

To **thank our donors** the UASBC publishes their names in the Foghorn at year end in recognition of their support above and beyond the volunteer hours contributed”.

You too can see your name in print.

Just send along a little something extra when you renew your membership.

All contributions over the membership amount will be eligible for a tax receipt should you want one.

We thank the following contributors who donated during 2025.

40,000 Leaguers	\$500 +
Glen and Marjorie Olds	\$18,959
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Please refer to
WWW.UASBC.COM for latest Updates!



UASBC Presidents' November 2025 Message

by: Keith Bossons

Hello Everyone,

This will be my last message as President of the UASBC. After over 9 years leading the Society, I will be stepping down as President in December. Long time director Holger Heitland will be picking up the torch as your new Present.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as President and look forward to continuing to support the Society with its mission in other capacities.

The UASBC is now in its 51st year as an organization. The 50th Anniversary celebration in October was a wonderful success and I would like to thank all those involved with organizing this event. It was quite a humbling experience reviewing all that the Society and its members have accomplished over the years.

In closing, I would like to thank the directors and all society members for your support and encouragement over my tenure as President.

Best wishes and hope to see you in the water.

***All the best
Keith Bossons
UASBC President***

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

Congratulations to the fall UAD Graduates

By: Jacques Marc

The UASBC ran an Underwater Archeology for Divers (UAD) course on 27 & 28 September, in Victoria.

Initially, ten students registered for the course but by the day of the course only 8 remained. The participants came from Kelowna, Comox, Duncan and Victoria. In the week preceding the course, each student spent five to six hours completing eight online course modules covering a variety of topics pertinent to maritime heritage and underwater archaeology.

On the Saturday 27 September students attended Crystal pool where they spent 2 hours in the water honing their survey skills. In the afternoon they plotted the results of the pool survey and learned some of the pitfalls of taking and plotting survey measurements.

On Sunday 28 September, the participants travelled to Deep Cove near Swartz Bay to do a survey dive on the PGE #2, a rail barge that sank in the 1970s. Each buddy team was assigned a section to survey. Once everyone completed the dive, they travelled back to the Crystal Pool to plot the survey results. The day concluded with the students learning about conservation and Documenting Shipwrecks. Each student was awarded a Certificate of Achievement for completing the course.



UAD Class boarding Inde to do PGE#2 survey dive.

Photo by J Marc

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Congratulations to the fall UAD Graduates

Congratulations to the following participants for completing the course: Left to right in back row Darius Pomeroy, Brad Tingstad, Noah Kaefer, Joshua Bryce, Craig Werger, Jed Forrest. In front is yours truly, Monica Mowez and Andrea Butteerworth.



Congratulations to the Graduates of 27-28 September 2025 UAD Course

Photo by Kim Ansell

Thanks to George Silvestrini and Jiri Kotler for helping with the pool and Craig Bellamy who acted as safety diver at Deep Cove. Thanks also to Eric Keating of Frank Whites Dive Store for providing the Inde as a safety boat.

The next UAD course will be offered in late March 21 & 22 2026. Look for details on the UASBC's website in the

Victoria Explorers Spring Speaker Series Schedule 2026

Meeting Time: 7 PM at the Maritime Museum of BC
744 Douglas Street, Victoria

January 21, 2026

Jiri Kotler has been diving for a long time, but the discovery of a mysterious "Wine Jug" at Fermeuse Harbour, NFLD in May of 1980 had him perplexed. He will share with us the story of trying to identify the age and provenience of the mysterious jug.

February 18, 2026

Dr Ian Kirby, Consultant in Diving and Submarine Medicine will come and speak to us about Medical Fitness Exams for Divers and Mariners. Dr Kirby is a WorkSafe BC Dive Medicine Examiner and Transport Canada Marine Medical Examiner who is Registered with College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC as a Full Practice Family Physician.

UASBC Diver Explorations Spring Schedule 2026

Hello Everyone,

The Explorations schedule looks bit different this spring. We are distributing the workload and trying to provide some different offerings. Leila will be hosting some pleasure dives, to keep members active diving, without work obligations. Jacques will lead the survey dives and Chris Mills is going to re-introduce a limited number of technical dives during spring and fall. Not all dates and details could be ironed out in time for Foghorn, so out the web page.

TBA Port Alberni - Immigrant Ship Rusty

We will travel to Port Alberni to do a dive in Underwood Cove on the artificial reef, Rusty. The Rusty was one of 4 Chinese vessels apprehended off the BC coast with illegal Immigrants in 1999. The Port Alberni Reef Society acquired the 4 vessels with plans to sink them as artificial reefs. The Rusty was scuttled at Underwood Cove on June 10, 2001. This is a shore dive. Everyone is welcome.

Contact Leila B: leila.bautista@outlook.com

Sunday, March 1 - Technical Dive on the Henry Foss.

The Henry Foss is a wooden diesel tug that sank in 1959 with the loss of six lives in Captains Passage near Ganges BC. The wreck lies in 33 meters (105 feet) of water. The superstructure is gone but much of the lower hull is still extant and covered in plumose anemones. The prop and anchor remain on site. The goal of the dive will be to get technical divers working as a group to make and record observations and photograph the wreck as much as possible.

We will be using the Frank Whites dive boat Inde to do the dive.

Cost \$100 per person.

Contact Chris Mills: chrisfmills@gmail.com

Sunday, March 8 - Smyth Head Reef Net Site

We will return to the Smyth Head Reef Net site to continue our search for reef net anchor stones and to try get more accurate GPS locations on the existing anchor stones.

We will depart from Pedder Bay. Cost: \$100.00 per person.

Limit 8 divers.

Contac Jacques: jmarc@shaw.ca

UASBC Diver Explorations Spring Schedule 2026

TBA Wreck of Tug Queen

We will dive the wreck of the tug Queen at B jetty at Ogden Point Docks near the Heli jet terminal. The historic steam tug Queen was built at New Westminster in 1914. It sank the result of neglect December 15, 1993, at Fisherman's Wharf. There is no shore access.

Access will be by RHIB or by scooter from the James Bay Anglers boat launch.

We are currently waiting for Harbour Master permission to do this dive.

Contact Leila B: leila.bautista@outlook.com

Saturday & Sunday, March 21 & 22 Underwater Archaeology for Divers Course

The UAD course is a 20-hour long course and consists of 8 modules online, a pool session and an open water dive.

Graduates receive a Certificate of Achievement for successfully completing the course.

To learn more or to register Contact Jacques: jmarc@shaw.ca

Saturday March 28th - Shipwrecks 2026

See full details elsewhere in the Foghorn.

Registration will start in mid December.

April 10-13 Kootenays

Several tasks will be completed during this 3-day trip. There will be diving on known sites in Slocan Lake for the benefit of new members. Documentation work will be completed on a new wreck in Slocan Lake and Bill hopes to complete some side scan work along the Nakusp waterfront.

To learn more about this trip or to sign up

Contact Bill Meekel: billmeekel@gmail.com

April 11 & 12 Bamfield Wreck Trek

Barkley Sound is the current UASBC project area. The goal is to visit several wreck sites depending on weather conditions. The Mascotte was a salvage vessel that caught fire and burnt in Pachena Bay in 1895. If conditions permit, we hope to visit the freighter Tuscan Prince lost during a storm in 1923. The Vanlene loaded with Dodge Colt cars is always a group favorite.

If time permits, we will explore the remnants of the Effingham Mystery Wreck. We will stay at a house on Grappler Inlet and dive with Ocean Emerald Charters.

We will travel to Bamfield on Friday afternoon April 10th.

Charter and accommodation estimate is \$500, air and meals will be on top of that.

Maximum 10 divers. Some surge conditions can be expected on these dives so bring gravel.

Contact Jacques email: jmarc@shaw.ca

UASBC Revisits the Robert Kerr and Panther Wrecks.

By: Jiri Kotler

On October 19, 2025, a group of divers visited the wrecks of Robert Kerr and Panther located in the Southern Gulf islands. As the Society celebrates the 50th anniversary of its founding it was a rather fitting excursion since the two wrecks were the earliest ones that it worked on. First through archival research, then U/W search and finally documentation.

The group consisted of Jaques Marc, Leila Bautista, Warren Bush, Monica Mowez, George Silivstrini, Quinn Ashford, Sean Yu Qi and Jiri Kotler. The rendezvous with Inde (Frank White Dive Shop vessel), skippered by captain Keith Karlsson, was at the Maple Bay municipal dock (09:00 sharp).



L-R Jacques, Warren, George, Sean, Quinn, Monica, Leila, Jiri

Photo by Holger Heitland

Initially, there was some concern about the weather. The first dive (deeper) was planned on Robert Kerr. It looked like that the site just north of Fraser Point on Thetis Island would be too exposed to the strong NW wind. However, after a 45-minute of a somewhat bumpy ride the wind started to abate, and the site looked 'doable'. Jacques placed a marker at the previously established GPS coordinates. George and Jiri dove in first and found the marker well placed right among the timbers. They cleared the marine growth off the information plaque. Then they inspected a number of iron deck 'knees', and the stern capstan. Maximum depth was 44 feet with visibility of about 25 feet. Curiously, they did not see any other divers during their sojourn on the wreck. To their surprise they later learnt that the other divers did not find

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the wreck.

The second dive was on Panther. It is located at the southern tip of Wallace Island in about 25 to 35 feet of water. The wreck is very much deteriorated with some timbers and cooper sheathing still sticking out from underneath a rock and coal pile. This time everybody got onto the wreck and explored its remains including a hawsepipe, pieces of bilge pump and the information plaque. For a moment the group was entertained by a curious solitary sea lion.



Warren Bush with half buried Panther Hawse Pipe

Photo by J. Marc

Indy was back at the Maple Bay dock by 14:30. Everybody schlepped their gear up the (by then) steep ramp to a parking lot. Some took advantage of a fresh water hose to rinse the gear. Despite a bit of a set-back at Robert Kerr everybody enjoyed the day out on water. The good mood was undoubtedly later on further 'buoyed' by the much-improved weather.

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