

FOG HORN



Underwater Archaeological Society of British Columbia

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The Last Voyage of the Del Norte

by, Holger Heitland

The Del Norte, launched in January 1865, was a side paddle wheeler said to be the first ocean steamship of any significance built in the San Francisco shipyards. She was 190' in length, with a beam of 45' and hold depth of 7'. The Del Norte was equipped with large and heavy engines from the old US steamship Republic - two oscillating cylinders of 54" and a 6' stroke, designed to meet challenges posed by side-lever and walking-beam type engines. She was engaged in the Pacific coast trade in Ben Holladay's North Pacific Transportation Company, which by 1869, had 10 side-wheelers and 6 propeller steamers operating northward from San Francisco.

On September 10, 1868 it was announced that the SS Pacific (of Orpheus collision fame, in which 275 persons aboard her perished in November 1875) was to replace the Del Norte on the Northern coast. The Del Norte

would sail for Victoria, Port Townsend, and the Alaskan Ports of Tongas and Wrangel.

The Daily Alta California reported that the Del Norte left San Francisco on September 21, 1868 with 50 passengers, mail, newspapers, and exports to Victoria of a general cargo of 250 tons. Another 180 tons of cargo were destined for Puget Sound and Fort Wrangel. Typical cargo consisted of bitters, books, clothing, coffee, drugs, dry goods, fancy goods, iron, leather, macaroni, meal, nuts, opium, rosin, seeds, spices, sugar, tobacco, and wine. The Victoria store of the clothiers and hatters 'Adams and Beaven', advertised "Boys clothing, a special assortment, Fall Styles, Hats and Caps per steamer Del Norte" following its arrival. The trip from San Francisco was, however, not uneventful. On September 23, the Del Norte collided with the Aureola, sailing in ballast, (whose identity was unknown at the

time of the incident) off Cape Flattery in the fog. The Aureola sustained \$5,010 in damage, but the Del Norte had only a bit of her stem stripped.

On September 27, the Del Norte arrived in Port Townsend to receive troops which were transferred from the Active of the Holladay line. Troops were needed at Fort Wrangel which was under construction following the Alaska purchase by the United States. On October 4, she left Nanaimo bound for Alaska. On her arrival in Nanaimo on October 7, the Otter, which had left Fort Rupert on October 3, reported thick fog all the way down and that she must have passed the Del Norte heading north in the fog. The next report is of the Del Norte having returned from Alaska. It is conceivable that the steamer helped in emptying the warehouses of the defunct Russian American Company.

After refueling, the Del Norte left Nanaimo on October 22 at 0700 hours. Captain Winson elected to take the shortcut through Porlier Pass, which he made at 0900. The channel was thought unsafe for sailing vessels, being narrow with shallow reefs and tidal streams running from 4-9 knots, but the steamers were less cautious.

On entering the pass, a thick fog convinced the Captain not to proceed further. Without enough room to turn about, the steamer attempted to back out of the pass. The paddle wheeler was caught in the flooding tide current, her stern grounding on Canoe Reef. Damage appeared minimal, with

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As I write this we are all looking forward to Christmas next week, but you won't be reading it until the New Year has arrived. So, I'll send the wish that the Holidays fulfilled your wishes to the fullest.

To accompany our new logo and banner, we are also getting a new printing of our decals. Jennifer Ingram has been pursuing this endeavour through numerous incarnations. She will be trying to nail down a reliable supplier that can provide us with a rectangular version, to suit the new logo.

You will notice that the Foghorn has been expanded back to 8 pages. It will be coming out quarterly, in the 8 page format, in the New Year. We've also moved almost exclusively to an electronic format - with environmental reasons at the forefront of that decision.

In November we signed a new contract with the Heritage Branch. They found that they had some extra funding available and offered us the opportunity. We will use the funds in next year's budget to provide more

shipwreck reports. Needless to say it is a welcome addition that helps us fund our continuing activities. We are also pursuing other sources to help us fund our web site upgrade. We have dedicated funding in the budget for the web site.

To David Johnstone, after many years running our Chandlery, I would like to extend a heartfelt "Thank You". David felt that it was time to pass on the torch, but he will still be involved a bit. David will be offering our publications for sale at the Lower Mainland meetings. For the next while we have asked Lisa Glandt to handle the requests for our publications. She reports that business has been fairly brisk. The reprinted "Ghost Ships of Royston" has proven to be quite popular.

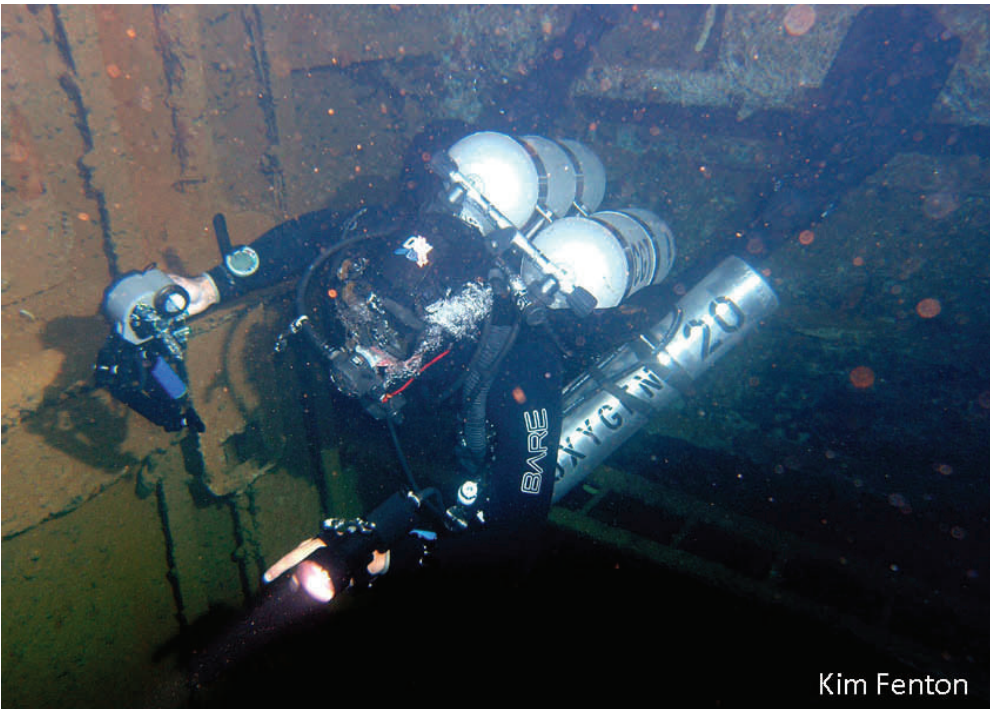
The two major urban chapters, Victoria and Vancouver, have been busy lining up events for the New Year. The Underwater Explorers Speakers Series have been fleshed out (check on the web site for the lists). Victoria is also organizing Shipwrecks 2012. The venue this year will be the Canadian

Forces Fleet Club in Esquimalt. This should be an interesting site, for what sounds like a very interesting line up of speakers. We always love this early spring outing because we bring our dive gear and do a bunch of shore diving. For us interior people the taste of salt water is always great. If anyone feels the need to up their sodium intake, give us a shout.

An interesting event coming soon at the Nanaimo Museum will be an exhibition on the coal trade out of that city. We are involved in a small way because the Museum has asked to borrow some of the Society's artefacts from the *Zephyr* and the *Ericsson*. It will be very nice to have some of our 'treasures' on display, where the general public can see them. When you're in the area it might be a good idea to drop in and have a look.

As you read this we will be close to our spring ramp up of activities. I am already looking forward to it from this side of Christmas. Talk with you again in a few months.





Kim Fenton

As members of the UASBC some of you have probably heard mention, over the past couple of years, about a group called the Shipwreck Exploration Team (SET). As the founder of SET, and the Communication Director for the UASBC, I have fielded my fair share of questions about the relationship between both organizations. Please let me formally introduce the Shipwreck Exploration Team.

The Shipwreck Exploration Team was formed in 2009. The team's stated goal is to locate, explore and document deep or otherwise challenging wreck sites, using marine archaeological techniques taught by the UASBC. As it turned out, this goal fit in well with the UASBC at the time, who had recently stated a desire to expand into work on deeper water targets. A match seemingly made in heaven.

The Shipwreck Exploration Team is often associated with the term 'technical diving.' In general this is a fair characterization, although certainly not all encompassing. Included in the ranks of SET's members are a number of divers with no interest in technical diving. I can comfortably state that the most important term to

use when characterizing SET is the term 'team.' The true commonality amongst SET members is a strict dedication to a way of diving - standardized training, standardized equipment, standardized protocols and procedures, and a firm belief that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. We're team divers, not necessarily technical divers.

Now that I've explained a little about what the Shipwreck Exploration Team is, let me also explain what it is not. It is not a registered organization, like the UASBC. It is not a team of underwater archaeologists. It is also not a large group (SET's membership is roughly 10% of that of the UASBC). SET is not part of the UASBC (although all of its members are required to be), nor is it in any way in competition with the UASBC.

SET is a dive team, with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the fundamental and finer points of diving. SET is an official affiliate of an organization called Global Underwater Explorers (GUE). GUE is a global diving organization dedicated to the same concepts that are so important to the UASBC: Exploration, Conservation, and

Education. GUE has other affiliates spread all around the world, that are also successfully carrying out aggressive exploration and marine archaeological work. The discovery by GUE divers of the Swedish war fleet flagship Mars, which sank in 1564 just north of Öland, Finland is the most recent example in a long list of such works. The ship was built of solid oak and lies in 250' of water. Mars was one of the largest ships of its time, and the largest in the Baltic Sea, with 107 guns and a crew of 800 men.

Two of SET's most experienced divers (Guy Shockey and Alan Johnson) are amongst the only 5 GUE Instructors in Canada. The Shipwreck Exploration Team's connection to GUE is central to its existence, as we draw on the experience and resources, of other GUE affiliates undertaking similar marine archaeological work all around the world.

The Shipwreck Exploration Team's connection to the UASBC is equally focal to its existence. While it is an autonomous organization, responsible for its own actions, we also participate heavily in UASBC projects. Especially deep water projects, where our skill set is of most use. We're grateful to the UASBC for these opportunities. Because the team concept is fundamental to our way of operating, we tend to join UASBC projects as an entire team. Similar to the way a Corporation is considered a legal person in Canadian law, I sometimes consider the Shipwreck Exploration Team to be a single UASBC member. Like many UASBC members, we dive recreationally regularly on our own, but we're most happy when we're out exploring with the UASBC family!





Shipwrecks 2012!

Join Us at Shipwrecks 2012!

Theme: Arctic Exploration!
Date: Saturday, March 31, 2012
Location: Canadian Forces Pacific Fleet Club, 1587 Lyall St, Esquimalt, BC
Start Time: 9:00AM

Confirmed Day Session Speakers Include:

- Dr. Tim Ball, *Jens Munk and his Search for the NW Passage on the Unicorn and Lamprey.*
- John Pollack, Institute of Nautical Archaeology, *The Wreck of Gold Rush Steamer A. J. Goddard*
- Jacques Marc, Explorations Director, *UASBC Exploring Maud: A Ship Made for the Ice.*
- Dr. Phil Nuytten, *Nuytco's Deep Water Technology Lights up the HMS Breadalbane.*
- Tim Flath, Defense Construction Canada, *Searching for and Recovering Unexploded Ordinance on Canada's West Coast*

Dinner & Woodward Lecture:

Frozen in Time: Exploring HMS Investigator Lost Mercy Bay 1853.

This year's lecture will be given by Marc-Andre Bernier, Chief, Parks Canada's Underwater Archaeology Service. He will chronicle the remarkable story of the search for and documentation of the royal navy ship Investigator crushed by ice and lost while searching for the missing Franklin Expedition.

To purchase your tickets online using PayPal please visit www.UASBC.com

- Day Session \$35 (+ \$1.50 PayPal fee)
- Dinner and Woodward Lecture \$40 (+ \$1.50 PayPal fee)

For more information or to purchase tickets the old fashioned way contact: John (250) 743-4495 or Jacques (250) 474-5797.

Sign-Up for Intro to NAS

The UASBC will be offering a NAS Introduction to Foreshore and Underwater Archaeology Course in Victoria, on Saturday February 25, 2012

What is it?

The NAS Introduction to Foreshore and Underwater Archaeology is a course designed to introduce students to the essential skills required to undertake basic underwater archaeological recording work.

The course will cover principles of archaeology, instruction in basic survey techniques, an overview of sites around the world, and the legal aspect of underwater heritage sites. The workshop includes a hands-on session where divers practice in the pool and non-divers practice on the pool deck. Both divers and non-divers are welcome!

Course Cost is \$90.00 for UASBC Members and \$125.00 for non members. Pre-registration is required. For more information or to register contact: Jacques Marc at 250-474-5797 or e-mail jmarc@shaw.ca

The course accreditation is issued jointly by the UASBC and NAS (the Nautical Archaeology Society from the UK).

Underwater Explorers Speakers Series

Lower Mainland - Join the UASBC in Vancouver to hear about underwater explorations from around the province and the world! Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm at the Vancouver Maritime Museum, 1905 Ogden Avenue in Vancouver. Everyone is welcome and there is no cost.

Victoria - Or, join the UASBC on Vancouver Island to hear about underwater explorations from around the province and the world. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month, at 7:00pm in the Maritime Museum of BC in Bastion Square, Victoria. Everyone is welcome and there is no cost.

For more information about the speakers, topics, or UASBC meetings visit our website: <http://www.UASBC.com/>

Dawson City's Paddle Wheel Graveyard

by, Matt Bossons

The paddlewheel graveyard, located just outside Dawson City in the Yukon Territory, is one of the area's better kept historical secrets. The two sites, simply named Site 1 and Site 2, are home to a total of seven abandoned and ruined paddle wheelers. The boats lay in a tangled mess along the sandy banks of the Yukon River, overgrown and forgotten by a world that has changed dramatically in the last few decades.

According to a handout at the Dawson City Visitors Information Centre, "with the addition of airplanes to its transportation network in 1937, and the construction of various highways linking Dawson Creek, Whitehorse and Fairbanks, the need for boats were [sic] diminishing." When the road to Dawson City was completed in 1953, it marked the end of the paddle wheelers time plying the rivers of the north. Now the Yukon River is home to jet boats, fishing skiffs and tourist catamarans.

Along Front Street in Dawson City you can view the S.S. Keno, a paddle wheeler which has been restored by Parks Canada. The Keno was brought to its present location from Whitehorse in 1960. According to the Parks Canada website: "On her last trip to Dawson, she carried 21 passengers, mostly newspaper correspondents and camera men. The old river steamer has been preserved to commemorate an era now passed forever."

Across the river at the paddle wheel graveyard this history is displayed in a much different form. Dilapidated boats lay strewn across the riverside, their wooden frames lying lifelessly



like skeletons from large, long forgotten animals.

Site 1 consists of four vessels, all of which are wooden sternwheelers built between 1898 and 1908. According to the visitors centre handout, the vessel Zealandian, originally named the Reaper, is the only boat in the first site to have been registered in Canada. It was sold in May of 1901 (a year after its construction) to the British Yukon Navigation Company and operated between Whitehorse and Dawson City. It was retired in 1905. The other boats at Site 1 were all registered in the United States: the Julia B, built in 1908; the Seattle No. 3, built in 1898; and the Schwatka, also built in 1898. The location of these vessels is serene and peaceful, with only the occasional boat passing by on the brown and slow moving Yukon River.

Site 2, claims a visitor centre employee, is "much more difficult to find because it involves some bushwhacking." Site 2 is home to three boats all built in 1898: the Tyrell, the Victorian and the Mary F. Graff. The Tyrell, according to the visitor centre, was constructed of both steel and wood. It was sold to the British Yukon Navigation Co. in 1907 and they operated the vessel until 1920. The Tyrell was dismantled in 1932. The Victorian

was a wooden paddle wheeler constructed by John H. Todd for Canadian Development Co. Ltd. The boat was sold to the British Yukon Navigation Co. in 1901 and was out of service by 1912. Mary F. Graff, like the Tyrell, was made from both steel and wood. The vessel was constructed by the Moran Bros. for the Seattle-Yukon Transportation Company, which went bankrupt, leading to its purchase by the Alaska Exploration Company. The ship was originally registered in the United States, but was later registered as a Canadian vessel after its purchase by the British Yukon Navigation Co. on August 14, 1901. According to the visitors centre handout, the vessel's frames were badly strained on its last trip from White Horse to Dawson City in October 1903.

Both sites offer the curious explorer a look into a unique era of Canadian history, when the rivers of the north were the equivalent of modern highways and an entire way of life revolved around these massive wooden vessels.

For information on how to find the paddlewheel graveyards visit the Visitors Information Centre in Dawson City and they will provide you with the handout that provides information on how to reach the sites.

No Scuba Required

by, John Campbell

On the advice of UASBC Exploration Director Jacques Marc, fellow UASBC member Randy Parke and I decided to take a short trip up the Harrison River, to inspect and photograph the site of the SS Port Douglas. We decided to enter from the Harrison Hotel area and canoe down the Harrison River towards the wreck site, since it was the shortest and most direct route.

The site was easy to find and in relatively shallow waters of 1-2'. The wreck sits in front of a beached barge, so there were two nice sites to inspect. Elements and time have taken their toll on these two wrecks. As the photographs we took show they are both in various states of decay.

The SS Port Douglas is entombed in mud and silt and its boiler is rusting out. The features suggesting this once being a tug boat are all but gone, and what is left sits on the floor of the river and not visible anymore. Debris litters the area. However, it is hard to differentiate between what came from the SS Port Douglas, or the Barge, and what may have been washed ashore from the river.

The barge is showing more deterioration and much of her valuable scrap metal looks to have been scavenged. The hold of the barge is now more exposed and you can clearly see the methods used in constructing it. The interlocking wooden girders, and how they were attached, make this a very interesting site to explore. Again, more debris litters the surrounding field and shore area.

These sites are in a serious state of decay so if you plan on visiting them, be cautious, as you could easily find yourself stuck in the mud or cut on many of the rusting parts hidden underwater.



John Campbell



John Campbell



John Campbell



John Campbell

Revisiting Cultus Lake's Bailey Bridge Site by, Matt Bossons

This past October, John Campbell accompanied Keith Bossons and I on a dive to take a first-hand look at the lost Bailey bridge that was covered in the Sept-Oct 2011 edition of the Foghorn. When I read the newsletter I was extremely excited by the idea that the stories I had heard circulating, about sunken military equipment residing on the lakes bottom, could be true.

When we arrived at Cultus and began suiting up we were relieved that the ominous grey storm clouds had not begun to dump rain on us. Once the three of us were all suited up we made our way to the water's edge, and walked shortly off shore into the icy water. We descended into the lakes depths and John Campbell began leading us towards the first site.

Our lights cut through the greenish-darkness, illuminating suspended particles of silt and debris. John kept a good pace which Keith and I followed, gliding through the water at a reasonable distance behind him so everyone had space to maneuver.

Soon our lights caught sight of metal railings stacked in a disorganized and random fashion on a gentle slope. My dive gauge read 38' - these had to be the railings.

The railings were covered in a thick layer of grey silt, lying undisturbed for some time. Understandably, being in cold fresh water, some paint was still visible. After a few minutes of observation we fell back into line behind



John and began following a guideline he had previously laid out to the overturned boats.

Our journey began to take us deeper. As we followed the line into the depths of Cultus Lake it began to get darker, and our lights became more essential than ever to navigate. At times I thought I had lost sight of the thin line that marked our way, but then I would look up to see John plodding confidently along, like a veteran to the area.

The underwater excursion to the boats took roughly ten minutes from the first site, the anticipation building with every kick of my fins. There wasn't much to look at while travelling to the boats, the bottom of the lake is barren and lifeless, much like I imagine the surface of the moon would look like.

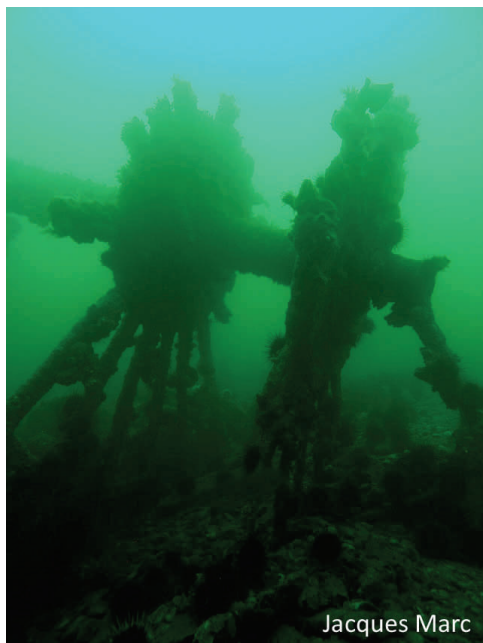
The boats sat in roughly 70' of water, and remained in amazingly pristine condition. Paint was still visible on both vessels and writing could be noted on several locations on the outside of the boats. The condition of both vessels, and the metal girder

connecting them, was outstanding. As was everything else we found on the dive. It's amazing how well fresh water preserves mankind's lost tools and toys. Although the site was covered in a layer of dusk-like silt we could make out many details, including two holes in the bow of one of the boats – a possible cause for its sinking.

We circled and surveyed the site for roughly ten minutes before regrouping and heading back towards the metal railings. At the end of the dive my buoyancy control became an issue. As my tank emptied of air, and we returned to the shallower depth, my equipment and body wanted to return to the world above. A rotten end to an otherwise stellar dive.



Del Norte Last Voyage (Continued)



Jacques Marc

only her rudder displaced and a portion of her false keel torn away. The cargo of coal was shifted forward to lighten the stern, and her bow anchor run out and the cables drawn taut to secure the vessel. A low tide, in the early morning, the Del Norte broke her stern post as she sheered to starboard on the reef. Water rushed into the holds as the water rose, despite bulkheads having been built. Passengers, baggage, furniture, stores, and provisions were removed at daybreak.

Controversy swirled around whether a qualified pilot had been on board. The Active brought Captain Winson and crew to Victoria on October 27. They reported that there was no hope of getting the grounded vessel off the rocks. Three men were left in charge the crippled steamer. Salvagers worked for two weeks attempting recovery.

The owners signed a contract with a Mr. Broderick of Victoria, who secured some large barges at Port Ludlow, in an attempt to refloat the Del Norte. While still underway, with the salvage apparatus in tow of the Otter on November 11, a southeast gale "lifted the steamer off the reef, and she settled in over ten fathoms of water".

The California Wreck Registry listed her as a total loss, valued at \$100,000 in gold. Gold was worth \$18.93 per ounce in 1868, so her value today, in gold, would have been about 8.95 million dollars. The Del Norte was replaced on the Holladay line with the Pelican, a twin propeller steamer with capacity of 400 tons, formerly a Confederate blockade runner.

Diving the Del Norte is a challenge for the same reasons she grounded - the tidal currents can be extreme, and the wreck must be dived at slack. A recent UASBC dive was well-timed, and the wreck easily located. While the crew aboard the dive boat Warrior attempted to keep dry during an intense down-pour, the seven-member dive team conducted their survey of what is left of the Del Norte. Still visible, but disappearing, are the boilers, having been perforated over the years by careless anchoring above the wreck. The engine, crankshaft and

hubs of the paddle wheels are readily identifiable and remnants of the copper-clad hull lie on the sandy-shell bottom.

Following our visit to the Del Norte, was a dive on the wreck of the Panther which, loaded with coal out of Nanaimo, wrecked off Wallace Island in November, 1874. Although she rests in about 30', she proved a challenge to locate. The Panther is proudly displayed on the emblem of the UASBC.



Join the Next Adventure

To find out more about upcoming UASBC Explorations, Trips, Courses, and Events visit us online at:

www.UASBC.com

Or join the discussion on:

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