

## Saanich Inlet Plane Wreck

By: Jacques Marc



Hampden P5428 Flying above James Island.

Photo Courtesy BC Aviation Museum

While planning the 2023 spring dive schedule in late October I dropped Lyle Berzins a note to learn if he was doing charters again, as I was looking for a boat to get to the *Fanny* wreck site at Discovery Island. Lyle got back to me on October 30<sup>th</sup> saying he had good availability in November and early December. He also mentioned that he had been filming with a group in Saanich inlet and had come across the wreckage of a plane in about 70 feet of water and wondered if we might be interested.

I responded that I was quite excited about the prospect as I had been researching plane wrecks in and around Saanich Inlet for two years, but most had been salvaged or lie in deep water. Rather than a trip to Discovery Island, I booked a trip on December 4<sup>th</sup> to look at the Saanich Inlet plane wreck.

During the week leading up to the dive day it snowed and we experienced freezing temperatures.

However, on December 4<sup>th</sup> the clouds parted, and it warmed up to 5° C – perfect diving weather. We met Lyle and his boat *Miss Emily* at Tulista boat launch in Sidney. The group consisted of Jiri Kotler, George Silvestrini, Paul Spencer, Leila Bautista, and me. Lyle was also going to dive so brought along a friend who would skipper the boat. We were away from the dock by 10:00 and it took us about 20 minutes to run around the peninsula to an area off Deep Cove.

Lyle didn't have the exact coordinates for the wreck but had coordinates for an octopus den they had been filming nearby. We tried using his on-board scanner to try find the

*Continued on page 2*

wreckage, but it became clear that the pieces were too small to image. Lyle was confident he could find it. We dropped a shot line at the octopus den coordinates and Paul and Lyle dropped to the bottom to conduct a search. They were not down for more than 10 minutes when an SMB popped to the surface. The remaining teams dropped into the water and descended to 85 feet.

On the bottom, we encountered a shale rock bottom with a layer of sand /shell sediment on it. 20 feet from the shot line we found our first piece of wreckage: a heavily damaged radial aircraft engine sitting upright on the bottom with some of its cylinders missing. Beyond it was mishmash of metal tubing and electrical wiring, and eventually, another engine. The second engine is face down in the muddy bottom with its nine cylinder heads visible. As we swam shallower and further inshore, we found a propeller. Interestingly it was not bent at all, which suggests that it was not spinning at the time of the crash.

Our 30-minute bottom time went by all too fast, and soon it was time to surface. Back on the boat we learned that Lyle and Paul had found a set of landing gear inshore of the initial wreckage.

After some discussion we decided we would do a second dive so that everyone could see the landing gear. On our second dive we initially swam past the engines and prop to view the landing gear and wheel. The landing gear was quite distinctive with a lattice work support.



Nine Cylinder Radial Engine and landing gear onsite.

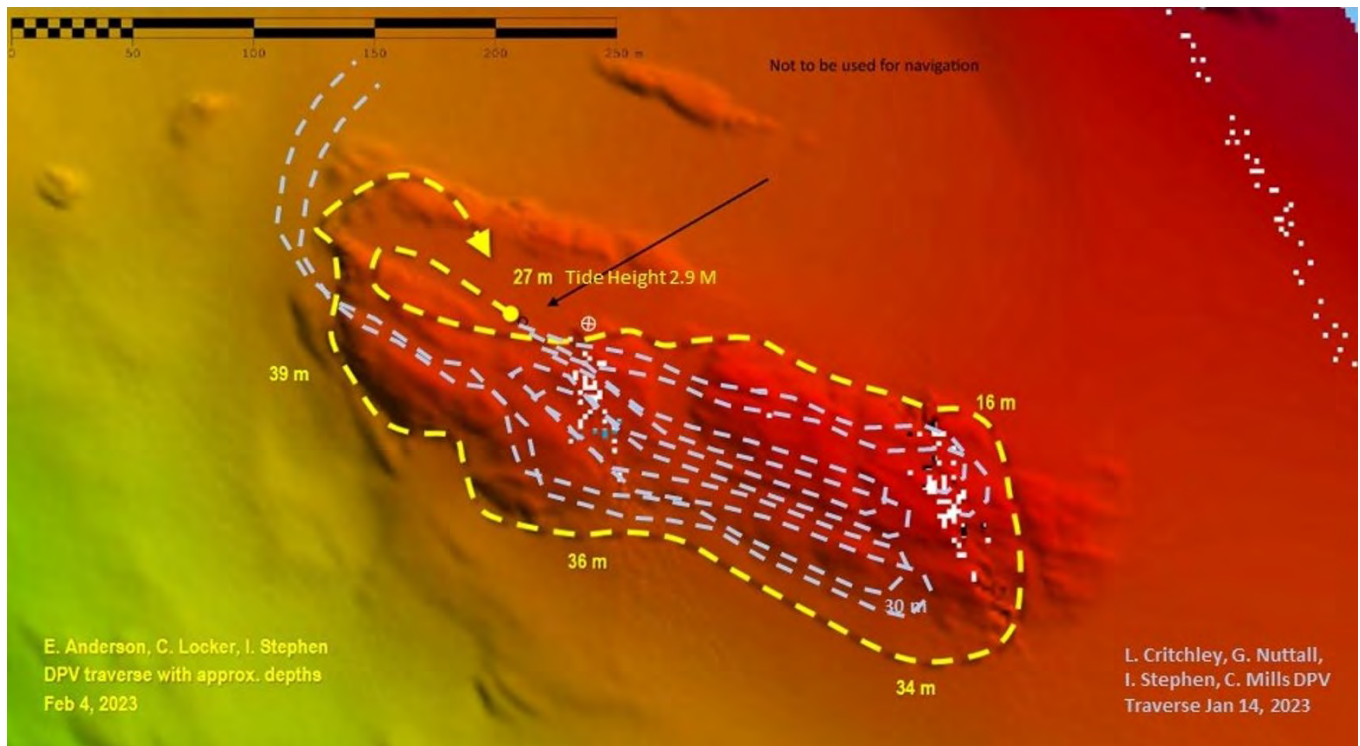


Photo Courtesy Lyle Berzins.

Upon reflecting on what I saw, I was perplexed. There was little or no fuselage on site. I don't think based on what can be seen at other WW II aircraft crash sites that the fuselage would have rotted away in its entirety. This leaves two possible scenarios: the plane had hit the water nose down so hard that things were sent flying and the heavy objects like the engines dropped straight to the bottom; or alternately, there was some salvage after the crash (*i.e.*, the fuselage was recovered, and the engines were left behind).

Following our dive, I made a trip to the BC Aviation Museum where I met up with Dave Jackson, Doug Rollins and Bob Bell. I showed them what we had found. Doug said that if there was loss of life, the RCAF would have made a concerted effort to recover the bodies. That would usually entail dragging the bottom to snag the wreckage. If this had occurred, it would be possible that the fuselage was recovered and that the engines fell off as it was being lifted.

*Continued on page 3*



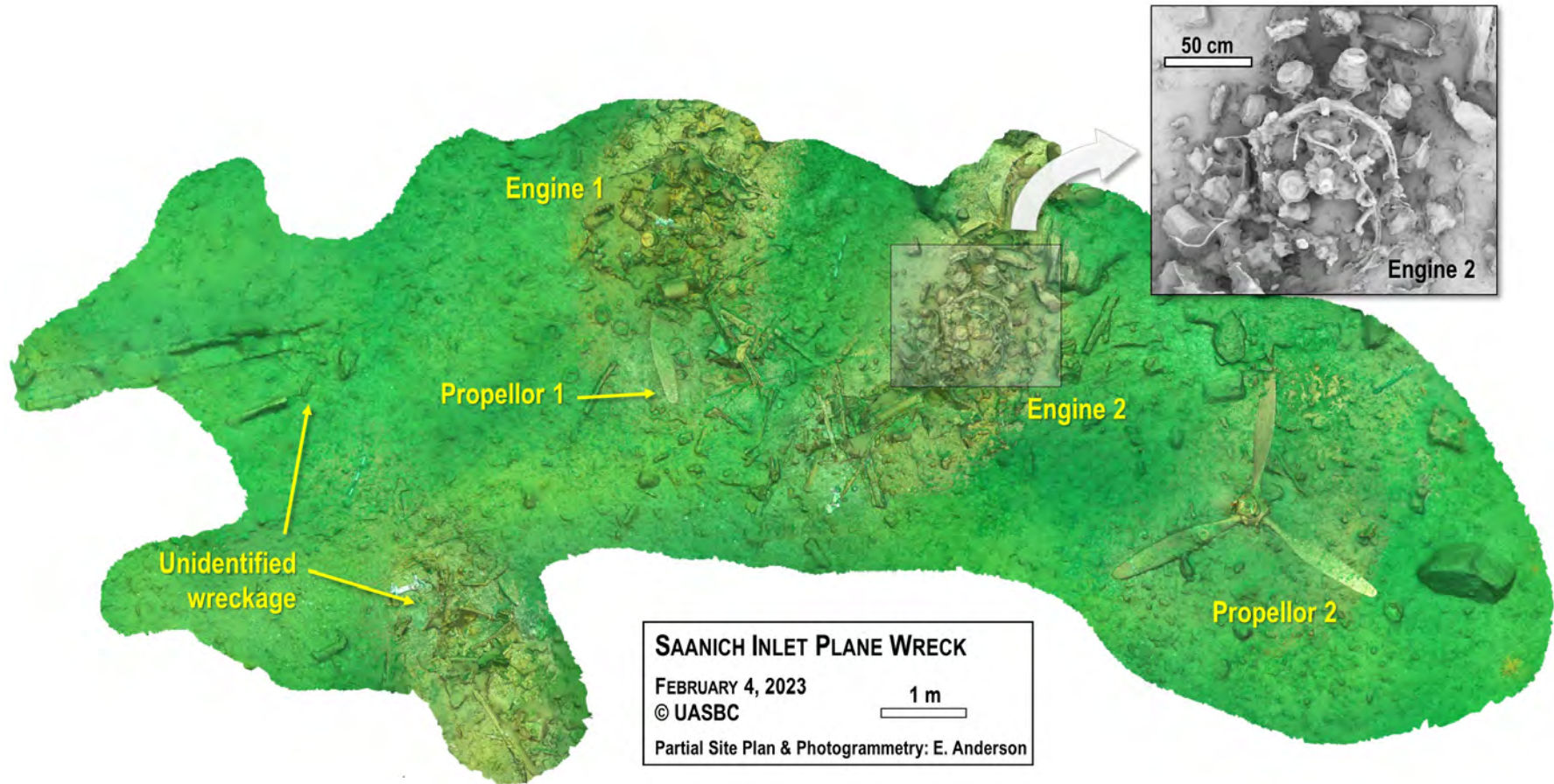
Area covered by underwater scooter searches.

Since our initial dive, we have made two more trips to the wreck site. On January 14th technical divers Lee Critchley, Greg Nuttall, Ian Stephen and Chris Mills scootered around the reef searching in 65-115 feet (35-20 m) of water for more wreckage. No more wreckage was located. A final dive was completed on February 4<sup>th</sup>. Ewan Anderson, Chris Locker and Ian Stephen searched the remaining area around the perimeter of the reef and down to 125 feet (38 m), again with no luck.

Based on the evidence collected on site (landing gear measurements and engine measurements) we are confident that the plane was a Hadley Page Hampden HP 52, twin engine medium bomber. The Hampden was known to be a cranky plane to fly and was prone to engine failure. Of the 104 Hampdens based at Pat Bay in WW II, 26 crashed resulting complete destruction of the planes and with the loss of 43 crew members. I have narrowed the search down to a couple of specific aircraft. Bob Bell at the aviation museum will try to access specific crash details for these planes, which may help pin down which plane it is. My money is on Hampden P5433 which crashed during low elevation flying over Saanich Inlet at night.

*Stay tuned.*

*Continued on page 4*



Orthorectified plan of a portion of the wreck site showing artifact distribution: undamaged propellor at far right; two engines at centre; and unknown wreckage at bottom left and far left. (Photogrammetry: Ewan Anderson)

# INDIGENOUS MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE

SATURDAY · APRIL 15 · 2023

CHIEF JOE MATHIAS CENTRE  
100 CAPILANO ROAD, NORTH VANCOUVER

THE WOODWARD LECTURE:

**Jessi Halligan** | Florida State University

WHY UNDERWATER? THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBMERGED LANDSCAPE RESEARCH

AND

**Chris Arnett** | LOST & FOUND: SXƏL'ƏLʔALS ("WRITING") AT XWƏN'EN'ƏĆ (FULFORD HARBOUR)

**Norm Easton** | THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF SUBMERGED SITES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

**Meaghan Efford** | A FISH-FOCUSED MENU: A RECONSTRUCTION OF PRE-CONTACT DIETS

**Rob Field** | S' GAAN KINGHLAS – THE BOWIE SEA MOUNT

**Quentin Mackie** | DROWNED LANDFORMS IN JUAN PEREZ SOUND, HAIDA GWAII

**Nicholas Mead** | ADZES, PADDLES & DRUMS: RHYTHM & INDIGENOUS DUGOUT CANOES

**Kelly Monteleone & Rosita Worl** | PERCEPTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE, PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND

**Farid Rahemtulla** | AN 8,000-YEAR-OLD INDIGENOUS MARITIME VILLAGE ON CALVERT ISLAND

**Jesse Robertson** | INDIGENOUS & CULTURAL MARINE KNOWLEDGE IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

**Rob Rondeau** | NEW PERSPECTIVES & METHODS UNDERWATER TO FIND OLD SITES

**Nicole Smith** | THE UN OCEAN DEBATE & UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE NE PACIFIC

**Lisa Sonnenburg** | RESEARCH IN FRESHWATER SUBMERGED LANDSCAPES

AND MORE!

TICKETS  
UASBC.COM

\$35/\$50 | Student/Regular Day Session | 9 am

\$60 | Woodward Lecture & Dinner | 6 pm

Can't attend in person? **Livestream** tickets also available!

SPONSORED BY:

PRESENTED BY  
THE UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF BC  
AT XWMÉLTS'STN ON THE LANDS OF  
SKW̱XWÚ7MESH STÉLMEXW (SQUAMISH PEOPLE)



## In Memoria Rod Palm 1942-2023

*Roderick S. Palm passed away suddenly Tuesday March 7, 2023.*



Rod is known in recent memory with his association with the Strawberry Isle Marine Research Society. However, in his youth and early west coast years Rod had a fascination with Shipwrecks.

Rod was born and grew up in Victoria. He spent much of his youth diving the waters around Victoria exploring shipwrecks. As a result of this experience, he was able to provide the UASBC with considerable information on Southern Vancouver Island shipwrecks in 1990 when the Society completed its report on this area.

In the early 1970s he moved to Tofino, where he worked as a freelance commercial diver and continued his shipwreck exploration. Rod operated a 22-foot Boston whaler which he called *Wreck Checker*.

In December 1971 Rod Palm bought the *Norvan* (North Vancouver Ferry) for \$2,000 and moved his family on board. <https://www.nauticapedia.ca/Gallery/Norvan.php> In 1978, he hauled it out of the water onto Strawberry Island where it has been a fixture of the community ever since. Rod raised his children, Gill, Fin, Coral, Shell, Pearl,

Naceo and Nixie, and several grandchildren on the *Norvan* and later in homes built on Strawberry Island.

In December 1974 Rod did a dive in Tofino harbour to recover a crab trap caught on the bottom and in the process discovered the *Hera*, a schooner that had burned and sank in 1899.

Rod accompanied noted Oregon Historian Edmund Hayes to Friendly Cove/Yuquot in 1968 in search of the trading ship *Boston* and returned to Friendly Cove in 1969. Rod returned there with the UASBC in 1977 and completed some circle searches in the Cove but did not find any artifacts from the 1803 *Boston* era.

In March 1978, he completed an inventory of shipwrecks of Pacific Rim National Park for Parks Canada. The resulting report contains information on 193 wrecks.

In the summer of 1982, Rod provided logistical support and his vast local shipwreck knowledge for the UASBC's 10 day survey of the shipwrecks of Clayoquot Sound.

Rod worked for Parks Canada during the summers of 1983 and 1984, documenting shipwrecks in Barkley Sound and along the West Coast Trail. During this project he found many new shipwrecks, but perhaps the most notable was the *Orpheus* of 1875, which was in a collision with the SS *Pacific* that sank with the loss of 305 lives. Rod also found the salvage ship *Mascotte* in Pacheena Bay and the *Duchess of Argyle* on the West Coast Trail. In 1988 and 1989 Rod provided logistical support to the UASBC in its investigation of the *Lord Western*.

In 1985, Rod participated in Phil Nuytten's search for the *Tonquin* (1811) in the Nawhitti area on northern Vancouver Island.

Rod founded Strawberry Isle Marine Research Society (SIMRS) <https://www.simrstofino.org/> in 1991 as a platform for monitoring Bigg's Killer Whales and conducting other research in Clayoquot Sound. It has since expanded its mission to promote and conduct marine research, monitoring, and education in Clayoquot Sound, and has paid employees.

Rod's last foray into the shipwreck business was in 2003, when, as with the *Hera* 30 years earlier, a crab fisherman got their trap caught on something in Templar Channel.

## A tribute to our friend Don Gaynor 1944-2023



Don August 16, 2016.



Don on Whistler Mountain 1964.

UASBC member and friend Don Gaynor passed away unexpectedly January 2, 2023, at the Royal Jubilee Hospital.

Don was born in Winnipeg in 1944 and received his education at Vancouver. He graduated with a B.Sc. in Mathematics from UBC. During the summer of 1964 while at UBC Don got a summer job at Rainbow Lodge on Alt Lake. After graduating Don spent most of his career in Calgary working as an Information Technology Specialist. He loved the mountains and his greatest joy was a thirty-six-year association with Lake O'Hara Lodge in Yoho National Park, first as a seasonal employee and later as a photographer. His photographs of the Lake O'Hara area were collected into books titled "The Lodge at the End of the Rainbow" and "Lake O'Hara Lodge Staff Photos".

Don is remembered by his friends in the UASBC as a quiet, considerate person who had many interests and hobbies. Although not a diver he enjoyed the UASBC monthly meetings and the annual Shipwreck Conference. One of his interests connected with underwater archaeology was the "China" used by the Pacific Coast Shipping Companies. He was also a Target Shooter and reloaded his own Ammunition for this discipline.

We will miss Don.

## In Memoria Rod Palm 1942-2023

When Rod dove down to free it, he found an English long plan anchor protruding from the bottom. Rod orchestrated the recovery of the anchor, and it was found to have blue trading beads concreted to it. There was speculation that it could be from the *Tonquin* (1811), but nothing more was found in the vicinity.

These words describe only a small portion of Rod's contributions to documenting the submerged cultural history of the West Coast. His storytelling was legendary. His exploits could fill a book.

Rest in Peace Rod.



# UASBC Presidents' March 2023 message

*by: Keith Bossons*

*Hi Everyone,*

*Well the past week has brought some hints of spring weather and I am sure everyone is looking forward to longer days and a bit of sunshine.*

*As always, the UASBC has been active in pursuing our mandate over the past few months.*

*Jacques Marc has managed an active winter dive schedule, which has been well attended by members and produced some interesting finds. There are four more trips scheduled between now and the end of May so if you are interested, check them out on the website.*

*Our most recent Underwater Archaeology for Divers (UAD) course was over the weekend of March 25. This new course offering is proving to be a great success.*

*The Annual General Meeting was held on March 23 on Zoom. Several new Directors were elected by acclamation - turn to the last page of this issue to see your 2023 UASBC Executive!*

*We are currently in the process of selecting a developer to build us a new website. The current website has served us well but is built on very old technology and it is time for a change. We will hopefully have a shiny new website up and running before the end of 2023.*

*The big event of the year will be the annual Shipwrecks Conference which this year is titled the 2023 Indigenous Maritime Archaeology Conference. This is a bit of a change from previous conferences with a pivot to Indigenous Maritime Archaeology. The conference will be held at the CHIEF JOE MATHIAS CENTRE in North Vancouver on April 15, 2023. The organization committee of Tom Beasley, Rob Rondeau and Warren Bush have done an outstanding job at putting together this conference. I strongly encourage everyone to make time to attend this event.*

All the best  
Keith Bossons  
UASBC President

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

# UASBC VISITS THE WRECKS OF HMCS MACKENZIE and RESTLESS

By: Jiri Kotler

After very successful three exploration dives on the plane wreck in Saanich Inlet earlier in the season, by mid-February it was time to focus back on shipwrecks. First, the plan was to re-visit (as a bonus) the former *HMCS Mackenzie*, which was sunk off Gooch Island in 1996 as an artificial reef. This site is a popular dive destination that offers variety of diving experiences. The second objective was to concentrate on locating remnants of a 70-foot steam tugboat *Restless* in Saanichton Bay (destroyed by fire in 1933).

Early on Saturday February 18<sup>th</sup> the team assembled in Sidney at the Tulista Park boat ramp. The weather looked promising with patches of 'blue sky' here and there. The slack tide at Gooch Island was predicted to occur between 0930 and 1000. Our charter boat *Inde*, captained by Tyler Preston and with Chris Mullen as deckhand, arrived on time. The vessel is a nice diving platform powered by twin 300 HP Yamaha outboards. All the gear got schlepped down the ramp and loaded on board.

The team, a truly mixed lot, consisted of Jacques Marc (expedition leader), Paul Spencer, Lee Critchley, Mike Lewis, Mike Powell, Lucas Gentina, Mike Lunoz, Jiri Kotler and Holger Heitland as a non-diving time keeper. There was a variety of equipment on board ranging from rebreathers, doubles with Nitrox fills to old-fashioned single tanks with regular air - not to mention a pair of U/W scooters. According to Tyler, the *Mackenzie* site had not been visited for some time and the condition of the mooring buoy was uncertain. However, to everyone's pleasant surprise, the mooring buoy was still there and useable. By 10:00 everybody was on the reef with U/W lights and bubbles visible

everywhere. Clearly, nobody was disappointed with their dives even though the visibility was not great – only about 6 meters. The white plumose growth was not yet overwhelming so a lot of features were quite discernible, including many deck items and, of course, the big guns. By 10:45 everybody was back on deck sharing their respective experience and enjoying hot tea and cookies (courtesy of the captain).



Dive vessel *Inde* on site at Mackenzie artificial reef site.

Photo J. Marc

However, the real fun was yet to begin. While approximate coordinates for the wreck of *Restless* were known it still took several 'search patterns', and a lot of loud 'instructions' to somewhat confused divers from the deck of *Inde* to finally locate the wreckage. At the end everybody got to see what is left of the once mighty tug boat. The wreckage is in shallow water – about 4.5 meters deep on a 3-meter tide.

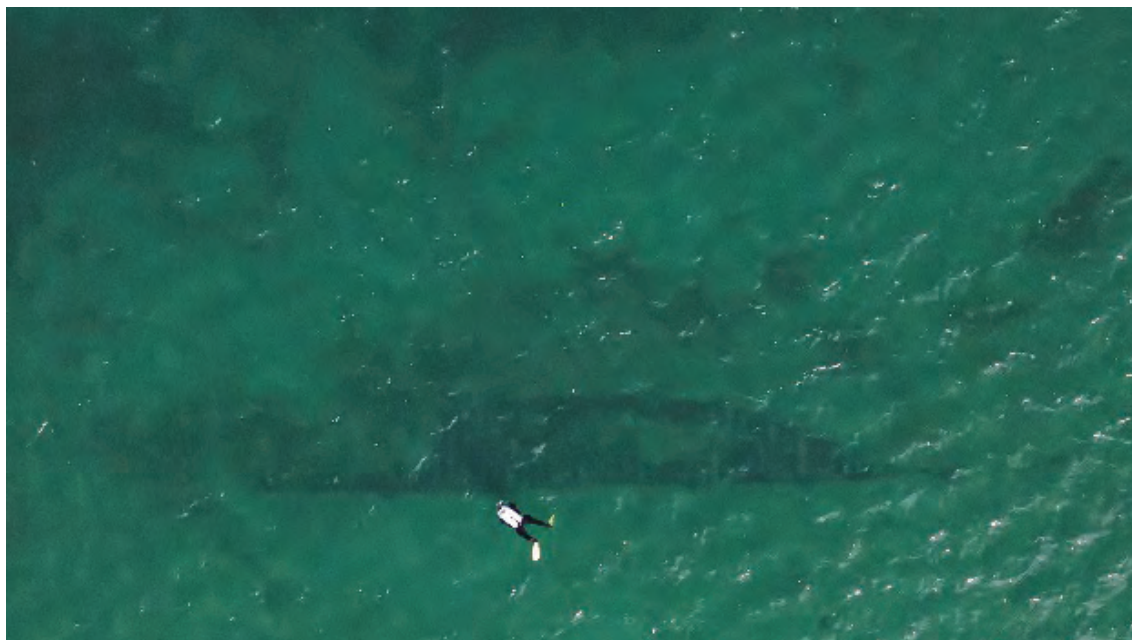
*Continued on page 10*

There are a number of wooden frame parts embedded in sand, with a few protruding “keel bolts”. Clearly, most of the tug’s machinery was salvaged. Basically, the wreckage is ‘two-dimensional’. Chris managed to get some aerial footage with his drone which nicely showed an outline of the wreckage. Jacques and Paul managed to get a few measurements to confirm the identity and initiate the site record.



Tug Restless.

Photo Courtesy Nauticapedia.



Tug *Restless* from above.

Photo Chris Mullen

By 15:00 the expedition was back at Tulista Park. By all accounts it was a success and everybody enjoyed the dives and good weather on water.

# Expedition to Gambier Island & the Mystery of SS Lorne

By: Warren Bush

On 1 October 2022 a team of seven boarded *Mine II* of New World Diving. The team ventured to Gambier Island's Center Bay, and then located and explored a target that may be the key to solving one of British Columbia's enduring maritime mysteries: the fate of the SS *Lorne*.



SS Lorne in Victoria Harbour Early in its Career.

Photo Credit: City of Vancouver Archives

*Lorne's* story begins in the San Francisco drawing room of Middlemas and Boole, a well-known naval architecture firm. Most tugs built on the west coast in the earlier days of steam also hauled freight and passengers, but *Lorne* had the distinction of being the first tug designed and built solely for towing. Victoria's E.C. Havener actually constructed *Lorne* based on Middlemas and Boole's designs, and launched it on 3 June 1889. The tug measured 151 feet in length, 26 feet in breadth, with a depth of hold of 13.2 feet. Albion Iron Works built the triple expansion steam engine that provided a cruising speed of 14 knots.

Coal barons James and Alexander Dunsmuir commissioned *Lorne* and immediately put it to work towing sailing ships and log rafts after having it registered in Victoria in 1889. Seattle's Puget Sound Tug Boat Company purchased *Lorne* in 1904, by which its activities increasingly focused on towing barges and log booms instead of sailing ships. The Pacific (Coyle) Navigation Company purchased the tug after a number of ownership changes, and registered it in Vancouver.

An often-cited event associated with *Lorne* occurred in 1930. On 19 September of that year *Lorne* was towing the 3,000-ton steel barge *Pacific Gatherer* in Burrard Inlet, and somehow the barge veered off course, becoming stuck under the Second Narrows Bridge. As the tide rose *Pacific Gatherer* applied pressure on the underside of the bridge, eventually toppling eight thousand tons of steel into Burrard Inlet.



Lorne and its tow Pacific Gatherer stuck underneath the Second Narrows Bridge

Photo Credit: Vancouver Maritime Museum

*Continued on page 12*

*Lorne* continued to ply the waters of Burrard Inlet and the Strait of Georgia for the next six years, but in 1936 it went aground while moored, which caused significant damage. *Lorne* was refloated and sold to Shafer-Haggert Ltd., likely for wrecking. It seems that Shafer-Haggert stripped the tug of whatever may have been useful, but in 1938 it changed hands again when the Dominion Tug and Barge Company Ltd. bought it. Here the historical record becomes murky.

What little is known about *Lorne's* later years is that Dominion Tug and Barge appear to have abandoned the tug in Vancouver's inner harbour shortly after acquiring it 1938. The historical record then splits into two theories on what happened next – either *Lorne* was scrapped at the BC Marine Engineering and Shipbuilding yard, or it was towed to Gambier Island and sank somewhere near there. The historical record tends to lean more toward *Lorne* being scrapped, but the Gambier legend is persistent (perhaps historians focus on the scrapping-hypothesis because there is no actual evidence to support the Gambier legend, which could be construed as imaginative).

The Gambier legend is frustrating too: it is vaguely referred to in a handful of secondary sources, but not in such a way as to substantiate where it may have originated or exactly who it was that shared the legend to such an extent that it has become as common as the scrapping-hypothesis. For example, in *Westcoasters: Boats That Built BC*, Tom Henry writes “The details of the *Lorne's* fate are uncertain...Most likely it was bought by Shaeffer-Haggert company and dismantled at the BC Marine Engineers and Shipbuilders Yard. Sentimental mariners, though, prefer to think its remains lie off Gambier Island in Howe Sound, where the BC towboat fleet the *Lorne* pioneered continues to run.”



Captain Jake Iversen Onboard SS Lorne

Photo Credit: Museum of North Vancouver Archives

By the 1960s, well known diver and historian Fred Rogers decided to try and locate *Lorne's* wreck. It is a point worth making that evidently enough folklore about *Lorne* having sank near Gambier as opposed to being scrapped in Vancouver caused Rogers to focus his exploratory efforts in Howe Sound instead of assuming that there was no wreck to find. He conducted interviews with a number of people in Howe Sound and on Gambier, notably Al Zueff, who said that *Lorne* had sank in West Bay at about the halfway point of the eastern shore. Rogers made a dive, and successfully found an upturned wreck in 60 feet of water. Little is known about Rogers's dive other than that he didn't find any trinkets to liberate, and he included *Lorne* in his 1992 book *More Shipwrecks of British Columbia*. However, had he spent more time exploring the wreck, he may have realized that the mystery of *Lorne* lives on.

It seems that historians, divers, and maritime enthusiasts spent little time researching *Lorne* since it disappeared from history, excepting Ken Drushka, Tom Henry, and Michael Mjelde, who wrote an excellent history in Puget Sound Maritime's journal *The Sea Chest*. Then, around the early 2000s, UASBC divers organized themselves in support of the Society's project to survey and document numerous wrecks around the Lower Mainland, which ultimately became the 2007 report associated with that area and which expands on the UASBC's 1994 report *Vancouver's Undersea Heritage*. One of the wrecks that would be a chapter in the Lower Mainland report was *Lorne*. The fieldwork leading up to the 2007 report was especially important, although the UASBC actually started diving the wreck thought to be *Lorne* fourteen years earlier.

On 17 July 1993, a team of eleven divers traveled to West Bay to survey the wreck that Rogers had dove in support of the *Vancouver's Undersea Heritage* report. That day's logs and notes report a significant volume of detailed information about the wrecks in West Bay, including the target long thought to be *Lorne*. The divers made a number of discoveries – importantly, their measurements underwater did not match the dimensions of *Lorne*, nor did their observations of the wreck align with *Lorne*'s design or historic photos of the tug. In fact, the evidence suggested that the shipwreck initially dove by Rogers in the 1960s was not *Lorne* at all. Somewhat confusingly, the UASBC operated on the assumption that the Rogers-West-Bay wreck was *Lorne* when it published *Vancouver's Undersea Heritage* in 1994, even though the 1993 dives cast doubt on the wreck's identity. It seems that the UASBC returned to the site again in 1998, and conducted data collection that was similar to the fieldwork of 1993.

Next, on 10 June 2006, a UASBC team returned to the site yet again. The purpose of this 2006 trip was to conduct fieldwork in support of the *Historic Shipwrecks of the Lower Mainland* report and specifically to bring a greater degree of scrutiny to the wreck thought to be *Lorne*, as *Lorne* would be the subject of

a chapter in that upcoming report. No doubt David Stone remembered his 1993 dives where the data on the wreck long-thought to be *Lorne* did not correspond with the ship's dimensions or design. This 2006 team thoroughly explored and measured the site. Stone and his team drew their new conclusion: the wreck that everyone had long assumed to be *Lorne* could not possibly be *Lorne*, as it is considerably too large and not the same design. This conclusion is explained in the *Lorne* chapter of the Lower Mainland report, but once that report went to press, interest in the once-famous tug dissipated again.

Thirteen years later, I opened *Historic Shipwrecks of the Lower Mainland* and realized an exciting problem: if Rogers had erroneously identified *Lorne* which the UASBC suspected in 1993 and then proved beyond a reasonable doubt in 2006...where is *Lorne*?

So, I decided to take on the case, and researched the *Lorne* saga beginning in the summer of 2020. The Sunshine Coast Museum and Archives put me in touch with Mike Clement, a longtime UASBC member, diver and historian. Clement conducted numerous interviews with people throughout the Sunshine Coast and Howe Sound, while I toiled in archives and museum. Clement's interviews yielded new and useful information, and the story that emerged was that *Lorne* was towed to one of Gambier's three southern bays and sank in one of those bays after filling with water while being moored close to shore. The bays on Gambier were leased by towing firms to store log booms, and if *Lorne* was towed there it probably supported that industry. The oral histories collected by Clement support *Lorne* having sank near Gambier as a viable historical possibility, but the tug certainly isn't well represented in the historical record after the early 1940s.

Clement and I worked well together – we assembled information, and stayed on the case even when momentum slowed. By the summer of 2021, the project was yielding a diminishing return on investment of effort put in. I had the idea to write a 'Letter to the

Editor' at *Western Mariner Magazine*, which old timey tug skippers presumably read. My letter explained the uncertainty associated with *Lorne's* fate and asked "can anyone confirm with any certainty whether or not the *Lorne* was towed to Gambier Island? Can anyone shed light on the fate of this historic tug?"

The *Western Mariner* letter prompted a number of responses, including a handwritten letter which turned up at the magazine's office. The letter was penned by Bob Spearing, a mariner who has had loose involvement with the UASBC in decades past. Spearing wrote that after being converted to a barge *Lorne* was moved to Gambier Island. His letter included details that his friend Eino Eriks had relayed to him, and information from a Registrar of Shipping document given to Spearing by historian Frank Clapp. Both Eriks's and Clapp's document suggested Center Bay as the sinking location. Eriks relayed to Spearing, "when I was a deckhand on the *Projective*, we and a couple of other Cliff tugs put an old scow on the beach at Center Bay, Gambier Island. There is a small bay on the starboard side going into Centre Bay and Doug Cliff, the mate, told me the *Lorne* was beached there. They had lines ashore to hold her against the steep shore. Sometime later the *Lorne* took a roll and pulled the trees out by the roots. He said that for a while the tops of the trees were showing. That's my story for now."

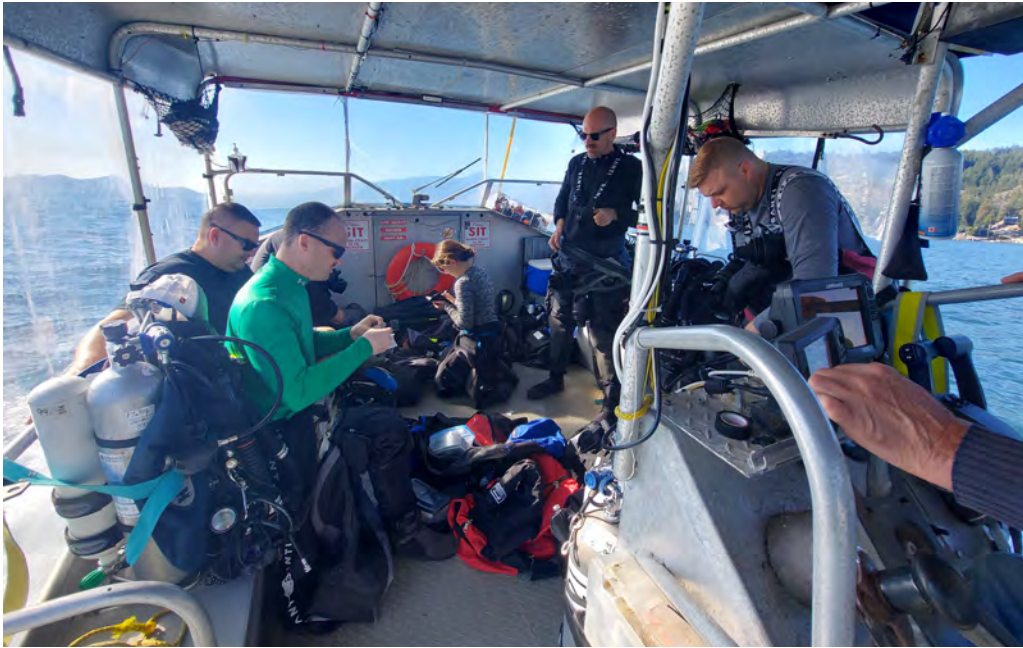
Well, I was definitely pleased with this! Spearing's letter contained enough details about both *Lorne's* life after 1936 and also the sinking event to suggest that Spearing and Eino Eriks knew what they were talking about. Around the same time, Clement conducted a number of interviews, a few of which placed the sinking event at the same location, halfway up the western shore of Center Bay on Gambier Island. I decided that the information justified action: Spearing's sinking hypothesis sounded detailed enough to be believable, and Clement's overlapping locations for the sinking event identified that particular location as a strong possibility. Excitingly, only a few months later, a long-time resident of Center Bay saw the *Western Mariner*

article, which was being shared around Howe Sound, and contacted me – her cottage is adorned with paraphernalia from the *Lorne*, and she even learned to swim while wearing a life jacket from the tug. It hardly seems unreasonable to think that perhaps her family removed the items from the hulk before it sank, presumably in Center Bay, where the cottage is. Could the mystery of *Lorne's* fate be nearing a conclusion?

By this point Clement and I were considering how to best explore Center Bay. The bay is deep, and the shore is wooded. The underwater topography is not great for exploration – the sides of Gambier Island are steep-to, meaning that the sides of the bay are essentially cliffs descending from the waterline to the bottom of the bay, around 200 feet (60 m) below. We decided to ask Jacques Marc to hail his contacts at the Canadian Hydrographic Service (CHS) and see if they had any data about Center Bay beyond what is regularly available. In August of 2021, the Jacques's contact responded with a surprise: not only did CHS have such data, but that data clearly showed what appeared to be a shipwreck where Clement's interviews and Eino Eriks's story indicated the *Lorne* sank. Cross referencing the bay where the target is with an old map of Gambier's booming grounds also reveals that the bay was leased by M.R. Cliff, the same tug firm that employed Eino Eriks and through which he heard the story of *Lorne's* sinking. Getting warm, right?

Slowly, an expedition came together, assisted by Guy Shockey, currently a UASBC board member, and also a noted technical diver who has been involved with the UASBC, off-and-on, for decades. Over August and September of 2022, the team corresponded and made a plan. The UASBC would charter New World Diving to take a team to the site, where they would make an exploratory dive. The team consisted of Guy Shockey, Ewan Anderson, Dennis Diamond, Jason Cook, John Campbell, Sabrina Figliomeni, and project leader Warren Bush.

*Continued on page 15*



Dive team Enroute to Centre Bay.

Photo Warren Bush

On the afternoon 1 October 2022 the team made the 40-minute transit to Center Bay after loading their equipment at the public dock in Horseshoe Bay. The day was beautiful, clear and calm. Divers Anderson, Cook and Diamond, all on rebreathers, entered the water just after 1600, and released a SMB when they found the wreck, which prompted Shockey and Figliomeni, both on open circuit to enter the water and descend. In releasing the SMB the first team succeeded in one of the day's main objectives: to confirm that the target was indeed a shipwreck.

The rebreather divers spent 45 minutes on the wreck, which lies on a gently sloping bottom approximately 165 feet (50 m) deep, followed by 60 minutes of decompression. Visibility was very bad, and the advance state of deterioration and a somewhat confusing site layout obscured what would have been an easier process of data collection under better circumstances. For example, which end of the wreck was the bow and

which was the stern could not even be determined. The divers shot video and still photographs, which clearly show a wooden shipwreck. After the dives, the team transited back to Horseshoe Bay, and enjoyed beers at The Troller Alehouse.

So, what does all this mean, and is this newly discovered wreck in Center Bay the long-lost and mysterious *Lorne*? It is simply too early to tell – the UASBC needs to return to the site and make more observations. From a historical point of view, the circumstantial evidence for the target being *Lorne* is strong. We have gone from not even knowing whether or not *Lorne* actually sank to having a wooden shipwreck at the bottom of a bay where at least one nearby cottage contains numerous *Lorne* items.

The UASBC will return, and continue to explore the shipwreck in an attempt to identify it. Confirming *Lorne's* fate would be satisfying. On the other hand, so is chasing legends. It's almost worth not solving.

**Please refer to  
[WWW.UASBC.COM](http://WWW.UASBC.COM) for latest Updates!**

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](http://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.

**UASBC Executive**

President: Keith Bossons  
Treasurer: Leila Bautista  
Communications: Ewan Anderson  
Membership: Guy Shockey  
Lower Mainland Director: Tom Beasley  
Van. Island Director: John Middleton  
Southern Interior Director: Bill Meekel  
Explorations & Education: Jacques Marc  
Chandlery: Holger Heitland  
Archivist/Researcher: Warren Bush

**Layout**

Anji Smith  
Gary Lambeth

**Editorial Material**

Opinions expressed in Foghorn are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the UASBC. Copyright © 2023, the Underwater Archaeological Society of British Columbia. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted without the publisher's written permission

