

1. Attendees (15): John Ratcliffe (Chair), Debbie Reinhart (Treasurer), Chris Harnett, Barry Edgington, Beverly Sawchuk, Leonard Baak, Frank Vieni, Iryna Volochay, Peter Noel, Nancy Binnie, Germain Wiseman, Luc Lafontaine, Jules Leduc, Francis Langlois, Nancy McCall.

2. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1905 at our usual space on the lower level of the Clocktower Brew Pub on Bank Street.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting – 26 November 2018

Minutes of the 26 November 2018 meeting were reviewed, with one correction identified by Barry Edgington:

“The owner of Dive Tech and Training Centre, DTTC, in Mallorytown is Dan *Humble*.”

The motion to approve the minutes was made by Barry Edgington; all in favour; approved.

4. Recent Events

AIA and CIMS Lectures, Ottawa

John said that there have been several American Institute of Archaeology (AIA) and Canadian Institute for Mediterranean Studies (CIMS) lectures held recently at Carleton University, Dominion-Chalmers United Church (be careful where you park!) and the Hellenic Community Centre on Prince of Wales. These are held on Sundays at 2pm; John has been forwarding emails about these to chapter members. These lectures are free and open to the public. Although they're not always on maritime subjects, the speakers are usually quite good and it's a great opportunity for members to learn more about other aspects of archaeology.

SOS Board Meeting, Toronto, 23 February 2019

John circulated minutes from the SOS Board of Directors Meeting. These minutes have already been posted online. He briefly summarized the chapter highlights from the minutes:

- Durham/Northumberland Chapter is regrouping;
- Lake Superior Chapter is active; working with Parks Canada on surveys; has several active survey licenses; presented a paper at the “Gales of November” conference in Duluth, Minnesota;
- Huron Shores Chapter (Goderich area) would like to open an underwater park in the St. Clair River;
- Thousand Islands Chapter was very active: they installed new sculptures and plaques at Centeen Park, sold 900+ dive tokens, had a summer student, and report that the new management at the Aquatarium would like to liase with the dive community
- Windsor Chapter focuses on side scan surveys on the Canada side of Lake Erie.



Other items of note include:

- The new SOS website is up and running although the membership and renewal components still need a little work;
- Chris Phinney is planning on offering two NAS Level 1 courses this year – one in eastern Ontario and another in the Hamilton area;
- Vacant positions on the SOS Board include Vice-President, Secretary, Webmaster and Quartermaster (Marg Barker recently stepped down as SOS Quartermaster). Contact John Ratcliffe or Luc Lafontaine (on the provincial board but stepping down) if you are interested;
- The 2019 AGM will likely be moved to June 2019, Jen Bush (President) wants to try and hold it in Belleville and do some dives in the Picton area, to try and increase attendance. Helen Cooper is planning on running one of her charter boats out of Waupoos Marina.

5. Treasurer's Report

The Ottawa Chapter's current bank balance is \$6,744.28.

Treasurer Debbie Reinhart reminds chapter members that they can donate to SOS through United Way (SOS has been a registered charity since 1984), but if you are donating, be sure to tag your donations so that our chapter receives them.

Luc Lafontaine reminded members to save their receipts from the Clocktower and to pass them to Debbie after their bill is paid – Clocktower donates a percentage of these receipts to our Chapter.

6. Donation Boxes

Barry Edgington will check our donation boxes at the local dive shops this spring, he will do his annual tour with Murray Hollis. Some dive guides will need to be reprinted.

7. Buoy Report

John gave an update on our chapter's mooring buoys. We are still having difficulty finding a charter operator who is consistently able to help us deploy/remove mooring buoys, since Andy Bennis (Bottom Time Diving) has scaled back his charter operations. The Seaway Valley Divers club in Cornwall and the Eco-Dive shop in Valleyfield, QC have been able to help over the last couple of years, however.

Ottawa Chapter is responsible for maintaining buoys from Prescott to Cornwall.

- Rothesay buoy can be deployed from shore if needed, otherwise Tom Scott can deploy it for us when he takes his boat from Johnstown to Brockville in the spring, although we will need to ensure that the mooring line is at the surface with a jug on it. Chris Harnett described how he had repaired the line from the mooring block to the stern of the wreck last year. He may be able to help put a jug on the mooring line this year, if required.
- Eastcliffe Hall has a large spar buoy; Ron McDonald removed it on September 12, 2018, this was a bit earlier than we would normally remove it, but we needed to take whatever opportunities we could to get out buoys in/out until we can find a reliable operator in the area.

- Milles Roches Power House - On Nov 24, 2018 John met Jean-Michel Lalonde from Eco-Dive (Valleyfield, QC) at Guindon Park, and they removed the buoy from Milles Roches using Jean-Michel's boat. Launching the boat was a little tricky as the dock had been pulled up on shore and ice was starting to form along the shoreline.

John updated the new SOS website to show that the buoys were removed, and talked to provincial mooring coordinator Raimund Krob to go over the steps involved when updating the new website. John emailed the Coast Guard to let them know the buoys were removed for the season (NOTSHIP). John reminded members that our chapter still needs a Buoy Coordinator, they would just do things like update the SOS website and email the Coast Guard.

Buoy storage: John and Murray Hollis picked up the Rothesay buoy from Tom Scott (Johnstown) and Eastcliffe buoy from Ron McDonald (Long Sault) on Nov 10, 2018 and delivered them to Andy Bennis in Iroquois for winter storage; John dropped the Milles Roches buoy off at Andy's on Nov 24, 2018.

Spring 2019:

- Most of our buoys will need some maintenance in the spring - cleaning, new stickers etc. John says he received some new reflective tape and decals from the SOS Quartermaster (Marg Barker) last fall. John to get in touch with Andy Bennis to see if we can schedule a day to clean and update the buoys this spring.
- Luc Lafontaine suggests replacing existing conical buoys with small spar buoys, as most of our older conical buoys are looking pretty tired.
- Jean-Michel Lalonde from Eco-Dive in Valleyfield, QC seemed interested in helping us deploy more buoys in 2019. We should consider buoying more sites this year, ie Belly Dumper, Hoople Creek Bridge, Fred Mercur etc, but we would need to ensure that we have the ability to remove them in the fall. We should also put a buoy on the Conestoga, but this should be straightforward.

8. Ottawa Beavers Plaque

The plaque for the defunct Ottawa Beavers (RCMP) scuba club is complete – Gregg Buscombe poured the concrete base, and has mounted the plaque on it, with a piece of Plexiglas on top.

Murray and John met Gregg at his storage unit on Nov 10 2018, picked up the plaque, and delivered it to former Beavers Treasurer Dan Kenny in Ingleside.

The plaque now needs to be installed at the Conestoga site. We are considering installing it near the stern of the Conestoga.

Next steps for 2019:

- John has contacted former Beavers president Ron Cowalchuk to select a date to install the plaque – still waiting for a response.
- An important consideration is moving the plaque from shore into the water, given the weight of the concrete base. Luc will get in touch with Cardinal Township about using a backhoe to lift it from shore into the water, like they did with the radiator plaque a few years ago.

9. Nick and Hetty Baets Donation of Old SOS Files

Last fall the Ottawa Chapter received a donation of files and drawings from Nick and Hetty Baets, former SOS members who prepared many of the SOS Diver's Guides in the late 1980s and early 1990s John has started to scan and catalogue these files – there is some great material, but it is a large collection – several hundred pages.

- Discussion about inviting Nick and Hetty to a future chapter meeting to talk about their work.
- Discussion about obtaining permission from the Baets to possibly share electronic copies of their work online. We will need to talk to SOS Corporate and secure written permission from the Baets before sharing any of their work. There is some really excellent material here that would be of interest to the local dive community.

New Business

10. Local Fieldwork Opportunities (“Ann Sissons”) – ON HOLD



Last fall *Ottawa Citizen* reporter Andrew King published a story on what is likely the wreck of a 19th-century paddle steamer (the “Ann Sissons,”) located in very shallow water near Britannia Bay in the Ottawa River (<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/king-on-the-hunt-for-a-shipwreck-here-in-ottawa>). Local archaeologists Nadine Beaudoin and Ben Mortimer accompanied King on his site visit in 2018. Nadine was planning on applying for an archaeological license to conduct fieldwork on the site in summer 2019, to try and confirm if this wreck was indeed the “Ann Sissons.” This fieldwork was intended to be part of Public Archaeology Month in August, and there would be opportunities for SOS members to become involved.

Update:

- Nadine will be on maternity leave during summer 2019, so this fieldwork will be postponed unless other chapter members are interested in leading the project.

SOS AGM – Belleville June 2019

- Date to be confirmed.

Morrisburg Washrooms and Diver Facilities

In late February John received an email from Yan Hurtubise, who is associated with Action Scuba in Pointe-Claire, QC. Yan wants to improve diver facilities in Morrisburg, specifically around the Augusta St pumphouse where many divers enter the water. Last year local residents were complaining about divers urinating and changing in public, so Yan proposes to install some porta-johns on site as a start, and would eventually like to get some benches for divers to gear up, and perhaps even install a historical plaque. Yan has met with Ben Macpherson, Director of Parks for Morrisburg, who seems supportive, and Yan says they are even talking about getting access to the interior of the pumphouse.

Yan proposes selling diver tokens (similar to those sold by the 1000 Islands Chapter) to raise money for the project. John isn't sure this is a great idea, as we don't want to divert revenues from an existing program which has been very successful.

John told Yan that we're interested in supporting this project, and asked him for details on what we can provide (money, volunteers, etc) - we could potentially apply for Heritage Funding from the province. John forwarded Yan's information to Sydney and Larry Schnurr, who live on the Morrisburg waterfront and are very active in the local dive community – they organize the Sharky's Scuba Wednesday night dives there during the summer. Sydney and Larry should be aware and involved in any diver facility improvement projects in Morrisburg.

Prescott Waterfront – Diver Access

For many years the Prescott Scuba Park was a popular dive spot, featuring a large anchor, set of stairs, and the wreck of a modern 40-ft sailboat. Divers could enter the water via a steel ramp, or do a stride jump off the retaining wall and then climb up ladders bolted onto the wall upon their return. Several years ago the City of Prescott decided to renovate their waterfront, but apparently the company that was doing the work ran out of money, and the City had to finish things themselves. The renovated waterfront contains no infrastructure for diver access, and "No Diving" signs are posted. Development plans for the waterfront note a "relocated dive site" closer to the ferry dock, which isn't workable.

Helen Cooper from ABUCS scuba in Brockville has taken the lead to restore diver access in Prescott. She launched an online petition which has received more than 1,500 signatures to date (<https://www.change.org/p/city-of-prescott-bring-back-diving-in-prescott>), and met with the City Council on March 25, 2019. Helen has been in touch with John about this project. She said the meeting with the City went well, they seemed supportive and have asked her to work with their Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) to come up with some estimates on what it would cost to restore diver access. Barry Edgington said he consulted the Mar 25 meeting minutes online, which record that the City Council directed the Clerk to follow up with Helen.

PTO Exploration – Quebec

John received an email from local tech diver Kevin Brown, who is part of a team (PTO Exploration) exploring a flooded mine on the Quebec side. There might be opportunities for SOS members to become involved, but they will likely need to be cave certified.

11. “Beyond the Edge ...” with Barry Edgington

Barry kindly brought in more examples from his enormous collection of vintage scuba gear. This month Barry brought in a Dacor CVS (Constant Volume System) hardshell BCD with ballast tank, to be filled with water, circa 1975. There is no bladder inside. To be balanced, the diver expels water. It is Weight Integrated – there is room for 16-20 pounds of weights. Barry bought this used tank after promising that he wouldn't encourage anyone to dive with it!

Those interested in vintage gear may want to look up Alex Peirce's web site (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFBv1_u7CDOEAdBqedlkSeQ)



John gave away some books:

- *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery: Inuit Testimony* (1991) by David C. Woodman
- *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex* (2000) by Nathaniel Philbrick
- *Perils of the Atlantic: Steamship Disasters 1850 to Present* (2003) by William Flayhart
- *Jacques Cousteau: The Sea King* (2009) by Brad Matsen
- *Mighty Fitz: The Sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald* (2005) by Michael Schumaker – 2 copies
- *The Last Dive* (2000) by Bernie Chowdhury
- *Shipwrecks of Nova Scotia. Vol. II* (1986) by Jack Zinck
- *Handbook of Knots and Splices* (1995) by Charles E. Gibson

12. Next Meeting Date

John will try and schedule the chapter AGM next month, based on availability of a guest speaker.