

1. Attendees (27): John Ratcliffe (Chair), Debbie Reinhart (Treasurer), Leonard Baak, Jules Leduc, Luc Lafontaine, Beverly Sawchuk, Nancy Binnie, Sheryl Lonsbary, Murray Hollis, Chris Holloway, Peter Noel, Jeff Porter.

Non-members: Meryl Oliver (Guest Speaker), Greg Weiss, Bill MacLennan, Karen Griffiths, Simon Griffiths, Joseph Griffiths, Daniel Shugar, Paul Johns, Pauline Lacroix, Bruce Kemp, Laurie Carter, Mike McEvoy, Murray Nash, Dave Testa, Jeanette Rykken.



2. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1900 at our usual space on the lower level of the Clocktower Brew Pub, 525 Bank Street.

3. Guest Speaker

The Chair introduced guest speaker Meryl Oliver, a historian with Parks Canada who works closely with their underwater archaeology team. Meryl was also involved in the development of a museum exhibit on the Franklin Expedition which opened at the Canadian Museum of History last year, before moving to the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, UK.

Her presentation “HMS Erebus and HMS Terror: The Search for the Franklin Ships and the Impact of their Discovery” discussed the historical context of the Franklin Expedition and the rediscovery of *Erebus* (2014) and *Terror* (2016). Meryl’s presentation was very well-received, drawing the largest crowd that we’ve had for some time.

Meryl also provided a brief overview of new federal legislation governing shipwrecks in Canada, the *Wrecked, Abandoned and Hazardous Vessels Act* (Bill C-64).

<https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-64/royal-assent>



SOS members and guests enjoy Meryl Oliver's excellent presentation.



Ottawa Chapter Chair John Ratcliffe thanks Meryl Oliver from Parks Canada for her presentation “HMS Erebus and HMS Terror: The Search for the Franklin Ships and the Impact of their Discovery”.

4. Break

5. Minutes of the previous meeting – 1 April 2019

Minutes of the 1 April 2019 meeting were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Luc Lafontaine; all in favour; approved.

6. Upcoming Events and Information

[NAS 1](#) Course – Chris Phinney is running a NAS I course which will be held in Welland May 24-26, 2019. More details are available on the SOS website.

[Provincial AGM](#) – 1 June 2019 in Belleville, Ontario.

SOS 1000 Islands Clean Up Dive and BBQ – 15 June 2019 at Centeen Park, Brockville.

SOS Corporate:

- SOS Board need to fill a number of vacant positions including Vice-President, Secretary, Webmaster and Quartermaster. Marg Barker recently stepped down as SOS Quartermaster. Contact John Ratcliffe or Luc Lafontaine (who is on the provincial board but stepping down) if you are interested in any of these positions.
- We need images of local wrecks for the SOS website – please contact John if you have some good images, or know any talented underwater photographers.

7. Treasurer's Report

The Ottawa Chapter's bank balance is \$6,704.28, with a \$40 float out for Donation Boxes.

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

After a discussion about whether the Clocktower still donates a percentage of bar receipts to our Chapter, John Ratcliffe followed up on Debbie's inquiry to Clocktower manager Bill Lewin.

8. Donation Boxes

Barry Edgington and Murray Hollis will check on our donation boxes at the local dive shops this spring as part of their semi-annual tour. John reminded Murray to make sure to restock the Diver's Guides.

9. Chapter Elections

All chapter executive positions (Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer) were up for nominations.

After discussion, Jeff Porter volunteered to replace Sandy Sutherland as Secretary. Since there were no other candidates, Jeff was acclaimed as the new Secretary.

John Ratcliffe and Debbie Reinhart will remain as Chapter Chair and Treasurer for the time being but will try and identify replacement candidates for 2020.

10. Buoy Updates

The Ottawa Chapter is responsible for maintaining buoys from Prescott to Cornwall. John reminded members that our chapter still needs a Buoy Coordinator to do things like update the SOS website and notify the Coast Guard when buoys are deployed or removed. John has been doing this for the last few years and could use some assistance.

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. John has received a couple of emails from divers who are interested in helping deploy or remove buoys, but we still need a charter operator who can get us out to the sites.

Spring 2019

Rothesay

- Chris Harnett and his buddy Barry Achorn dove the site last week to raise the mooring line to the surface and put a marker jug on it
- Andy Bennis dropped the buoy off at Johnstown Marina for Tom Scott from the 1000 Islands Chapter.
- Tom Scott plans to deploy the buoy shortly when he takes his boat from Johnstown to Brockville, but if he can't then we can always deploy it from shore

Eastcliffe Hall

- Eastcliffe Hall requires a large spar buoy because of the strong current and location in the shipping channel. John Ratcliffe has contacted the Seaway Valley Club in Cornwall about deploying the buoy for us, and will also get in touch with the Eco-Dive shop in Valleyfield, QC if required.

Other sites:

- Jean-Michel Lalonde from Eco-Dive in Valleyfield, QC seemed interested in helping us deploy more buoys in 2019. He removed the Power House buoy for us last November. 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 consider putting a buoy on the Conestoga, but this could be done from shore.

Buoy Maintenance and Storage

Many of our buoys are starting to show their age and require some maintenance. John received new decals and reflective tape from SOS Quartermaster Marg Barker last year. Murray Hollis volunteered to collect all of our buoys from Andy Bennis in Iroquois and store them temporarily at his place in Stittsville. John and Murray to coordinate buoy maintenance (with Barry Edgington too, if available).

Luc suggests replacing our entire inventory of buoys, as SOS Corporate now supplies buoys at no cost to the chapter. Luc also suggests that we prepare new mooring lines for our sites. The current ropes, shackles and hardware are at least 10 years old.

After a discussion about where the buoys should be stored in the winter, Luc suggests that Andy Bennis is probably willing to continue to store them. Need to verify with Andy.

Coast Guard Notifications (NOTSHIP/NAVWARN)

Last fall 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). The Coast Guard has updated and renamed the NOTSHIP process – it is now called NAVWARN.

11. Beavers Plaque

The plaque for the defunct Ottawa Beavers (RCMP) scuba club is complete – Gregg Buscombe poured the concrete base last year and has mounted the plaque on it with a piece of Plexiglas on top. Plaque was completed in July 2018 and Beavers notified. John and Murray delivered the completed plaque to former Beaver's Treasurer Dan Kenny in Ingleside in November, 2018.

Next steps – the plaque needs to be installed on the Conestoga. Preferred location is near the stern, by the swim chain (in the hopes that divers might read it).

Planned for 2019:

- Jeff Porter to contact former Beavers to arrange a date to install the plaque. John has emailed former Beavers president Ron Cowalchuk to select a date to install the plaque – still waiting for a response.
- Nancy Binnie suggests billing the event as a “Beaver’s Reunion.”
- 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 providing a backhoe to lift it from shore into the water, like they did with the radiator plaque a few years ago.

12. Nick and Hetty Baets Donation – Old SOS files

Last July 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 finished cataloging and scanning this material and has uploaded it to Dropbox. There is some great material, but it's a large collection – several hundred pages worth. There are lots of drawings, photos and maps of local sites, as well as information on the history and development of SOS. There is some really excellent material here that would be of interest to the local dive community.

John will contact the Baets to secure a formal disposition agreement. We will need to talk to SOS Corporate and secure written permission from the Baets before sharing any of their work. John to invite Nick and Hetty to a future chapter meeting to talk about their work.

13. Prescott Waterfront (Scuba Park)

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. 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.

Update – Helen presented costing proposal and schematic for new diver access ramp to the Prescott City Council at their May 6, 2019 meeting. Proposal was approved - details to follow.

Leonard Baak suggests that the Ottawa Chapter should take a leadership role in improving the Prescott Scuba Park, organizing clean up dives, and should look into installing a training platform there, similar to what’s at Centeen Park.

14. Morrisburg - Augusta St. Improvements

In 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 divers enter the water to visit the Tin Plate Factory and begin their drift through Lock 23.

Last year residents of Augusta St were complaining about the behaviour of divers who gear up at the pumphouse, specifically about divers urinating and changing in public.

Yan Hurtubise wants to address these concerns by improving diver facilities at Augusta St. His ideas include:

- installing some porta-johns on site
- installing benches for divers to gear up (similar to those at Centeen Park and Rothesay site)
- constructing wooden change rooms similar to those found at Lock 28 or Rothesay
- installing a historical plaque
- installing a sign reminding divers to respect local residents

Yan has met with Ben Macpherson, Director of Recreation and Facilities, Municipality of South Dundas, who seems supportive, and Yan says they are even talking about getting access to the interior of the pumphouse. While generally supportive, the municipality doesn't want to spend any money on the project.

To fund these improvements Yan has proposed selling diver tokens (similar to those sold by the 1000 Islands Chapter) and launching a GoFundMe page. John has informed Yan that we likely wouldn't be very supportive of another diver token program in eastern Ontario, as we don't want to divert revenues from the existing 1000 Islands program which has proven to be very successful. Revenue splitting/sharing between different token programs might also be difficult. John is skeptical about the GoFundMe option.

John told Yan that we are interested in supporting this project, and asked him for details on what we can provide (money, volunteers, etc). John asked Yan to provide a detailed breakdown of what he wants to install at Augusta St and how much that will cost, so that we have a financial target to work towards. John contacted 1000 Islands Chapter for information on how much their Centeen Park benches cost, Steve Hatch said they were about \$1200 each. Still waiting on detailed proposal from Yan.

John forwarded Yan's proposals 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 has provided feedback on the proposed improvements. She feels that the porta johns would likely not go over well with local homeowners, as they can get pretty smelly during the summer. She likes the idea of diver benches and signage, but was initially skeptical about the need for change rooms, as there are public washrooms and change rooms down the road at the public beach. After further consideration, she was OK with the idea of constructing wooden change rooms at Augusta St if they're built right against the pumphouse. Sydney will get in touch with local homeowners on Augusta St to see what they think about these ideas.

Discussion regarding Ottawa Chapter participation in any Morrisburg improvements. John asks Luc Lafontaine (SOS board member) if he thinks Corporate would provide any money for this project, Luc thinks this is doubtful unless we could really sell them on the heritage component.

More to follow.

15. New Business

Projects

Luc Lafontaine encourages the chapter to initiate one or more projects as a way to increase participation. All in agreement, but each project does require one or more leaders/sponsors. Luc suggested installing a plaque at the wreck of the "Bruce" by the Rowing Club in downtown Ottawa.

Next Meeting Date TBD

John gave away some books:

- *Frozen in Time: Unlocking the Secrets of the Franklin Expedition* (1988) by Owen Beattie and John Geiger
- *Ninety Fathoms Down: Canadian Stories of the Great Lakes* (1995) by Mark Bourrie
- *Many a Midnight Ship: True Stories of Great Lakes Shipwrecks* (2005) by Mark Bourrie
- *Ghost Ships of the Great Lakes* (1968) by Dwight Boyer