

Attendees (7): John Ratcliffe (Chair), Debbie Reinhart (Treasurer), Lorne Cooper, Chris Harnett, Nancy Binnie, Germain Wiseman, Chris Holloway.

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 19:05 - this was our first virtual meeting (via Zoom).

2. Minutes of the previous meeting – 18 November 2019

Our chapter has not held any meetings since November 18, 2019, when we met at the Clocktower Brew Pub in the Glebe to hear guest speaker Bruce Kemp give a talk on the Great Storm of 1913. A motion to approve the minutes of 18 November 2019 was made by John Ratcliffe and seconded by Debbie Reinhart – motion carried.



3. News and Events

Effects of COVID-19 on Local Diving and SOS

John briefly discussed the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on SOS and local diving. Our chapter has not met since November 2019. We would typically have held a meeting in late March 2020, which was put on hold due to Covid, as were subsequent meetings in 2020.

John mentioned that the SOS 1000 Islands Chapter worked with the Ontario Underwater Council (OUC) last spring to translate a protocol for safe diving during Covid developed by the Fédération Québécoise des Activités Subaquatiques (FQAS). This protocol was then posted on large signs at local dive sites including Centeen Park, the Rothesay, and the Conestoga ([https://brockville.com/images/sitepics/SOS%20Shore%20Diving%20Covid19%20Return%20P rotocol.PDF](https://brockville.com/images/sitepics/SOS%20Shore%20Diving%20Covid19%20Return%20P%20rotocol.PDF))

While many had to cancel dive trips, shore diving remained popular during the pandemic, and local charters continued to operate, albeit on a reduced scale and with new safety protocols in place.

Updates to SOS Executives – Local and Provincial

Our chapter Secretary, Jeff Porter, has informed John that he is no longer available to continue in that role. Jeff replaced Sandy Sutherland as our Secretary in May 2019. Thanks for all your excellent work, Jeff.

Our chapter will need to schedule an AGM later this spring (there was no AGM in 2020) to hold elections to see if anyone is willing to take on job of Secretary. We also still need a Buoy Coordinator, as this position has been vacant for the last few years since Andy Bennis stepped down, with John filling in since then.

At the provincial level, Jen Bush has stepped down as the President of SOS and has been replaced by Durrell Martin. John Raso has taken on the role of SOS Quartermaster in addition to his normal duties as Webmaster. Stephen Hatch from the 1000 Islands Chapter continues as the provincial Membership Coordinator.

Online Lectures – AIA, CIMS, OAS, and Marine Museum

John said that the local chapters of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), the Canadian Institute for Mediterranean Studies (CIMS), the Ontario Archaeological Society (OAS) and the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes in Kingston have all organized online speakers series over the last year.

While these lectures don't always deal with maritime themes, the speakers are generally excellent and these talks are a great way for members to broaden their archaeological horizons. John will continue to forward invitations to these various talks from time to time, and has also been sharing them on our chapter's Facebook page.

NDA Shipwrecks Symposium 2021 – April 9-10, 2021

The Niagara Divers' Association (NDA) annual Shipwrecks Symposium event, which was cancelled last year, has now moved to an online format

(<https://shipwrecks.niagaradivers.com/wp/category/past-events/2021-shipwrecks/>).

They've lined up some excellent speakers including well-known cave diver and explorer Jill Heinerth and famed American shipwreck hunter Dave Trotter. Registration for the event is FREE, although donations are encouraged.

SOS Annual General Meeting (AGM) – May 16, 2021

SOS will hold its AGM (online) on May 16, 2021 (<https://saveontarioshipwrecks.ca/news/annual-general-meeting-2021/>)

NAS I Course in Brockville this Spring (EPSO)

A Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) Level I course will be held in Brockville this spring. The course was organized by the École de plongée sous-marine de l'Outaouais (EPSO) shop in Gatineau and will be taught by Chris Phinney. Contact EPSO for more details if interested.

4. Membership

The SOS website has improved and is sending out automated emails to remind members when their membership has expired. Membership can be renewed on the SOS website (<https://saveontarioshipwrecks.ca/>), by logging in to your profile, selecting “Dashboard” along the menu bar at the top of the page, and then “Manage Membership.”

If you have any issues renewing your membership please contact John or email membership@saveontarioshipwrecks.ca.

5. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Debbie Reinhart was present and provided an update.

As there was little financial activity in 2020 Debbie presented a summary which showed both our 2019 and 2020 financial activity. Our current bank balance is \$6,743.14.

We received another anonymous \$90 donation through United Way in September 2020 – thank you anonymous donor! Debbie reminded members that it's possible to donate to SOS through workplace charitable campaigns.

It appears that our chapter did not receive any membership benefits from SOS Corporate in 2020 – John will follow up with Corporate to see what's happening. Our chapter typically receives about \$200-\$300 annually in membership benefits from SOS Corporate.

6. Donation Boxes

John has been in touch with Barry Edgington regarding the donation boxes our shop maintains in local dive shops in Ottawa and eastern Ontario. Barry was not able to connect to the meeting, but has sent John some updates. The donation boxes increase our visibility by providing our contact information, SOS brochures and Diver's Guides and stickers to local divers, who can leave small donations in return.

Barry and Murray Hollis did not do their annual tour last year to collect the money from the boxes and refresh the material, but Barry says he will try and go this year once he's vaccinated, as he is 77 years old.

Barry has been in touch with Durrell Martin to obtain more brochures and pamphlets, and is also working on upgrading some of the donation box signage.



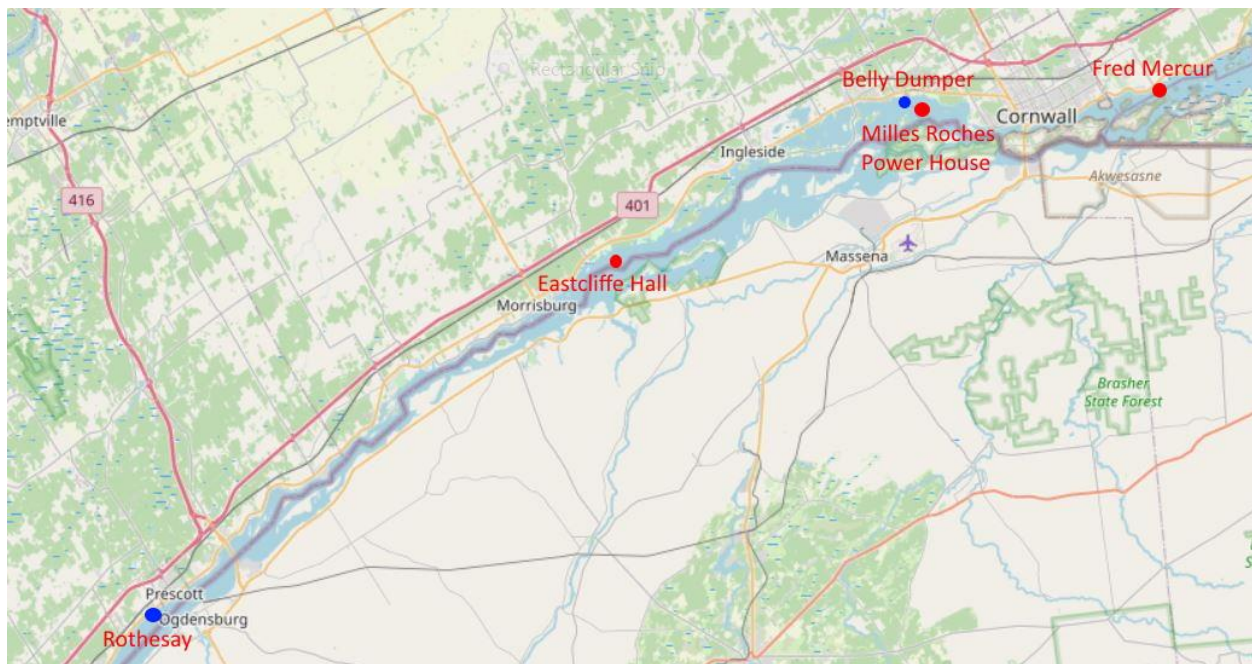
Example of SOS Ottawa donation box. Photo courtesy of Barry Edgington.

7. Buoy Updates

Our chapter has 10 mooring buoys: (3) large spar buoys; (2) medium spar buoys; and (5) small conical buoys.

Type	Size	Site	Custodian	Location
Spar	Large	Storage	Murray Hollis	Ottawa
Spar	Large	Storage	Murray Hollis	Ottawa
Spar	Medium	Storage	Murray Hollis	Ottawa
Conical	n/a	Storage	Murray Hollis	Ottawa
Conical	n/a	Storage	Murray Hollis	Ottawa
Conical	n/a	Storage	Murray Hollis	Ottawa
Spar	Large	Eastcliffe Hall	John Mondoux	Cornwall
Conical	n/a	Power House	John Mondoux	Cornwall
Conical	n/a	Fred Mercur	John Mondoux	Cornwall
Spar	Medium	Rothsay	Dom Gingras	Prescott

SOS Ottawa Buoy Disposition, Spring 2021



SOS Ottawa is responsible for maintaining shipwreck moorings from Prescott to Cornwall. In 2020 we maintained mooring at three sites: the Eastcliffe Hall, Milles Roches Power House, and Fred Mercur (red dots). In 2021 we will also deploy mooring buoys at the Rothsay and Belly Dumper (blue dots).

SOS Ottawa has an inventory of 10 mooring buoys, summarized in the table, above. These were all formerly stored on Andy Bennis's property in Iroquois, but after Andy stepped away from his role as Buoy Coordinator a few years ago Murray Hollis graciously agreed to store some of these, which were transported to his place in Stittsville in spring 2019. The six buoys with Murray were cleaned and refurbished in 2019, and new decals and reflective tape added as needed.

The Seaway Valley Divers club in Cornwall has been helping us deploy our moorings for the last few years, so John Mondoux from the club has a large spar buoy and two conical buoys at his place in Cornwall. In 2020 John and SVD deployed a large spar buoy on the Eastcliffe Hall and conical buoys on the Milles Roche Power House and Fred Mercur, and retrieved them in the fall. John will get in touch with John Mondoux and the Seaway club to confirm if they can deploy these again this year.

John was recently contacted by Sylvain Marcotte, an experienced diver from Montreal and friend of Christian Rémillard, who spoke to our chapter in fall 2018 about his work mapping Lock 23. Sylvain has purchased a boat and says he is interested in helping us deploy a buoy at the Belly Dumper this season.

We did not deploy any mooring buoy at the Rothesay in 2020 due to various COVID delays. For the past few years Tom Scott who ran "Under Where?" charters would deploy this for us when he took his boat from Johnstown to Brockville in the spring, but he was delayed getting his boat into the water last year, and he since sold his boat to a new owner. Dominique Gingras who owns the EPSO shop in Gatineau has purchased a property in Prescott, however, and has volunteered to deploy the Rothesay mooring for us this season. John drove down to Prescott on March 19th to deliver the Rothesay buoy to Dominique. Dominique is aware that someone will have to dive the site first to raise the mooring line. Chris Harnett says he may be available to help with this if needed, although this likely wouldn't be required for at least a month or two.

8. Prescott Scuba Park

Request for Funding to Construct 2x Training Platforms

John said that he was contacted by Neil O'Hare from the 1000 Islands Chapter in September 2020, who previously worked with Helen Cooper from ABUCS Scuba to have the access ramp installed at the Prescott Scuba Park.

Neil wants to construct two training platforms at the Prescott Scuba Park – these are plastic and wooden platforms similar to those found at Centeen Park in Brockville, used by instructors and their students to perform skills during their Open Water classes. The platforms get the students up out to the silt, and the 1000 Islands Chapter suggests that these platforms and scuba parks like Centeen promote low-impact diving by allowing students and new divers to develop their buoyancy before visiting historic wrecks.

Neil has acquired some large plastic pallets which will form most of the structure, and has been in touch with Stefan Senecal from the 1000 Islands Chapter, who built the existing platforms at Centeen Park. Neil has also been in touch with Jeff Horricks from Kanata Dive Supply (KDS), who is willing to contribute the labour to construct the platforms. Neil says that he has contacted some of the Prescott city officials, who don't foresee any objections to installing the platforms.

Neil says he wants to install them to the east of the current access ramp, at a depth of about 25'.

Neil is asking SOS Ottawa to fund the cost of the lumber for this project, as the Prescott Scuba Park falls within our chapter's territory. Neil's goal is to construct and install the two platforms this spring – he had wanted to do this last year, but John had suggested that it was a bit late in the season when Neil contacted him in mid-September, and that our chapter would need to discuss and approve the project before disbursing any funds.

Neil provided a detailed estimate of the cost for lumber for the proposed platforms (approx \$985.00 – lumber costs have increased dramatically during the pandemic), which John shared with chapter members in a document he previously sent them. This document also outlined some of the arguments for and against SOS's involvement in the project. Arguments for the platforms include the opportunity to promote low-impact diving while developing a site for which we are responsible, at minimal cost, and reducing pressure on Centeen Park while giving local shops an alternate training venue. John said that he felt that using our resources as a non-profit to help for-profit dive shops train students was a bit peripheral to the overall mandate of SOS, but that ultimately he was willing to support Neil, as we have a healthy bank balance, haven't been particularly active in the last few years, and this is an opportunity to increase our visibility a little bit and contribute to the local dive community.

Nancy said that we should support this project, as it allows us to support the development of low-impact diving and would still leave us with a bank balance in excess of \$5,000.00, and we have been sitting on our money for the last few years and spending very little. Nancy suggested that the platforms could be used in future NAS training courses, with the addition of small datum markers, and suggested that we consider how future platforms could be designed for NAS training to more closely replicate historic wrecks, rather than simple square structures. Lorne and Germain suggested that we add a small plaque to the platforms to acknowledge the contribution made by SOS Ottawa.

Nancy Binnie raised a motion for SOS Ottawa to contribute a grant not to exceed \$1,000.00 for the purchase of lumber to construct two training platforms at the Prescott Scuba Park, reserving the right to add small plaques to the structure to recognize our financial contribution, and small metal or plastic datum markers if we decide to conduct NAS training there. Motion seconded by Lorne Cooper – approved.

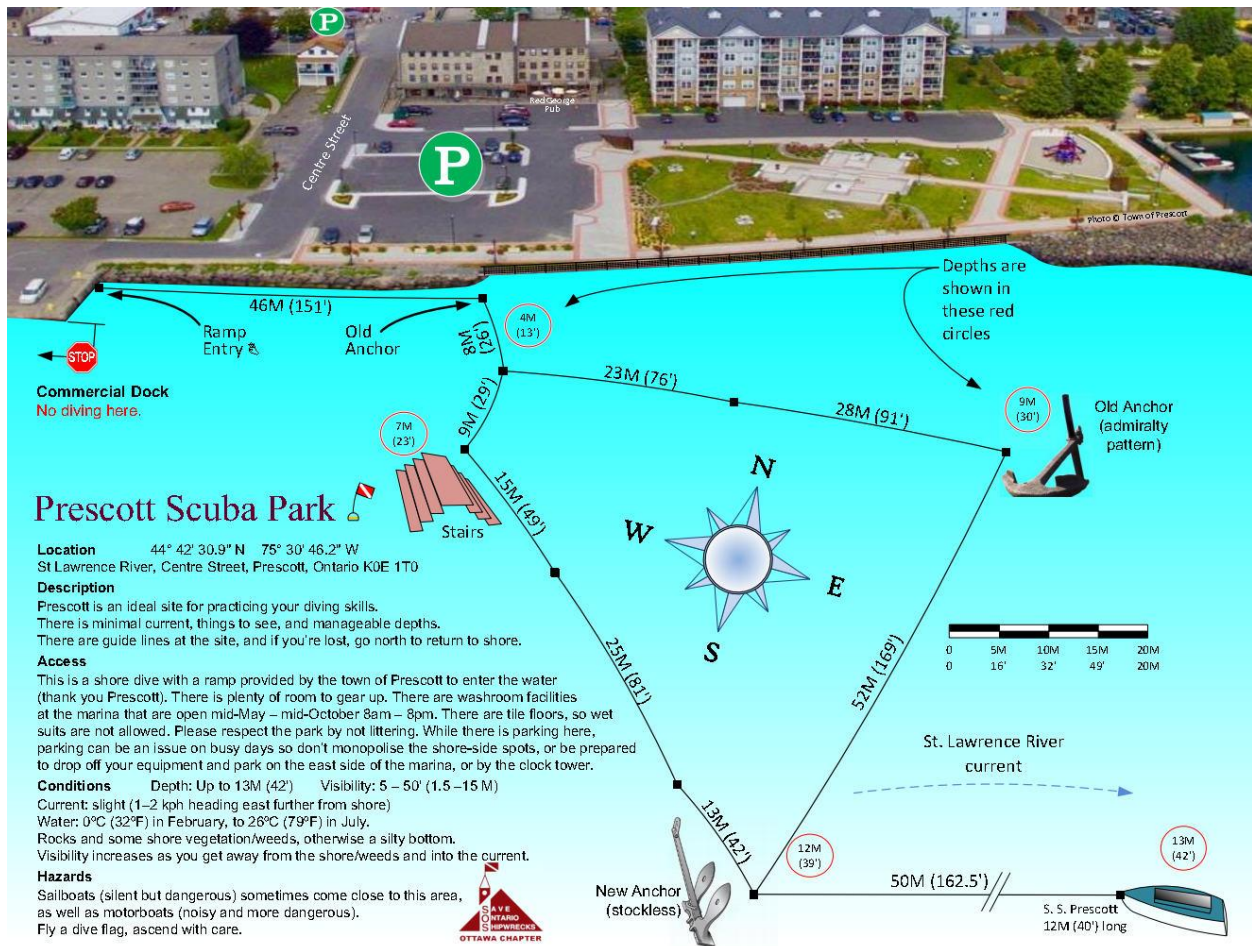
John will contact Neil to let him know that his request for funding has been approved, and Debbie will coordinate his reimbursement for supplies (to a maximum of \$1,000.00).

John will stay in touch with Neil and will share any information and updates with chapter members in case they want to contribute to this project. More to follow.

Prescott Scuba Park – Map

Chris Holloway has been working on an updated map of the Prescott Scuba Park for the last couple of years (see below), which is nearly complete.

John would like to verify one or two details (a new line has been added from the stern of the sailboat to one of the anchors, for example) before distributing, and Chris said he would like to wait until the new platforms are in before finalizing the map. Should be ready later this summer. John to send draft map to meeting attendees for review and comment.



Draft version of Prescott Scuba Park map by Chris Holloway.

9. Beaver's Plaque (Again!)

This plaque was installed at the Conestoga by SOS Ottawa in fall 2019 to commemorate the defunct Ottawa Beavers (RCMP) scuba club, who made a substantial donation to our chapter in 2016 after deciding to disband their club.

John reported that he had made a mistake when fabricating and installing the plaque. They had screwed a piece of clear plexiglas over the plaque to protect it, but the joint between the plexiglass and the plaque underneath wasn't watertight, and algae has since grown on the interior face of the plexiglass (where it can't be scraped off), obscuring the plaque text. John would like to try and remove the plaque from the water this season to refurbish and repair it. This should be possible with one or two sturdy divers.

10. New Business / Next Meeting Date

Nancy reported that she was contacted regarding the discovery of a sunken canoe of possible historic significance in Lake Simcoe by an ice fisherman. The fisherman lowered a camera and observed a sunken canoe that appeared to have been there for some time, and exhibited unusual features such as a high bow.

Nancy has been in touch with Durrell Martin to obtain contact information for the SOS Barrie Chapter, to see if they are still active and interested in following up on this find. Nancy suggested that this could be an interesting small project for the Ottawa Chapter, if Barrie isn't able to take the lead. First steps would involve a recon dive to locate the wreck and assess its significance.

Nancy says she has put the finders in touch with a local museum in the area, as well as the Canoe Museum in Peterborough. She has confirmed that Lake Simcoe does not fall within the Trent-Severn Waterway managed by Parks Canada, so it would fall under provincial jurisdiction. She has also started to look at which First Nations communities might be interested in this find. Debbie says she has a contact in the Rama Nation, if required. More to follow.

Next meeting to be held in late April/early May. Motion to adjourn at 20:00.