

Local History – Bedwell Bay Shipwrecks

By Ralph Drew, Belcarra, BC, April 2011.

Bedwell Bay has had two new shipwrecks documented in recent weeks:

1. The **Mystery Wreck** is that of an unknown 58.4m (191.6 foot) wooden ship that was most likely sunk in the early 20th century when Bedwell Bay was used as a “ships’ graveyard”. The wreck is lying at a depth of 105 feet, not far from the **YMS-159 Minesweeper** shipwreck on the eastern shore of Bedwell Bay. The wreck was explored and videoed by the *Shipwreck Exploration Team* (SET) which is affiliated with the *Underwater Archaeological Society of BC* (UASBC). See the following links for more information and a video of the wreck:
March Trip Report – <http://shipwreckexplorationteam.ca/Reports/tr8.html>
April Trip Report – <http://shipwreckexplorationteam.ca/Reports/tr11.html>
Underwater Video – <http://vimeo.com/21053843?ab>
2. The second wreck is a **Mystery Barge**; again, most likely sunk in the early 20th century. The wreck is lying upside-down and partially buried at a depth of 65 to 80 feet, not far from the **Western Dispatcher** shipwreck on the western shore of Bedwell Bay. The wreck was also explored and videoed by the *Shipwreck Exploration Team* (SET), and the good underwater visibility resulted in excellent video of the wreck. See the following links for more information and a video of the wreck:
April Trip Report – <http://shipwreckexplorationteam.ca/Reports/tr10.html>
Underwater Video – <http://vimeo.com/22512829>

The other well-known Bedwell Bay shipwrecks are:

YMS-159 Minesweeper (aka VT-100) – This 136-foot wooden-hull vessel was built as a Yard Class mine-sweeper by the *Burger Boat Co.* in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and launched in 1943 during the height of World War 2. After the war she was renamed the VT-100 and used as a tug for the rest of her career. On April 22nd, 1956, vandals started a fire on board the vessel and she burned to the waterline, sinking in 50 feet of water. See the following links for more information and a video of the wreck:

Wreck Information – http://www.belcarra.ca/reports/Bedwell_Bay_Mystery_Wreck.pdf

Underwater Video – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ctug0fyi-qE>

Western Dispatcher – This 110-foot wooden-hull vessel was built as a submarine-chaser by the *Quincy Adams Yacht Yard* in Quincy, Massachusetts, and launched on April 19th, 1943. After World War 2 she was used as a fishpacker with *Nelson Bros. Fisheries Ltd.* for the rest of her career. She points north on a slight mud slope on the western shore of Bedwell Bay, her bow in 46 feet of water and the stern down 56 feet. The vessel was stripped and demolished at Bedwell Bay, and her registry was closed on April 5th, 1978. See the following links for more information and a video of the wreck:

Wreck Information – http://www.belcarra.ca/reports/Bedwell_Bay_Western_Dispatcher_Wreck.pdf

Underwater Video – <http://vimeo.com/22589158?ab>

Sealing Schooner – Structural evidence of this unidentified wreck indicates that she was a small sailing vessel. Most such craft were schooners; however, the term “schooner” was used loosely on the BC coast — sloops and other rigs were common too. The wreck lies on a mud slope, at depths of 26 feet to the stern and 36 feet down to the bow. What remains is 85 feet of hull from stem to sternpost, and all the wood is quite deteriorated. Bedwell Bay was long used as a place to moor idle vessels and as a ships’ graveyard, and this vessel was probably abandoned. See the following links for more information and a video of the wreck:

Wreck Information – http://www.belcarra.ca/reports/Bedwell_Bay_Sealing_Schooner_Wreck.pdf

Underwater Video – <http://vimeo.com/22635874>

SS Amur (aka SS Famous) – The vessel was a steel, steam-screw, awning-deck freighter built by the *Strand Slipway Company* in Sunderland, England, in 1890 as the *Famous*. Her dimensions were 216 feet in length by 28 feet in breadth. The vessel was renamed the *Amur* when it was brought to British Columbia in 1898, and the name reverted to *Famous* when the ship was sold in 1924. The *Famous, ex-Amur*, is one of the most historically important vessels sunk off the southern mainland of British Columbia. Around 1928 she was sold to *Leith, Murray and Company*, of Vancouver, and they salvaged her brass and steel, and then beached the hulk in Bedwell Bay. The *Famous* was subsequently scuttled on September 6th, 1932, in the deep water of Bedwell Bay south of Farrer Cove — the wreck lies at an average depth of 213 feet. See the following links for more information:

Wreck Information – http://www.belcarra.ca/reports/ISE_Sonar_Survey_Shipwreck_Famous.pdf

New Information – <http://shipwreckexplorationteam.ca/Reports/tr3.html>