

community

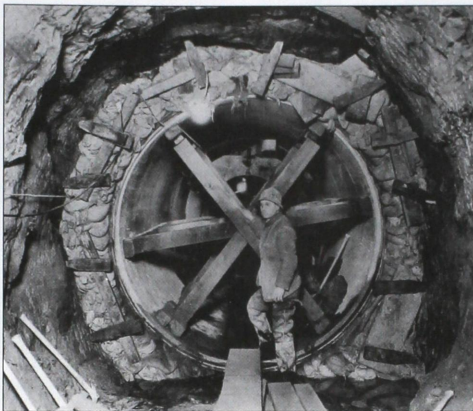
by Dianne Mackay

It is 10:03 a.m. as the Burrard Beaver SeaBus pulls out of the Lonsdale Quay Terminal on its routine run to Waterfront Station on the opposite side of Burrard Inlet. Passengers on the vessel casually read the newspapers, engage in idle chit-chat or stare resolutely into space. The ferry trip across Burrard Inlet is part of a routine that many North Vancouverites follow every day. But how many people know the human history that lies underneath the inlet? How many SeaBus commuters, for instance, know of the mysterious shipwreck lying only metres beneath them as they pass through the waters that surround Lonsdale Quay?

Although few people realize it, a fascinating array of relics and ruins lie beneath the heavily charted waters of Burrard Inlet. Beginning in early November, the North Vancouver Museum and Archives will shed fresh light on the history of the inlet with a new exhibit entitled *Bottoms Up! A Walk in Burrard Inlet*. The display—a colourful collection of old photographs, artifacts and stories—promises to take a whimsical look at Burrard Inlet's past. A series of lectures are planned to give visitors deeper insight into the many events and tragedies that have occurred in Burrard Inlet in the last two centuries.

Shipwrecks will be an important component of the exhibition. It has been estimated that at least a dozen ships have gone down in Burrard Inlet since the mid-1800s. The most famous of these is the Beaver, a freight/passenger ship and former member of the Hudson Bay Company's fur trading fleet that was wrecked near the mouth of Burrard Inlet in 1888. The Beaver did not sink completely after its destruction and, with its hull still clearly visible from the shores of Stanley Park, the wreck quickly became a popular Vancouver landmark. The vessel was eventually swept away from its

Mystery and History Lie in Burrard Inlet



Shown here under construction, the First Narrows Pressure Tunnel lies 122 m. below Burrard Inlet. Built in 1933, it is still relied upon to carry millions of gallons of water daily from Capilano Reservoir to Vancouver. Photo: W.J. Moore, courtesy of the GVRD

resting place and disappeared underwater in 1892. The area is now an official heritage site.

Another shipwreck featured in the exhibit is the Chehalis, a Union Steamship boat which was struck by another ship in 1906. Controversy and an inquiry continued for years as authorities searched for the cause of this disaster in which eight people died. A memorial cross sits today at Brockton Point in commemoration of the event.

And then there is the elusive shipwreck under the waters in front of Lonsdale Quay. Still unidentified, the wreck is believed by some researchers to be the remains of a vessel named Sprat's Ark. Later named Canada, Sprat's Ark became a fixture in local history as the barge was used to carry building materials from the North Shore to the city of Vancouver. The boat was decommissioned in 1909, and its whereabouts have remained a mystery ever since.

In addition to shipwrecks, the museum will investigate the historical roots of Burrard Inlet's two bridges. The Lions Gate Bridge was built to

accommodate the needs of the Guinness family, wealthy entrepreneurs intent on improving city access to their fledgling British Properties development. The bridge was completed in the 1930s. The tragic collapse of the Second Narrows Bridge during its initial construction will also be revisited in the exhibition. Eighteen workers and one rescue diver lost their lives in this disaster. The Second Narrows Bridge now officially bears the name Iron Workers Memorial Bridge in honour of those who died in the accident.

Along with displays detailing the construction of the two crossings, the exhibit will also examine some of the functional structures built under the bridges, including rare photographs of the water tunnel running under the First Narrows crossing and descriptions of the water pipes located under the Second Narrows Bridge. The exhibit is a unique way to discover secrets lying in your local waters.

Bottoms Up runs from November 6–March 1 at the North Vancouver Museum and Archives. For details contact Virginia Nuytten, 987-5618.