

Vancouver Island West Coast – Sep 23

After a couple of days of rain, it was really nice to see the sun start to shine through the trees this morning.



Jen wanted to do the Wild Pacific Trail so off we went, through Ucluelet and to the start of the trail, a kilometer from the Amphitrite Lighthouse.

You are here

Amphitrite LIGHTHOUSE

A Wild Pacific Dream

In 1988, shellfish farmer "Oyster Jim" Martin decided that the wild beauty of Ucluelet's coastline was a treasure to be experienced and preserved for all time. He began talking about an accessible trail tracing the cliff-edge from Amphitrite Lighthouse all the way to Pacific Rim National Park. The proposed route crossed land owned by a host of federal, provincial, municipal and private parties, so the dream at first seemed impossible. But "Oyster Jim" would not take no for an answer. It took a decade for his relentless persistence to wear a path into being, and in 1999 the first section of coastal trail opened, connecting the lighthouse with the nearby He-Tin-Kis Park boardwalk.

Since then the Wild Pacific Trail Society has taken up the mission to expand the trail network northward, building on the dedication and vision of "Oyster Jim" and his countless supporters.

Now the Wild Pacific Trail is deeply rooted in the identity of Ucluelet and has become a favourite walk for visitors and locals alike. With the continued help of donations and fundraising, the dream of extending this trail all the way to Pacific Rim National Park Reserve can be attained.

"You haven't seen anything yet." — Oyster Jim Martin

1999 • Amphitrite Point lighthouse loop trail
2002 • Six-kilometre trail extension from Big Beach to highway access
2007 • Brown's Beach parking lot
• Tugwell Field connector trail
2008 • Brown's Beach connector trail
• Lighthouse loop trail connected and new parking lot built in partnership with the Ucluelet and Ana Historical Society
2009 • He-Tin-Kis Park boardwalk replaced with gravel trail
2010 • Terrace Beach trail extension
2011 • Artiss loops section 1
2012 • Artiss loops section 2
2013 • Ancient Cedars & Rocky Bluffs

This morning was a real learning experience. Not far into the trail we came across this (next page).

Plank Roads & Boardwalks

These 100-year-old cedar planks are fragile remnants from a time before paved roads.

Elevated boardwalks were used to build and operate a 1906 lighthouse, a telegraph office and a radio station. Supplies, including coal to power the foghorn, were lifted off ships in Spring Cove. Then men pushed loads on wheelbarrows for 1 km over this boardwalk to Amphitrite Point Lighthouse.

World War II created a need for more capacity, so a cedar plank road was built to carry a small truck. Ships were Ucluelet's lifeline until a gravel logging road was opened to Alberni in 1959.

1 Boardwalk from Spring Cove in 1945. Planks were suspended to maintain a level grade for wheelbarrows. (Photo of George Colquhoun, South Sea Coast - Olden and Brown)

2 Cling Harrold's vintage light keeper, with a 1949 Dodge pickup truck at the intersection of the plank road and the lighthouse boardwalk.

3 Very few people could keep that truck on the slippery plank road - hence many use Stuart, designer of radio station operator Barclay Stuart's 1973 photo of Miles Graydon.

4 50-foot radio beacon mast

5 Vehicle plank road 1952 photo taken by the Stuart family from their radio station residence. Poles in the background carried telegraph lines, then a local phone line. Power lines were not added until 1961.

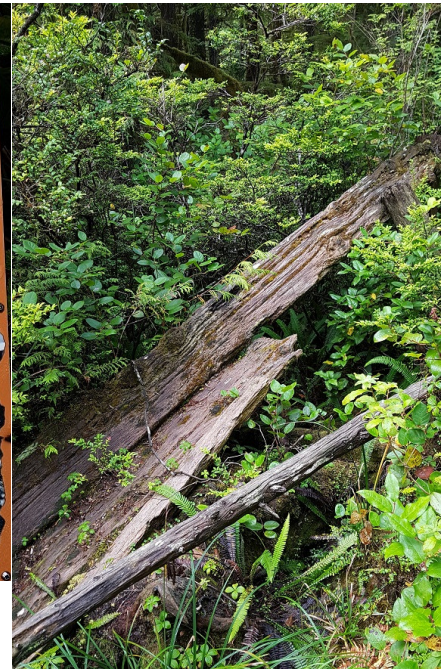
Wild Pacific Trail
UCLUELET, B.C.

KEY to photo locations and historic routes traced on this 1959 aerial photo:

- 1 Cedar Boardwalk (Boardwalk on the Colquhoun family)
- 2 Intersection of vehicle plank road & raised boardwalk.
- 3 Radio Station Plank Road (Plank road photos by Stuart family)

Thanks to Claydon's Biosphere Trust for funding this project and to the Ucluelet Historical Society for research. Photo by: That historic and the height of Ucluelet





The views of the water were magnificent; the sunshine certainly helped.



Unfortunately in poorer weather all sorts of havoc happens.

Graveyard of the Pacific

Near here lies the shipwreck of the *Pass of Melfort*, a British four-masted barque. Built of steel, she was the length of seven school buses, but still no match for the waves that pounded this shore.

In the early hours of December 26, 1905, this huge sailing ship struck the jagged reefs in front of you. Travelling in ballast, the ship was on its way from Panama to Port Townsend, Washington. It was carried north past the mouth of Juan de Fuca Strait by strong currents and a fierce southwest gale.

By daylight all that remained visible of the vessel were three bodies and assorted flotsam. Smashed ship's boats, wooden buckets carrying the name of the ill-fated vessel, were seen floating in the small bay to your left. All hands, said to have numbered at least twenty-seven, including one woman, were drowned in the raging waters. Even within sight of shore, massive breaking seas prevented anyone from reaching firm ground alive.

Hundreds of shipwrecks are documented along the western shore of Vancouver Island, which continues to earn its name 'Graveyard of the Pacific.'

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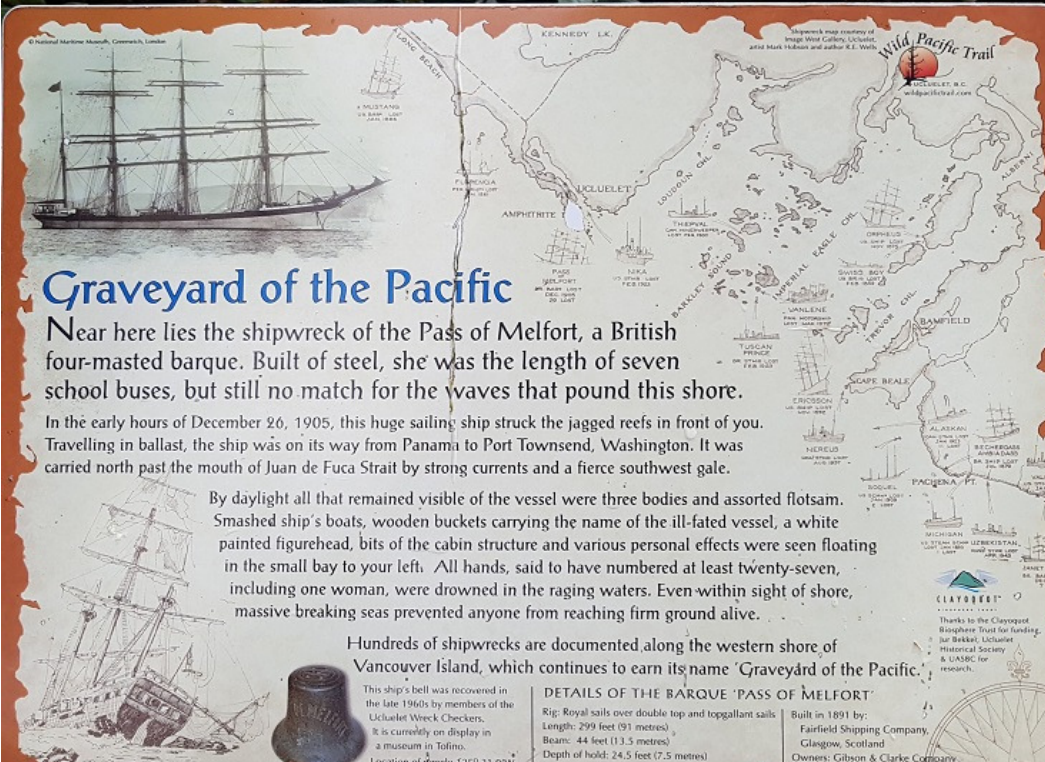


CLAYDON'S
Thanks to the Claydon's Biosphere Trust for funding. For Birkett, Ucluelet Historical Society & UASBC for research.

DETAILS OF THE BARQUE 'PASS OF MELFORT'

Rig: Royal sails over double top and topgallant sails
Length: 299 feet (91 metres)
Beam: 44 feet (13.5 metres)
Depth of hold: 24.5 feet (7.5 metres)
Tonnage: 2196

This ship's bell was recovered in the late 1960s by members of the Ucluelet Wreck Checkers. It is currently on display in a museum in Tofino. Location of wreck: 125° 31.9' W and 48° 51' N

Built in 1891 by: Fairfield Shipping Company, Glasgow, Scotland
Owners: Gibson & Clarke Company

Many of the lighthouses we have seen on our travels, especially the eastern-most one in Maine, USA, are quite spectacular. Perhaps the setting helps too. But this one was a little underwhelming to say the least. I guess if it does its job, it really doesn't matter what it looks like. But we kinda thought something a little more impressive would be ... a little more impressive.

We continued on the trail past the lighthouse. I was concerned that this 2.6 km walk was going to be a bit much for Jen. But she assured me, as long as she could stop at the frequent "bench sites", that she would be okay.



So here was something that we did not know. Perhaps you did.

Sea Foam

What looks like soap suds on the surf is actually tiny, single-celled plants mixed with air and water.

Sea foam is created when waves or strong winds mix air into the ocean water. Organic matter in the sea, mostly from dead microscopic plants, contains protein that gives the water enough surface tension to form lasting bubbles. Strong surf and winds pile the bubbles up into the familiar, suds-like masses common in the surf and along the shore.

This common sight results from the prolific reproduction of tiny, single-celled plants of the sea called "phytoplankton." Diatoms and other types of phytoplankton will bloom when conditions are favourable. When the cycle ends, billions of plankton die, releasing the organic material that creates the foam.

Diatoms can be easily seen under the microscope. These jewel-like cells can multiply to 12,000,000 individuals per ml. of seawater. Diatoms have glass-like silica walls.

Sea foam tells you that the sea off our coast is producing tons of food for creatures higher up in the food chain. Every living thing in the ocean feeds on diatoms and other plankton, directly or indirectly. Even the great baleen whales filter out plankton and diatoms as part of their diet.

CLAYCOOOOT™

Graphics by Schramm Design
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The awe inspiring views just continued.





This was the only "mile marker" we saw on the trail.





Inspiration Point was down a flight of steps. Jen couldn't, and I didn't. We continued along the trail stopping at many of the benches along the trail.



The last part of the trail, basically cutting across back to the parking lot was a bit tougher for Jen; uphill and downhill and not nearly as many rest stops. We figured the benches we passed earlier were mainly for visitors to stop, rest, and admire the views.

Just before we got to the parking lot, and just outside a side trail through a bog, we saw this.

I took a couple of pictures, but unfortunately there wasn't an angle that clearly showed the gnarled "bonsai" that the board described. I even spent some time back at camp, blotting out the background vegetation, but we still could not really see the fine example of Mother Nature's bonsai. Guess you will just have to walk the Wild Pacific Trail yourself.

We got back to Alfie after 2.6 kms. Jen was smiling but she admitted that last bit had really done her in. Too much walking and not enough rest benches. But she, and I, thoroughly enjoyed the Trail. We highly recommend it.

This area is a woodland bog • Learn more on the Interpretive Loop ahead!

Westcoast Bonsai

Why are trees here twisted into a giant broccoli forest?

Bonsai gardeners prune plants in shallow containers to make miniature trees—nature does the same thing in a woodland bog. Tree roots can only grow a few inches (~10 cm) before the high water table drowns them. This stunts growth so severely that trees the size of children can be hundreds of years old, twisted into broccoli-like shapes by a lack of nutrients. Growing tips of branches are also pruned by summer droughts. This slow growth makes tree rings so dense even dead branches take a long time to disappear.

Dwarf trees can be hundreds of years old
Size is not a predictor of age. Notice how trees change size as the trail ahead crosses higher and lower ground. Shore pines are characteristic of coastal bogs, but hemlocks and cedars also manage to survive.

Fun fact:
Bonsai-like trees also appear on **coastal rocks** where soil is scarce, and fierce salty winds prune growth.

Shore pine
(*Pinus contorta* var. *contorta*)
This slow growing pine is a coastal variety of lodgepole pine, which grows in B.C.'s interior.

ayquoit Wild Pacific Trail UCLUELET
Funded by donations to the Wild Pacific Trail Society and the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust - Thanks to Dr. Andy MacIsaac and Pacific Rim National Park for source material.

Tomorrow, we return back "home" to the other side of the Island.

Tomorrow also happens to be the 3rd anniversary of our Mattie's passing. Hard to believe it is three years since our beloved friend and companion left for the big doggie park in the sky. Good girl!

By the way, this will be our last entry for a while. On October 1, we leave for our winter location in Comox, BC. We are looking forward to having time to really explore the Cumberland, Courtenay, and Comox area for a few months.

See you Spring 2019!