

The “Garbage Boat” Incident

Submitted by Kevin Vine
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You may recall that on Sunday, 24 July, an email message was circulated to Club members, which read in part: *“A small barge that was loaded with garbage has sunk in the harbour between the Club’s docks and the nearby houseboat. The contents of the ‘garbage barge’ are littering the harbour along the Club’s foreshore.”*

You may also have already heard rumours and speculation about whodunit, their intent, their motive, and how their garbage boat managed to sink.

But here’s what I think we know for sure:



At high tide on Sunday afternoon, the “garbage boat” — a small fibreglass runabout well past its best-before date and initially filled with trash — was grounded on the ledge between the neighbouring houseboat and the shore. The debris from it was strewn across the intertidal zone, littering at least 100 metres of shoreline in

the vicinity of the creek that borders the Club’s property.

By low tide on Monday morning, much of the detritus had already been picked up, apparently by one of the nearby live-aboard residents. A group of Sailing Club volunteers showed up to pick up the remaining bits and pieces and take them away for disposal.

By high tide on Monday afternoon, the “garbage boat” floated just enough to be pulled up close to shore, and the attached anchor was secured above the high tide line, where it remains for now. In short, all the debris that could be found has been removed and the boat is secured.



The Coast Guard claimed to have received upwards of 30 calls regarding this incident. The RCMP have been notified and photographs have been shared with them. However, the "garbage boat" remains on the beach, and there has been no commitment from the Coast Guard or the Harbour Authority to remove it.



The live-aboard boats that reside in the harbour present a variety of problems that don't have any good solutions that are obvious, humane, clear or simple. A similar situation exists in downtown Ganges where many RVs are parked that have become home for some.



This issue is not unique to Saltspring and it's not the first time it's been addressed, either. Both the growing understanding of the problem and the realization that solutions are required has been going on for some time. Check out the list of links at the end of this article.

Live-aboard boats continue to be a growing problem common to virtually every harbour up and down our coast. A couple of jurisdictions have used their authority to kick people out, further displacing them, forcing them to take their "stuff" elsewhere to places like Ganges Harbour. Other jurisdictions are experimenting with pilot projects to provide more acceptable housing alternatives.

The Sailing Club is looking for ways to be part of a solution, but currently, we're still trying to understand how deep the water is we're intending to wade into! On Saltspring, it's not clear at this point who has the authority, jurisdiction, or impetus to actively seek solutions.

To that end, SISC member Glenn Stevens has been asked to be the **Saltspring Island Sailing Club Coordinator for a Green Harbour**. His role will be to explore ways in which SISC can initiate or contribute to initiatives to seek out solutions to this on-going and complex problem.

Below are links to stories and events that are already on the record regarding abandoned boats and pollution in Ganges Harbour. It is not definitive:

Raising of the Blondie

March 24, 2019

The "Dead Boats Society" retrieved "Blondie" from the bottom.



Driftwood

Jan 9, 2020

MLA Olsen Floats Liveaboard Meeting

"Multiple agencies needed to tackle Ganges Harbour situation"

Work is underway to address issues connected to floating homes and boats in Ganges Harbour.

December saw multiple meetings in which people living in Ganges Harbour addressed politicians, stating their concerns over regulations and enforcement on the water. Water-based communities have faced regulatory challenges for years since multiple agencies and governments share varying levels of jurisdiction on the water and foreshore areas."

<https://www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com/news/olsen-floats-liveaboard-meeting/>

CRD

"Abandoned and neglected boats impact the health and safety of our shorelines, especially if fuel, chemicals or garbage are leaking into the marine environment."

<https://www.crd.bc.ca/education/concerns/abandoned-boats>

CBC News

Jan 16, 2020

Salt Spring Island's boat-dwellers will voice concerns at town hall meeting

"Some fear government might seize vessels in Ganges Harbour

Boat-dwellers in Ganges Harbour on Salt Spring Island, B.C., will be able to voice concerns their boats might be seized at an upcoming town hall meeting with their member of parliament, Elizabeth May."

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/salt-spring-island-s-boat-dwellers-will-voice-concerns-at-town-hall-meeting-1.5430419>

Peter Prince

"Abandoned boats are not only an issue here on Saltspring Island, but throughout the Gulf Islands... and internationally as well."

Peter Prince checks out the activities of the Veins of Life Watershed Society, and the hard work of local volunteers cleaning up Ganges Harbour of abandoned boats and other debris polluting coastal community waterways and beaches.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= HAobxu9Wms>

Driftwood

Jun 12, 2019

Dead Boats Society Wants Your Derelicts

"Signing abandoned boats over makes clean-up process easier

With the controversial Ganges Harbour wreck Castle Finn now signed over to authorities for proper disposal, the founder of the nonprofit Dead Boats Disposal Society is urging other derelict boat owners to do the same.

Boat owners around the Gulf Islands have the chance to surrender their vessels to the Dead Boats Disposal Society for removal as part of the federal Abandoned Boats Program.

John Roe and disposal society partners have removed 17 boats from waters around Salt Spring so far and were out hunting for more last week to take advantage of the program."

<https://www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com/news/dead-boats-society-wants-your-derelicts/>