



BY MARIANNE SCOTT

Gordon & Marilyn Graham of Telegraph Cove

*One couple's journey to turn a
coastal outpost into a boating haven*

G

Gordon Graham invites me to board his golf cart and we mosey down to Telegraph Cove's Forest RV Campground, with its more than 100 campsites. Most of the campers are in recreational vehicles of all sizes—some quite glamorous—but tenters are welcome too.

Beginning in 1979, it was the first place Gordon (77) and Marilyn (76) created at Telegraph Cove, a small harbour off Johnstone Strait. "When we first

saw Telegraph Cove, it was a typical, old, West Coast town, with sewage on the beach, dilapidated houses, a generally low-rent place," said Gordon. "We liked fishing and thought a fishing resort would be popular here."

The Grahams, who'd married in 1970, were then living in Port Alice, a village on Neroutsos Inlet, one of the many bays and arms that form Quatsino Sound. Gordon, usually called Gordie, was a tree faller. "I loved the profession," he said. "We felled and bucked timber for Sitka Falling Ltd." But Marilyn, a public-health nurse, knew that logging was Canada's most dangerous industry and did not want to raise the couple's two daughters on her own. "I was born in Saskatchewan," she said. "But Gordie grew up on a dairy farm in the Fraser Valley."

Gordie had become acquainted with Telegraph Cove's sawmill that was still operating in the 1970s. "I sometimes bought lumber there," he said. He observed that the eclectic group of mill worker homes surrounding the boardwalk village posed a huge fire risk. "These wooden buildings had mostly knob-and-tube wiring installed in the first half of 20th century," said Gordie. "Very dangerous."

TELEGRAPH COVE AS a village started in 1912, when the Superintendent of Telegraphs sought to expand the telegraph network north of Campbell River. He picked this small harbour, naming the site after the transmission device of the day—then as important to communications as the internet is today. Bobby Cullerne maintained the telegraph line that was strung on tree branches and became the cove's first inhabitant. The expanded version of his one-room shed still stands on the side of the boardwalk.

In 1922, Alfred Marmaduke "Duke" Wastell, bought land around the harbour and eventually opened three businesses, the Broughton Lumber and Trading Company, the Telegraph Cove

Mill and a salmon saltery. Buildings accommodating these enterprises were erected and houses and cottages for the workers sprung up—many on stilts. His son, Fred, took over the industries, but when he died in 1985 and the enterprises shut down, the Grahams bought all of Telegraph Cove's buildings and began to update and repurpose them, creating a new industry—tourism. "It was a huge thing for us that Telegraph Cove's history be preserved," said Gordie. "But we didn't want to make the houses and cottages too pretty, not transform them into five-star destinations, but make them distinct, cosy and comfortable while retaining their historical character. We left the moss on the roofs."

WITHOUT THE COMPLETION of Highway 19 in the 1970s, Telegraph Cove would not have flourished. Before then, only boats could reach the isolated coastal settlements—using the marine highway just like the Indigenous 'Namgis and the Kwakwaka'wakw who fished and traded there for millennia. "Without the road, our village wouldn't have found success," said Gordie, adding that during many summers more than 100,000 people visited the cove (in the winter, only 10 to 15 people reside here).

Over the years, the Grahams rebuilt and maintained the marina and the boardwalk that surrounds the harbour, doing much of the work themselves. "You cannot afford to hire contractors to do the work," said Marilyn. "You simply have to do it yourself."

The renovated houses are rented to visitors—many from Europe. "We've hosted people from Africa and even Mongolia," Marilyn added. "And celebrities like Oprah, former UK prime minister John Major, Jimmy Pattison and George Bush senior have visited. They came to view the wildlife and because no one bothered them here."

Industrial-age artifacts are positioned around the village, including old fire-

PRINCE of WHALES

WHALE & MARINE WILDLIFE ADVENTURES

Private Charters

WHEN ONLY THE BEST WILL DO



TRAVEL IN STYLE & COMFORT ON OUR LUXURIOUS CATAMARANS

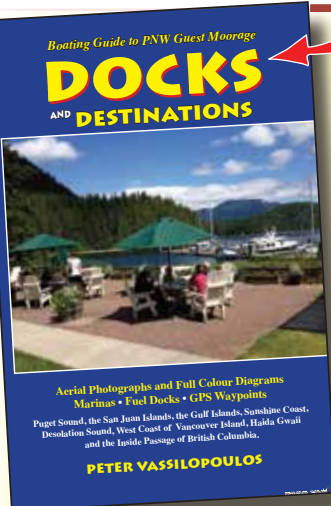
Up to 96 guests | Customizable Departures, Routes, Schedules
Catering & Beverage Options Available

VICTORIA | VANCOUVER | TELEGRAPH COVE

BOOK NOW

1-888-383-4884

princeofwhales.com/charters



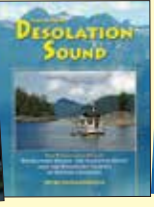
DOCKS AND DESTINATIONS
Aerial Photographs and Full Colour Diagrams
Marinas • Fuel Docks • GPS Waypoints
Pugnet Sound, the San Juan Islands, the Gulf Islands, Sunshine Coast, Desolation Sound, West Coast of Vancouver Island, Haida Gwaii and the Inside Passage of British Columbia.
PETER VASSILOPOULOS

NEW EDITION

All of these books are available at Pacific Yachting Magazine or marine stores and book stores



GULF ISLANDS

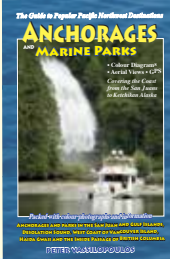


DESOLATION SOUND



BROUGHTON ISLANDS

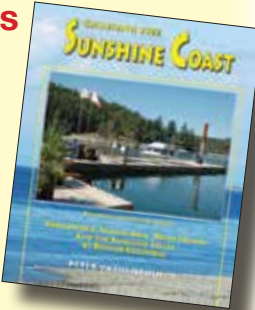
• Broughton Islands
• Desolation Sound
• Gulf Islands



ANCHORAGES AND MARINE PARKS
Aerial Photographs and Full Colour Diagrams
Marinas • Fuel Docks • GPS Waypoints
Pugnet Sound, the San Juan Islands, the Gulf Islands, Sunshine Coast, Desolation Sound, West Coast of Vancouver Island, Haida Gwaii and the Inside Passage of British Columbia.
PETER VASSILOPOULOS

• Anchorages
• Sunshine Coast

These Cruising Guides are your Boating Companions.



SUNSHINE COAST

Visit Marine Stores, Marinas and Pacific Yachting Magazine

All available at <https://shop.opmediagroup.ca/collections/bookstore>



fighting equipment and a rusty Dodge truck. Every few metres a green metal plaque explains a piece of the village's century of enterprise, as well as introducing the people who first inhabited certain houses. Some of the signs honour the saltery and mill workers of Japanese descent who were interned during the Second World War. "A grandson

brought his grandmother in her 80s back for a family reunion," said Marilyn. "She'd lived here before the war. We've also met other descendants of people who once lived here."

"We've maintained a little sawmill to make planks for the

boardwalk and cut timber for new and revamped buildings," Gordie added. The Grahams are especially proud of the recent reconstruction of the old lumber warehouse building, which houses the Whale Interpretive Centre. "We built it in the same style," said Gordie. "Just raised the ceiling to better display the whale skeletons."

Managed by the Johnstone Strait Killer Whale Interpretive Centre Society, it lays claim to being the largest marine mammal museum in BC. Besides displaying the skeletons of marine mammals (it's remarkable how much their appendages resemble human hands), the museum offers programs for school kids that teach biodiversity, conservation and animal adaptations in the Salish Sea.

In 1994, Bell Canada shot a commercial in Telegraph Cove. "They rented houses, brought in extras from



No visit to Telegraph Cove is complete without a walk along the boardwalk and a stop at the Whale Interpretive Centre.

Port McNeill and we had to join the Actors Guild,” Gordie said. “We had a coffeeshop but no restaurant to feed all these folks. That persuaded us to add a West Coast style restaurant, the Old Saltery Pub.”

The commercial played across Canada and gave Telegraph Cove a terrific boost.

Summer activities abound. The marina is home to a fleet of fishing boats with some spaces available for visiting yachts. Stubbs Island, founded in 1980, was the first whale watching company in BC (now operated by Prince of Whales). A fleet of rental kayaks, along with knowledgeable guides, are available. A bear watching company whisks

visitors out into Knight Inlet to view grizzly and black bears. On the boardwalk outside the pub, Gordie still grills slabs of marinated salmon. A new 24-room modern lodge, built to resemble the style of the Whale Interpretive Centre, opened recently.

AFTER MANAGING TELEGRAPH Cove for more than 40 years, the couple are thinking about its future. “We’re working on a retirement plan,” said Marilyn. “Our daughters worked here many summers and know how much work it is to run the place. We’d like to eventually find people who’ll want to maintain the houses, museum and boardwalk, and

keep their history alive.”

After all the years of hard work, the Grahams have no regrets about their long tenure, although Gordie grumbles a bit about government regulations that don’t always fit a seasonal business, and the tough times caused by the pandemic. “I’ve loved living here though, and reinventing Telegraph Cove with Marilyn and some family members,” he said. “We’ve won many prizes and awards.”

“Our biggest joy has been to see how much people enjoy it here. Most have never viewed an orca or bear, or anything like it,” continued Marilyn. “We’ve made so many friends and 99 percent of our guests are wonderful. We will miss them.” 

GET EDUCATED NOT JUST INSURED

What is Lloyd's of London?

Lloyd's of London, what's in a name...? Many people are under the belief that Lloyd's of London is an insurance company, and that is just not the case.

Commonly known as Lloyd's, it is an insurance market located in the city of London England. Unlike most of its competitors in the industry, it is not an insurance company. It is a corporate body governed by the Lloyd's Act of 1871 and subsequent Acts of Parliament. Today it's a marketplace within which multiple financial backers, grouped in syndicates, come together to pool and spread risk. These underwriters, or “members”, are a collection of both corporations and private individuals, the latter being traditionally known as “Names”.

There are over 80 actual insurance entities under the Lloyd's banner. The insurance business underwritten at Lloyd's is predominantly general insurance and reinsurance. The market has its roots in marine insurance and was founded by Edward Lloyd at his coffee house on Tower Street in 1686.

Navis is a proud Cover Holder at Lloyd's, meaning we have underwriting and claims authority on behalf of the Syndicates we represent. No two Lloyd's policy wordings would be the same, do you know what yours covers?

Visit our website for more information about Lloyd's of London and why our Lloyd's Yacht Policy might be the best insurance for you.

Call us about a detailed review of your current insurance.

604 620 4510

WE ARE
navismarine.ca

LLOYD'S

Coverholder

Lloyd's Building Dan Breckwoldt/Shutterstock.com

NAVIS

MARINE INSURANCE BROKERS