

RCAF B-24 Liberator Bomber Wreck in Gander Lake, Newfoundland

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Co-authors

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Maxwel Hohn – Salish Sky

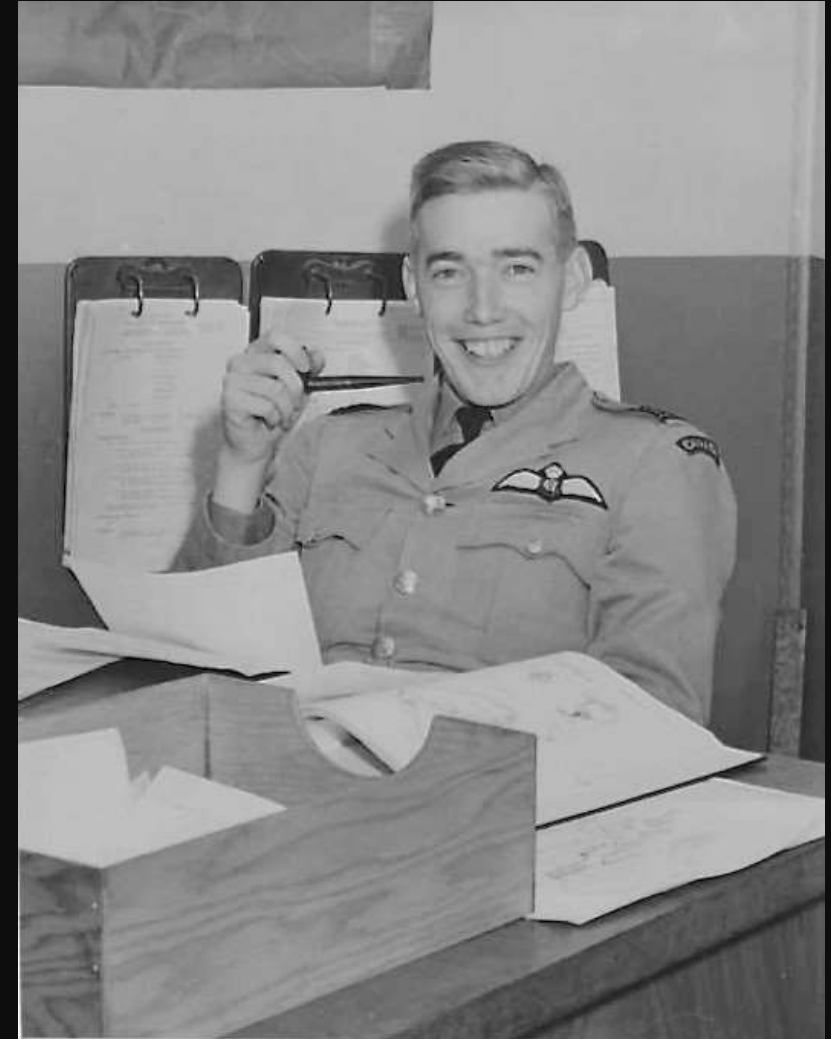
RCAF Liberator bomber (B-24)

- Liberator 589 “D” from No. 10 (BR) Squadron in Gander
- Normally flew anti-submarine patrols over North Atlantic
- Took off on a night practice flight on Sept. 4, 1943
- Eyewitnesses saw the plane climb from the runway and then barrel-roll several times, stall and crash into Gander Lake

RCAF Liberator bomber 589

Three RCAF crew and one passenger killed:

- Wing Commander John Young, Flight Officer Victor Bill & LAC Gordon Ward
- Squadron Leader (Dr.) Grant MacKenzie doing medical research on hearing loss in aircrew



Wing Commander John Young

RCAF Liberator 589

Navy divers spent 10 days trying to recover bodies and the aircraft

Divers recovered the body of Squadron Leader MacKenzie

Buried in Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Gander

Photo © Neil Burgess



RCAF Liberator 589

SPSNL member Tony Merkle researched this plane crash for 9 years

He provided a rough location of the wreck in Gander Lake from the RCAF crash report

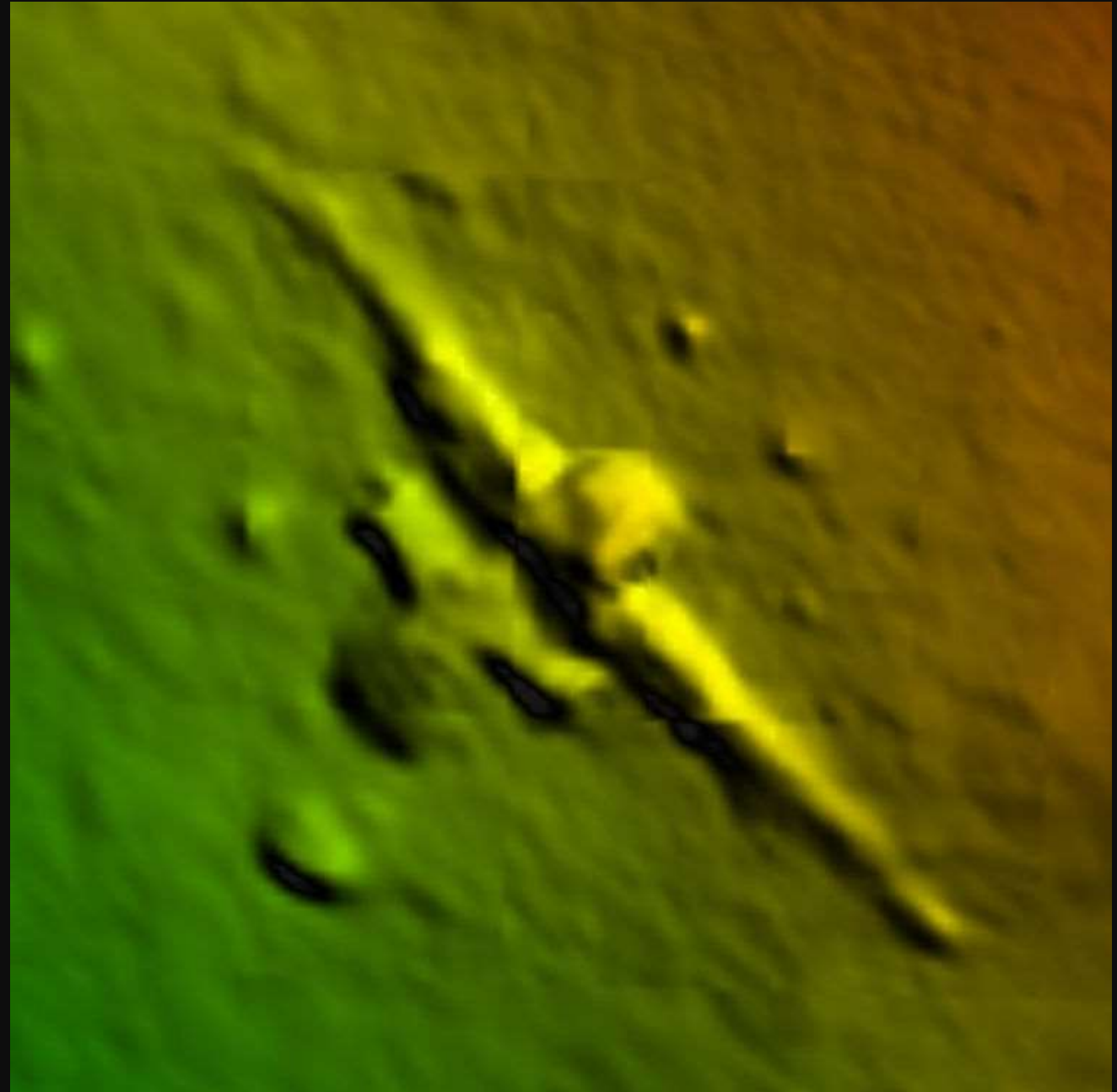
Photo © Jill Heinerth



RCAF Liberator 589

In June 2022, Kirk Regular of the Marine Institute located the bomber wreck using multibeam sonar

Photo © Kirk Regular



RCAF Liberator 589

Adam Templeton of the Marine Institute collected video of the bomber wreck using an ROV

Photo © Adam Templeton



RCAF Liberator 589

In Sept 2022, SPSNL partnered with Ocean Quest's Great Island Expedition team to dive on the bomber wreck for the first time in 79 years



Photo © Robert McClellan

RCAF Liberator 589

Challenges of diving
on the bomber wreck:

- 38+ m deep
- Dark brown water
- Nitrogen narcosis



Photo © Rick Stanley

RCAF Liberator 589

Landing gear nose wheel

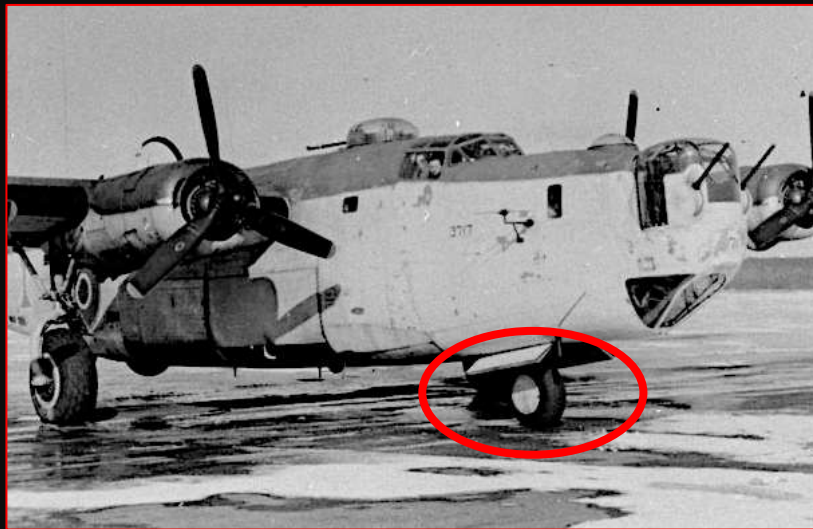


Photo © Jill Heinerth



RCAF Liberator 589

Diver Luc Michel on the fuselage



RCAF Liberator 589

.50 calibre machine gun

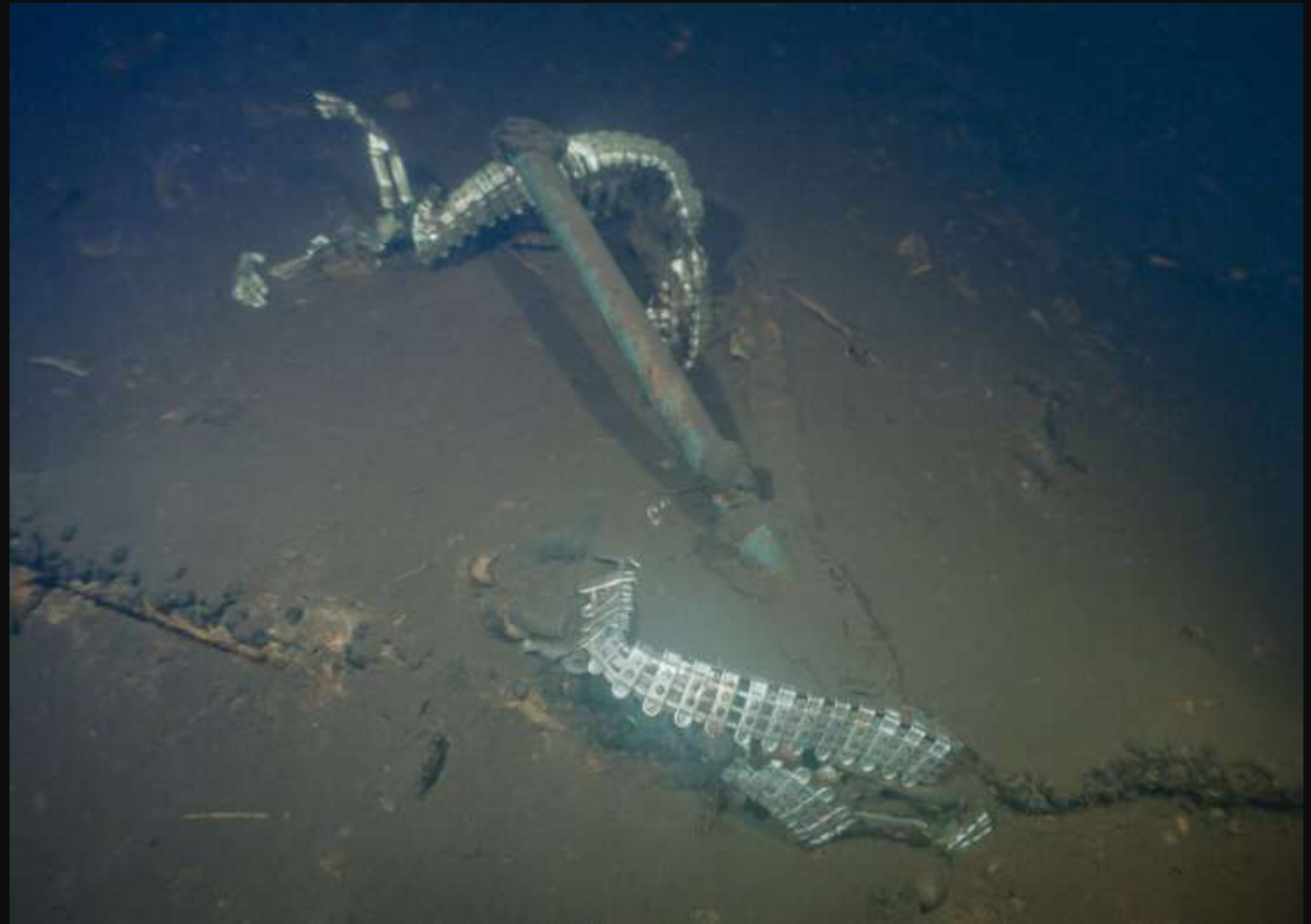


Photo © Maxwel Hohn

RCAF Liberator 589

Tail gun turret



Photo © Neil Burgess



RCAF Liberator 589

Bomb release interval control box



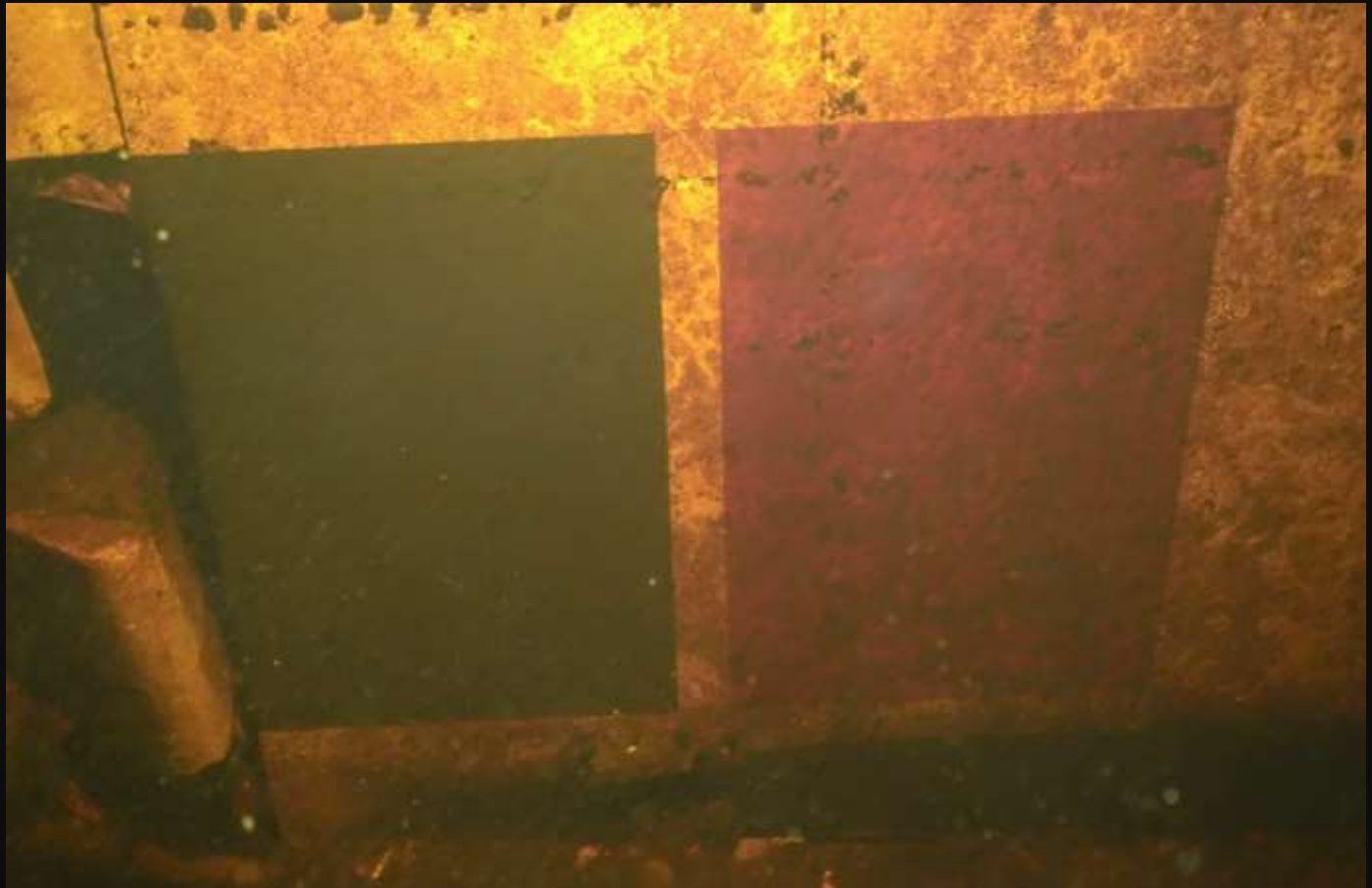
Photo © Maxwell Hohn

RCAF Liberator 589

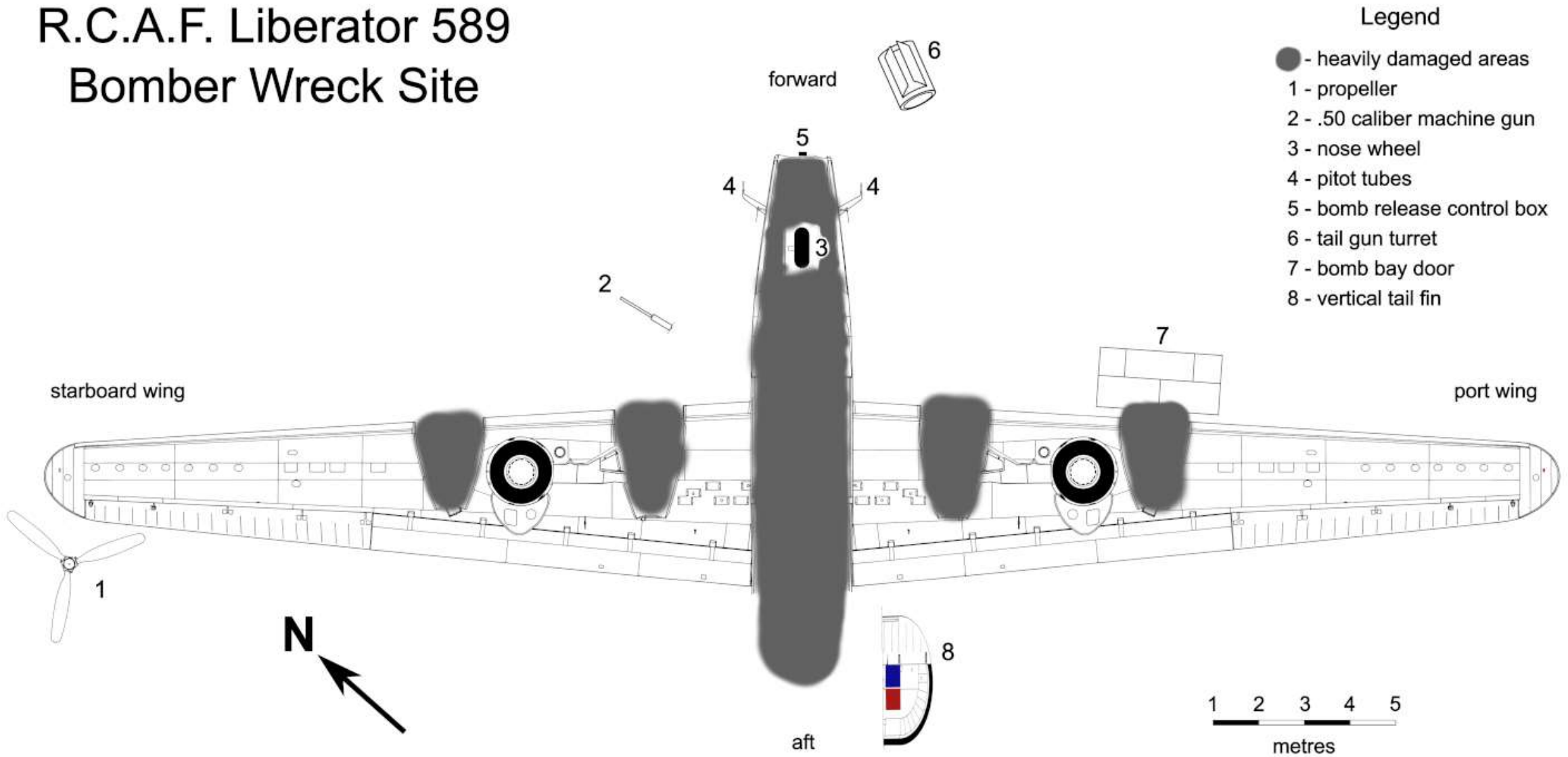
RCAF fin flash on vertical tail fin



Photo © Neil Burgess



R.C.A.F. Liberator 589 Bomber Wreck Site



Legend

- - heavily damaged areas
- 1 - propeller
- 2 - .50 caliber machine gun
- 3 - nose wheel
- 4 - pitot tubes
- 5 - bomb release control box
- 6 - tail gun turret
- 7 - bomb bay door
- 8 - vertical tail fin

Project Outcomes

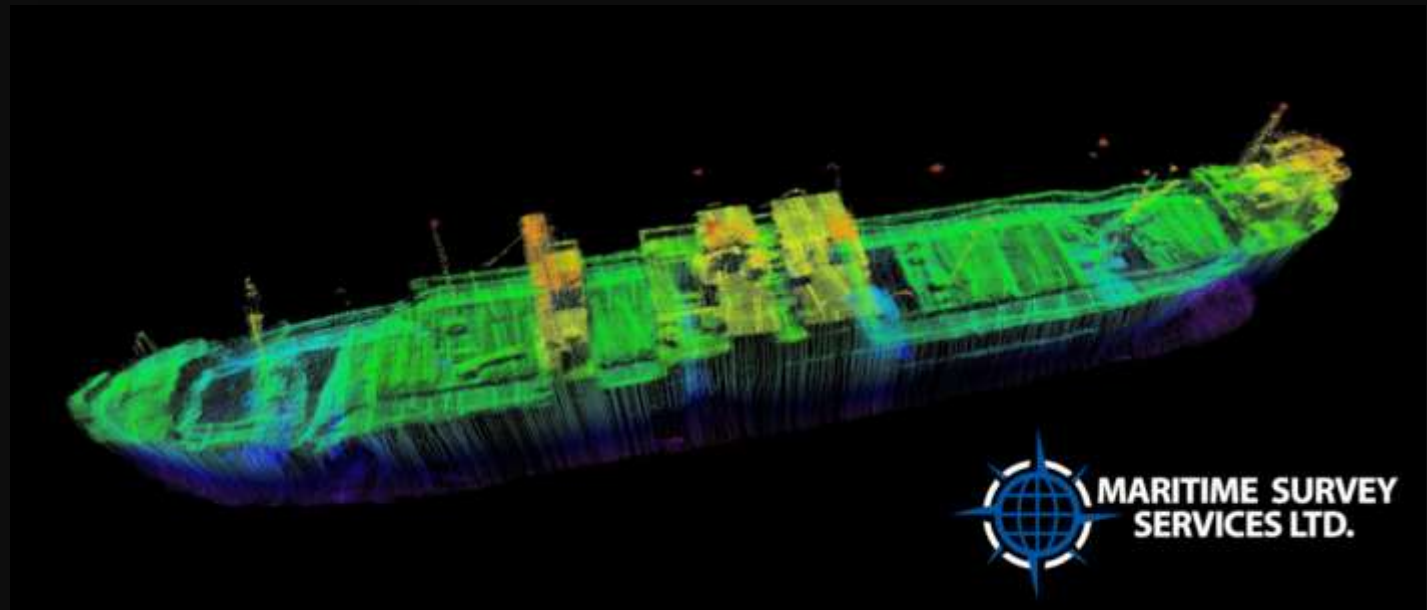
- Provincial and national TV and radio news coverage of initial discovery and diving surveys
- Article on findings in Provincial Archaeology Office's Annual Review 2022
- Report on findings submitted to the Dept. of National Defence
- Sharing the findings with the Gander community

Next steps

- Sidescan sonar and diving surveys to map the entire bomber wreck site
- Discussions with the RCAF on possible follow-up
- Explore the possibility of recovering artifact(s) to exhibit in museum(s) to raise awareness

Shipwreck Preservation Society of Newfoundland & Labrador Inc.

www.shipwrecksNL.ca



Shipwreck Preservation Society of Newfoundland & Labrador Inc.

- Our mission is to advance the awareness, documentation and stewardship of shipwrecks throughout our province
- Our members include divers, archaeologists, historians, ocean technology experts and the public
- Registered Canadian charity