

NOTE: the DRUC assumes NO responsibility, direct or implied, for the safety of diving at this site using this information.€ The information in this report presents general information on conditions and certain known hazards, but conditions are variable and other hazards may exist from time to time.€ It is every diver's own/personal responsibility to ensure that the conditions are adequately safe with respect to his/her training and experience – THIS INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT YOUR OWN RISK!

Dive Report – Petawawa Barge & Bottle Dump (Village of Petawawa)

The Petawawa Barge & Bottle Dump site (two sites located close enough together to call one site) rates as a good site – well worth visiting, and you may want to return to the site several other times because of the variety of attractions. Access is excellent, the hazards are minor (*during the appropriate time of the year – see below*), and the underwater conditions are fair to good. The main limitations with this site are the current (during certain times of the year), and the shallow depth of the river – overall, I'd rank this site 7 of 10.

Attractions

Wreck exploration, treasure hunting, abundant marine life (bass, sturgeon, gar pike), limited silt.

Site Overview

This site has two attractions (two sites in close proximity - see the sketch below). The sites are located immediately upstream of the last set of rapids of the Petawawa River, before it dumps into the Ottawa River in the village of Petawawa. The two sites occur in a sharp elbow of the river, where the current is reduced, but river current is still an important factor in planning the dive (safety issue). *Being in the main current of the river, this site should be visited only during the times that the river is at its lowest levels, e.g., August or September.* A positive aspect of the current is that there is minimal silt at the site, plus any silt kicked up is quickly washed away by the current.

The depth at the site varies between 5' and 10', with the average being around 6'. This site can be snorkeled, and some might prefer this approach, but to spend any time rooting around in the bottom at Glass Dump, a breathing air supply (scuba) is the most comfortable/enjoyable approach. Because of the shallow depths, even a 72 CF steel tank will last over an hour.

The river bottom varies in character – washed sand/gravel or stacked logs are the two main variations. The logs offer excellent habitat for fish, and the gravels are an attraction to fish during spawning season. Gar pike and suckers, for example, swim into this area to spawn in the early summer (but at this time of the year, the strong current is a hazard – remember, *the site is immediately above a set of rapids*).

VIS is often excellent at this site (~15') – lots of light because of the shallow depth, and the Petawawa River water is fairly clear to begin with. *BUT* – being located within a townsite, VIS can be greatly diminished after heavy rains, when the storm sewer systems purge into the river. Water temperature is often warm in the Petawawa River (20 to 28 deg C in the summer), and there is no thermocline at this site.

Marine life is abundant, which is one of the key attractions of the site. Many bass will pester you as you examine bottles, and if you're lucky you'll run into a sturgeon or gar

pike, or other species of fish. Probably related to the fish abundance and good access (and to the abundant logs and other structure), there are typically many fishing lures “on display” on the logs – but watch out for the associated fishing line draped everywhere.

Barge

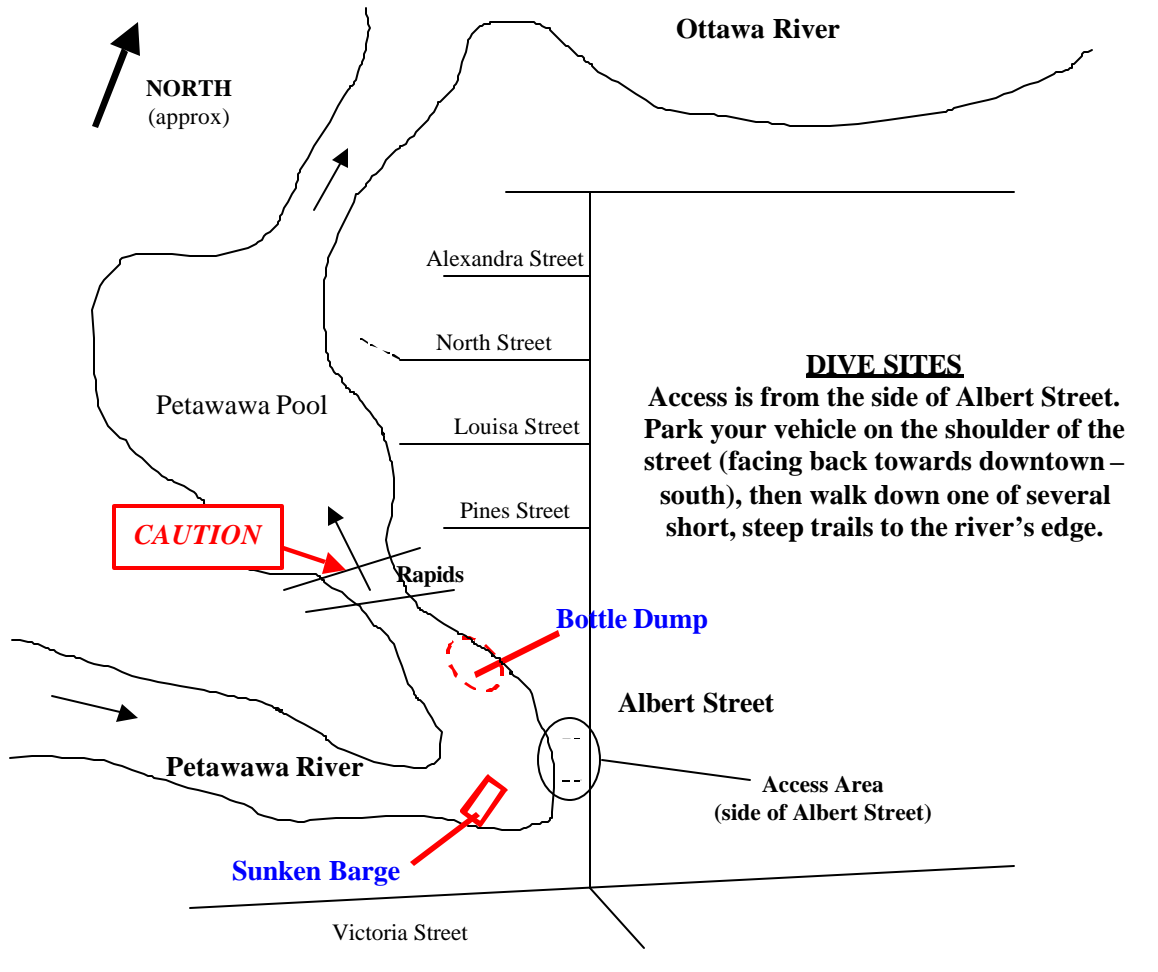
The barge is a large simple wooden structure – roughly 60’ long, 20’ wide, 6’ deep, with tapered ends (like a barge), and large wooden bumpers (in some places, clad in steel) along the sides and on the ends. The barge, which may have been a ferry vessel (given its size), is sitting upright on the sandy bottom, and over the decades sand has been deposited in the vessel hull (the vessel is mostly filled with sand now). The deck is in 3 to 6 feet of water, and the pool next to the wreck is about 10’ deep. Some of the deck planking has been washed away, allowing views of the hull cavity/interior, and in one location there’s an access hatch and short ladder from the deck into the hull. There’s no sign of any means of propulsion – simply a barge. What was it used for? - someone probably knows.

Bottle Dump

The bottle dump may have been probably just a convenient spot for early residents to dispose (?) of domestic wastes, as in addition to bottles, there are boots, cans, plates, glasses. Over the decades the river current would have washed away the lighter objects, leaving only the heaviest objects, like glass and ceramic materials. Unfortunately, 99.99% of the glass and ceramic objects are broken. Still, it’s interesting to examine them, and guess their dates based on glass quality (gas bubbles, inclusions, variable thickness), colour, and bottle characteristics (absence of markings, hand-tooling marks).

The depth of the site varies from 3’ to 8’. With all the broken glass everywhere, there’s some risk that you could cut yourself or damage your gear if you engage yourself in primordial crawling in the shallower areas of the site (obviously not recommended). Being really close to the rapids, there is a *need to be vigilant about knowing your position, to avoid being sucked down the rapids*. But because of the shallow depth, it’s easy to just lift your head above the water to monitor your positioning.

If you know anything about dating bottles, you’ll see that some of them are quite old – hand blown. To maximize your enjoyment, prep yourself for the dive by visiting several web sites concerning antique bottles, where you can become quickly educated about what to look for in bottles. Many bottles are recent gin bottles, but some are more ornate (perfume). Of course, like any dump site (e.g., Swisha Dump), there are classics like Palm’s Cold Cream, and Javex Beach. The oldest object found at this site was the bowl of a clay pipe (from several centuries ago).



Dive Site Sketch – Petawawa Barge & Bottle Dump

Access

Being located within the village of Petawawa, access is excellent. The site is located next to a paved street with public access to the river (there’s even a park bench to assist the gearing process). The site location is shown on the sketch – ~ 100 m north of the intersection of Victoria and Albert Streets. The river is clearly visible from the street. Park near the park bench, and at this location there are several rough trails that will lead you down a steep embankment to the river’s edge.

Hazards

**** Current** – the Barge and the Bottle Dump are both in the main current of the Petawawa River – there are times of the year when the river current is very strong and the site is completely unsafe to dive at. Conditions will vary with recent precipitation rates in the watershed, but in general the river current is often minor in the months of August and September.

***** Rapids** – related to the strong current, the sites are located immediately above a set of rapids – there is the risk that you could be sucked down the rapids if you are not vigilant in ensuring that you remain safely above the top of the rapids. This hazard is more the case with the Bottle Dump, located immediately above the rapids.

*** Broken Glass** – at the Bottle Dump, the abundance of broken glass presents the hazard of cutting your hands, or feet or knees. To protect yourself, wear gloves, and a wet suit (if you snorkel the site), and do not stand up.

Recommendations

1. **It's definitely worth checking out this site, but you may choose to snorkel the site rather than dive at it because of the shallow depths.** To spend any time rooting around in the bottom at the Glass Dump, a breathing air supply (scuba) is the most enjoyable approach.
2. Prep yourself for the Bottle Dump visit by checking out several web sites concerning antique bottles, where you can become quickly educated about what to look for in dating bottles.
3. Watch for logs that move - sturgeon.