



# GEOMARINE ASSOCIATES LTD.

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September 30, 2014

Chair (or alternate)  
GEBCO Sub-Committee on  
Undersea Features Names (SCUFN)  
International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB)  
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**Re: Apparently incorrect names in the GEBCO List of Names of six seamounts**

Dear Ms./Sir,

In the early 1990s I submitted the *Titanic*-related names:

1. Birma Seamount – one of the Fogo Seamount Group
2. Carpathia Seamount – “ ” “ ” “ ”
3. Frankfurt Seamount – “ ” “ ” “ ”
4. Mackay-Bennett Seamount – “ ” “ ” “ ”
5. Mount Temple Seamount – “ ” “ ” “ ”
- and
6. Minia Seamount (later Montmagny Seamount) – also one of the Fogo Seamount Group along with
7. Titanic Canyon

to the Advisory Committee on Names for Undersea and Maritime Features (ACNUMF) which at the time was a sub-committee of the “Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names” (CPCGN) – which in March 2000 was reorganized into the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC). In the 1980s and early 1990s the Advisory Committee on Names for Undersea and Maritime Features (ACNUMF) would receive, vet and approve (or disapprove) nominated names for undersea features, run them by the then-CPCGN and, once formally accepted at the Federal committee level, the Canadian Hydrographic Service, probably through the office of the ‘Dominion Hydrographer’, would inform the IHB and GEBCO of the approved names for at least the names in our GEBCO areas of responsibility.

Thus I recommended the name Orphan Knoll in 1970 that, once approved in Canada, was submitted to the IHB via the GEBCO Sub-Committee on Undersea Features Names (SCUFN), which appears both in the “Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names” (1983) in Canada, and also appears in GEBCO’s “Undersea Feature Names Gazetteer”.

To that end, I should note that in your gazetteer there is no note as to who proposed the name “Orphan Knoll”, who “discovered” it, or re data on the origin of the name. I do not wish to blow my own horn too loudly, but “yes” it was me. I attach a separate sheet with information, for your names file, and to allow any possible addition to the GEBCO “Undersea Feature Names Gazetteer”.

If I have understood the process correctly, that system worked fine until the mid-1990s. The seven *Titanic*-related names (as well as some others that the ACNUMF felt did not make the grade) were submitted and approved in Ottawa in 1990. Minia Seamount was identified by SCUFN as being a duplicate, and Canada re-submitted this Feature as Montmagny Seamount. I had originally nominated the four Canadian vessel names of vessels that went out from Halifax and St. John’s to collect the bodies of victims that were still suspended in their lifejackets. *Montmagny* was one of these vessels.

Recently in the process of putting in a nomination for a major seamount off just east of Orphan Knoll with a colleague at Memorial University of Newfoundland (now with ArcticNet), I queried the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB) for the above six *Titanic*-related seamount names, and I discovered that every one of these has been “demoted” to mere “knolls”. Two may fail the 1,000 m height test of a seamount, but all are volcanic seamounts poking up through the ocean floor.

In the May 1990 reorganization of the CPCGN into the GNBC, or perhaps I should say during the disorganization, the GNBC eliminated its Advisory Committee on Names for Undersea and Maritime Features (ACNUMF); this may have occurred as early as 1995, but certainly by the March 2000 creation of the GNBC out of the reorganization of the CPCGN. Thus for about 14 to 19 years (I do not know for sure), the Geographical Names Board of Canada has had no ACNUMF, and there has been no process to approve, disapprove, or alter names for Marine Features.

I have been unable to ascertain whether the CPCGN, or its successor GNBC, altered the approved six 'Seamounts' (of ca. 1992) and changed all six to mere 'Knolls'. So far the single staff person at the GNBC has been unable to find the original minutes of ACNUMF, and this staff person has not been able to establish whether the six 'seamounts' became 'knolls' before they were sent over to the GEBCO Sub-Committee on Under Feature Names (SCUFN), or whether the change in category occurred in Monaco.

Are you able to please look in your files of ca. 1993 and copy me the communication from Canada re these six seamount and one canyon names? In the GEBCO "Undersea Feature Names Gazetteer" each of five of the entries have the entries "proposed by A.J. Ruffman" and "Accredited by SCGN (May 1993)".

Am I correct that this "accreditation" was at the 10<sup>th</sup> SCUFN Meeting in La Jolla, California, in May 1993? Is the use of "SCGN" in the GEBCO Gazetteer a synonym for "SCUFN", or the name of an earlier predecessor Sub-Committee? What did SCGN stand for in 1993?

Will you please correct "A.J. Ruffman" to just "Alan Ruffman". The 'J' is an error, or a typo, for my middle initial S., however I do not use the 'S' in general. I would prefer just "Alan Ruffman".

Please note that the 'Proposed by' for 'Montmagny Seamount' should also be 'Alan Ruffman'; no proposer is noted. When Minia Seamount was identified as a duplicate by GEBCO/SCUFN, I suggested we use Montmagny which was the name of the third Canadian vessel to go out to the loss site to recover victims.

The credit for the name 'Titanic Canyon' should also be 'Alan Ruffman'.

I would not be upset if 'Titanic Canyon' were to be renamed as 'Titanic Channel' if only because the feature does not clearly start at an edge-of-the-continental-shelf (Grand Banks) indentation that is a clear 'canyon head'. We do not have multibeam bathymetry data in the upper parts of the 'canyon' so perhaps I am speaking too soon. I expect any change from, say, canyon to channel would have to originate with Canada and, if approved, would be sent over to you? Or does the GEBCO/SCUFN have the authority to make such a change?

Am I correct that the GEBCO/SCUFN has not received any names from Canada for entry into the GEBCO Gazetteer for over 14 years?

Shawn Meredyk and I have had our nomination for Orphan Seamount in to the Geographical Names Board of Canada now for over 2.5 years with not an iota of action from the Ottawa body since they do not have the former Advisory Committee (ACNUMF) to rely upon. Orphan Seamount is beyond the original Continental Shelf Edge of the southwest portion of Orphan Knoll, so in some respects is in that part of the ocean over which GEBCO has almost sole responsibility for undersea feature names. On December 6, 2013 Canada claimed Orphan Knoll under Article 76.

Do you think that Mr. Meredyk and I should reverse the process? Would you be willing to see us make a parallel application for the name Orphan Seamount to GEBCO/SCUFN and, if your process approves the name, you will simply inform Canada of the approval, and this, I expect, will come before the GNBC sorts out its missing advisory committee? I would welcome your advice on this matter. Orphan Knoll is a classic seamount of about 2,040 m in height, and the 2010 *Hudson* cruise using a 3,500 m tethered ROV called ROPOS confirmed the seamount comprises entirely volcanic basalt with typical volcanic textures seen at the seafloor on a traverse from near the bottom to the top. It is my view that this feature would easily qualify as a seamount and the name is appropriate.

I look forward to your comments on the change from 'Seamount' to 'Knoll' for five of the *Titanic*-related seamounts in the Fogo Seamounts, the possibility of nominating Orphan Seamount directly to the GEBCO SCUFN, and the details on the attached page as to the origin of the name "Orphan Knoll".

Regards,



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