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July–August 2013

### **Summer Tour Program**

Ross Bay Cemetery tours are offered each Sunday during July and August at 2 pm, starting outside Oregano's at Fairfield Plaza. Other tours and events are as noted.

*Gossip in the Graveyard* is a lively tour about many scoundrels, characters and eccentrics at RBC you won't find in your history books! Glenn Perlstrom leads these lively tours which he fills with fascinating details.

Tour dates for *Gossip in the Graveyard* are July 14 & 28 and August 25.

*Gold Rush!* is about some of the colourful men and women buried at RBC who made history in the Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858 and other gold rushes. Yvonne Van Ruskenveld leads these tours, with many new stories each year.

Tour dates for *Gold Rush* are July 7 & 21 and August 4.

On **Aug. 11** the *Obon Ceremony*, the traditional Japanese Buddhist ceremony for the dead will be observed at 2:00 pm at the Kakehashi Monument in the southwest corner of the cemetery. A celebration of Japanese food and traditional dancing will follow the ceremony at Ross Bay Villa, 1490 Fairfield Road.

### **Pushing Up Daisies**

Wilf Bruch

The grave of Walter A. Williscroft is truly covered in daisies which begs one to remember that old saying about death. (Pushing Up Daisies). On April 28<sup>th</sup> Yvonne Van Ruskenveld stood at the edge of Mr. Williscroft's daisy covered grave to tell his story. Yvonne is one of many storytellers who volunteer with the Old Cemeteries Society to tell the stories of the famous and the common people who have gone before us. Each Sunday a new set of stories emerge from historic files both public and private. Each Sunday one can peer back in time and get a glimpse of our past.



### **Chinese Cemetery Tour**

Photos by Susan Henderson

To launch Asian History Month, City Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe conducted a tour of the Chinese Cemetery on May 5<sup>th</sup>. The cemetery is a National Historic Site and includes the grave of Councillor Thornton-Joe's grandfather.



### Cleaning & Restoration

Sharon Welsh

On 01 June Wilf, Linda Boon and I were the volunteers for the first cleaning/restoration session of 2013. Linda and I swept the grass off several headstones, and removed some very wet & heavy moss from graves. We also swept leaves, dust and debris from the Houston mausoleum. Wilf raised several headstones in other sections of the cemetery and helped five people find where family members were buried.

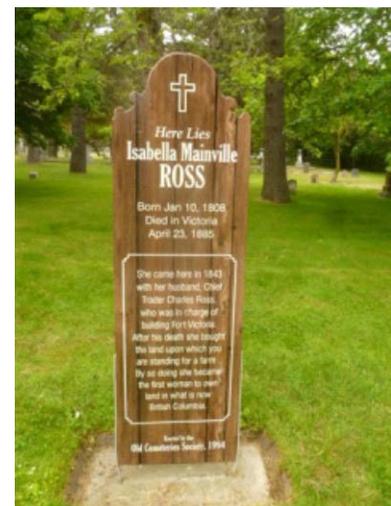
One of our latest “digs” involved restoring the headstone of Ralph Starratt. The headstone had been broken off many years ago and the base was buried about six inches below grade. Ralph died September 16, 1893 at age 23. Our summer project is to do 5 more.



### Ross Restoration Project

Wilf Bruch

As part of this year’s Thrifty Smile Card Fundraising Program, the Isabella Ross Marker placed in Ross Bay Cemetery in 1994 by the Old Cemeteries Society, has been restored. The old marker was removed from the cemetery, and a new refurbished one has been returned. This new marker was unveiled by Fern Perkins, great great granddaughter of Isabella Ross as part of our Fort Victoria Anniversary Tour on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Ross Family is woven into the very fabric of Victoria’s creation and early history. In 1843 James Douglas sent Charles Ross to a desolate piece of land on the tip of Vancouver’s Island with instructions to build a new fort. This new fort became what we now know as Victoria. After the untimely death of Charles Ross in 1844, his First Nations wife and her children moved for a time to Fort Nisqually before returning to Victoria to raise her children and live out the remainder of her life.





In 1983 the last wooden grave marker was removed from the cemetery and placed in storage. It is split in several pieces and barely readable. Thankfully someone felt it was worth saving and historically significant.

This old marker commemorated the Ross family and we have used it as a pattern for other markers and have now recreated it to its former glory. At the time of unveiling during our Fort Victoria Tour the marker was not totally finished but still very impressive.

The Old Cemeteries Society is extremely proud to have contributed to these restorations in this year of truth and reconciliation with the First Nations and the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fort Victoria.



The second project is to completely **refurbish the wrought iron fencing around the Grimm family plot (C 026/27 E 22)**. Over the past 20 years the Old Cemeteries Society has restored most of the historic iron features in Ross Bay Cemetery. Our last major ironwork project was in 2002-2004 when we teamed up with the Vancouver Island Blacksmiths Association to completely rebuild the Parker-Ball fence. In 2011, the Old Cemeteries Society cleaned and painted all 55 iron features in Ross Bay Cemetery except for the Grimm fence. At that time we felt that it was too far gone and would require a major restoration. This is the year for the restoration.

If you don't have an **OCS Smile Card**, please contact the office by phone, 250-598-8870 or email [oldcem@pacificcoast.net](mailto:oldcem@pacificcoast.net) at your earliest convenience. Donations in support of this project will also be gratefully accepted. Donations over ten dollars will receive a tax receipt.

### **Broken Angel**



We are sad to report that the Blue Angel suffered a broken wing this past month. An old tree standing close by came down in a wind storm and broke off part of her left wing. The family has taken the broken piece and plan to have it repaired.

**Fort Victoria Symposium****Ron Greene****What:** A symposium to mark the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Fort Victoria.**Where:** Newcombe Conference Hall, Royal BC Museum.**When:** Sunday 29 Sep, starting at 9 a.m. and continuing all day.**Cost:** \$50.00, payable to the Friends of the BC Archives,

c/o the BC Archives, 655 Belleville St., Victoria, BC, V8W 2W9

**Questions?** Contact Ron Greene, 250-598-1835**World War I Commemorations****Leona Taylor & Fern Perkins**

Great War commemorations will begin in 2014 to mark the 100th anniversary of the beginning of that war. If anyone in the OCS membership has any photos, letters or family stories they would be willing to share with the OCS research committee we would be honoured to hear from you.

Ceremonies will be held in each of the Greater Victoria communities during the years 2014-2019, and Victoria High School is also celebrating it's 100th anniversary in 2014. Please contact Leona at [leonataylor@telus.net](mailto:leonataylor@telus.net) or the OCS office.

What can you write for our Remembrance Day edition of *Stories in Stone*? Our next edition will be about the veterans who served our country in the wars. Submissions are needed by September to be edited in time for printing in October, to be on display at this year's museum event for the first week of November. Stories can be short or long. They should include the location of the grave and cemetery where the person being remembered is buried, the years that the person lived and died and which war they served in. Submit them to [fern.perkins@shaw.ca](mailto:fern.perkins@shaw.ca)

**Facebook & Twitter****Fern Perkins**

**Did You Know...**that you can look at the Old Cemeteries Society Facebook page even if you do not have an account? Just go to our web site and click on the blue F at the bottom of the page, or google Old Cemeteries Facebook. Also, if you click on the T on our web page it will take you to our Twitter account. You can also look at how that works without having an account.

**A Tombstone Challenge**

A member of our society sent this photo of a puzzling device carved on a tombstone in St. Andrew's cemetery, located near Bench and Koksilah Roads in the Cowichan Valley. One person suggested that it represented a golf grip but others disputed that. Leona Taylor thought it might represent hands on a butter churn. Doug Miller suggested it represented a spoke on the wheel of a sailing ship, perhaps alluding to something like Melville's *Life's a Voyage that's Homeward Bound*. Doug also wondered if the pyramid shape of the monument might signify a Masonic connection. Send your suggestions to your dauntless editor, [rste00@shaw.ca](mailto:rste00@shaw.ca) and I'll publish them in the next issue. In the meantime perhaps someone could determine details of the life of the person interred there. That would probably give an indication of the significance of the device.



**Thrifty Smile Cards help to fund our projects  
Do you have one?**