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March – April 2016

Report on the Annual General Meeting for 2015 Gerry Buydens

The Annual General Meeting of the Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria was held on Friday, February 26 at Victoria City Hall. There were 43 people in attendance. The meeting was chaired by Gerry Buydens, President of OCS.

The treasurer's report was presented by Gudrun Leys. Gerry Buydens summarized the highlights from the president's report & the committee reports. He thanked the executive for their support and also thanked the many volunteers. OCS has a high number of volunteers.

We did not participate in the Thrifty's Smile Card Project in 2015 as there was no one to coordinate the project. We are giving some consideration to potential projects for 2016 and hopefully will be putting in an application for a new project after May 4, 2016.

The Executive for 2016 will be Gerry Buydens - President; Wilf Bruch – Past President; Vice President – vacant; Gudrun Leys - Treasurer; Michael Halleran - Secretary; and Members at large are: Bente Svendsen, Drew Waveryn, Linda Richards, Stewart Dashwood, Pat Lydon, and Sharon Welsh.

The business portion of the meeting ended at 8:00 PM. After a refreshment break, the group was treated to a presentation by Drew Waveryn about the History of Victoria's City Hall and a few of the colorful city mayors. This was a very informative talk.

A copy of the Treasurer's Report and all other Committee Reports are available upon request from the office. Sunday Tour Brochures have been delivered to the various public libraries and the local archives.

They are also available at the Sunday tours or from the office.

Membership Dues for 2016:

We would like to express our appreciation to the members who have submitted their membership dues for 2016 and we encourage those who have not yet done so to please submit your dues as soon as possible. Membership cards are no longer mailed, but will be provided to members who request them.

Be a Tourist in Your Home Town:

Ross Bay Villa Society signed up as a participant in this event. We were asked if we would open our office and respond to inquiries regarding burials in Historic Cemeteries and in particular Ross Bay Cemetery. Approximately 80 people passed through RBV on Thursday, similar numbers on Friday and Saturday and a few less on Sunday. This was an excellent opportunity to give out

copies of our Sunday tour schedule. Many thanks to the people who sat in our office and gave out schedules and answered questions.

Stories In Stone

Stories in Stone has been printed and copies have been given out at various OCS events. It will be given out at the March 6 Sunday tour. Many thanks to Karen Howard for being the editor for this edition of Stories in Stone.

Cleaning and Restoration

Sharon Welsh

A small but very determined crew met once per month May through October during 2015. At the beginning of the year we worked for six hours, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Although it seemed like a good idea, six hours was too long, and we gradually shortened the time to between 2 and 3 hours. In 2015 we almost completed work in Section A. We will finish Section A in May of 2016. We will also, during the first few bees in 2016, sweep out the mausoleums of the debris that gather during the winter.

Next year we may add an additional cleaning bee to the schedule. We will hold a 2 hour (6-8 p.m.) bee on the Wednesday or Thursday night prior to the next scheduled Saturday cleaning bee. During this bee we can map out the plan for the upcoming Saturday and start the cleaning process.

Halloween Patrols

Sharon Welsh

We patrolled at RBC on Friday and Saturday, 30 and 31 October. The first night, Friday, was quite quiet – only about 10 people (and one dog) tried to enter the cemetery. Once we informed them of the fact that they couldn't be in the cemetery after sunset, they politely left. We were helped by the weather conditions, as it started pouring about 9:30 and by about 10 o'clock we called it quits.

Saturday 31 October, saw much more action – 30+ people, in groups of three or four were escorted out of the cemetery. Some were there to play a game, trying to find a grave with a birthdate of 31 October. Some just wanted to walk through the cemetery on Halloween, and others were in a large limousine. They were all advised of the city bylaw stating the cemetery was closed after sunset.

A huge thank you goes to the neighbours who live across from the cemetery. They noticed a group of people were in the cemetery in the dark on Halloween Night with flashlights and they called the police. As it turns out, WE were the someone who were there and when the police attended, we explained who we were and why we were there and they were very pleased with our efforts.

Cemetery Tourist

Wilf Bruch

Sometimes the story surrounding the creation of a cemetery is as interesting as the people buried there. I believe this is true of the Garcia Cemetery in Wickenburg Arizona.

Its story starts in 1863 with the discovery of placer gold in the area northeast of the town of Pumpkin Patch Arizona (now called Wickenburg). For the next 20 years hoards of would be miners worked the area with mixed results. Placer mining requires lots of water and that is one thing the desert does not provide with any reliability. In 1886 the industrious miners of the day decided to solve this problem by building a dam on the Hassayampa River north of the town. The dam was poorly built but worked adequately for about three years.

However, on February 21, 1890, after three days of constant rain the dam failed. Records of the day say that the lake behind the dam filled at a rate of 18 inches per hour until it overflowed its banks, destroying the dam and sending a wall of water 80 feet high down the Hassayampa river destroying everything in its path. There were between 70 and 100 deaths and is known as the Walnut Grove Dam disaster.

Most of the casualties were Mexican or Chinese and the church authorities would not allow them to be buried in their cemetery. A local farmer by the name of Ygnacio Garcia stepped in and donated a piece of his farm so that the unwanted could have a proper burial. Not wanting to acknowledge the generosity of a Mexican, the town called the cemetery “Catholic Cemetery” and it was not until many years later that it was changed to properly reflect its true history and renamed it The Garcia Cemetery.

Today it is rarely used but stands as a reminder of days gone by and of the real people who tamed the southwest. Here are some photos:



OCS 2015 Survey Results

Bente Svendsen & Sharon Welsh

Out of 112 members, we received 55 responses to our survey.

Question #1 – How long have you been a member of the Old Cemeteries Society?

Results:	1-5 years	34%
	6-10	27%
	11-15	11%
	16-20	19%
	21-26	5%

Question #2 – Do you (or have you) attended any of the following:

Sunday Tours	100%
Day Trips	55%
Member Evenings	55%
Annual General Meeting	60%
Pot Lucks	50%
Volunteer Dinners	52%

Question #3 – Do you (or have you) volunteered with the Old Cemeteries Society?

In the Office	21%
Research Committee	18%
Cleaning Bees	58%
Restoration	18%
Leading Tours	55%
Halloween Patrols	51%
Halloween Pilots	30%
Annual Ghost Tour	52%
School Tours	21%
Board of Directors	39%

Question #4 – With respect to emails sent to the Membership

I like all the emails	58%
Only send emails pertaining to the OCS	24%

Question #5 – Which of the following publications do you read?

Stone Cuttings 98%
Stories in Stone 91%

Question #6 – Do you follow us on Facebook?

Facebook 22%

Most do NOT follow us on Facebook. Some didn't know the Old Cemeteries Society is on Facebook. We encourage you to check it out. You don't have to have be on Facebook, just visit our website and click on the Facebook icon. We have excellent information added regularly and almost always photos of the latest tour.

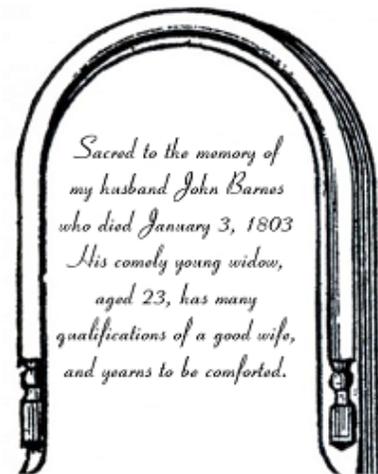
Question #7 – Do you use the Thrifty's Smile Card?

Yes 38%
No 47%

Thank you to everyone who participated in this Survey. If you have any questions, please contact the Office.

Tombstone Oddities

Last Words Josephine Baker 1910-1975



Epitaph on a tombstone in a Vermont Cemetery



“Oh, you young people act like old men. You have no fun.” The actress was attempting to seduce a much younger man before she died of a stroke.

Images from Kootenay Cemeteries

Photographed by Susan Henderson

