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November – December 2021

Halloween Ghost Tour at Ross Bay Cemetery Sunday October 31 at 2:00 p.m.

This has been one of the most popular tours since it started in 1990. Participants gather, at Stannard Street entrance to Ross Bay Cemetery to purchase their ticket prior to 2 pm and then will be divided into about ten groups & taken to their starting station. Each group will be piloted by an OCS volunteer who will take the groups to ten graves along a route in the cemetery where ten storytellers, some in period costume, will be awaiting to spin their tales of ghosts and legends. Each year the route and stories vary, though old favourites are always included. The OCS has an information table displaying the books and other merchandise produced by OCS. We'll start at Stannard Avenue and finish at the caretaker's shed. **Gerry Buydens** will organize the pilots and information people. We need volunteers to act as pilots to direct patrons on the tour. If you can help, please contact gbuydens@shaw.ca or 383-4873. Meet before 1:15 p.m. at the Stannard Street entrance to RBC.

Hallowe'en Security Patrols

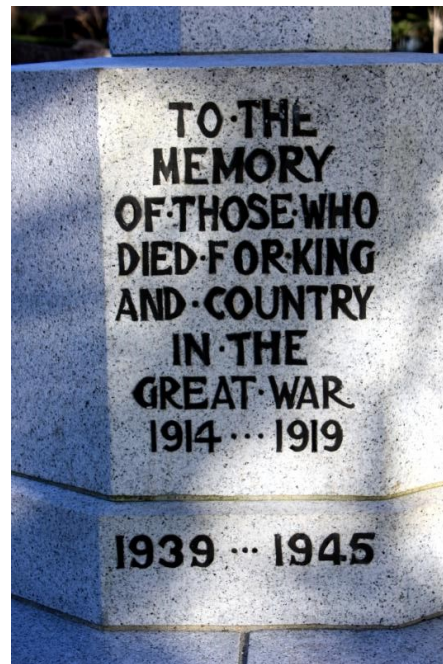
Friday, October 29; Saturday, October 30; and Sunday, October 31 from 8 pm to midnight.

The patrols are a unique opportunity to experience Ross Bay Cemetery at night and at the same time help to deter vandalism. The patrol dates have been finalized and **permission** to be in the cemetery at night has been granted by the Parks Department.

We do our patrols in two shifts, 8pm to 10pm and 10pm to 12 midnight. If you are able to help please phone **Gudrun Leys** at 250-590-5850 or e-mail gmlays@gmail.com



God's Acre in autumn



Cross of Sacrifice
Photos by Paul Taylor

Cleaning and Restoration

Wilf Bruch

It's finished!!

In our last newsletter we described our summer 2021 restoration project in Ross Bay Cemetery. I am pleased to report that the project is completed. We hope that you will stop by and have a look at it on your next visit to the cemetery. (M60/61W05)

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Opening the Door of Memory — Women's History Month

Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

History...tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilences in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all — it is very tiresome.

— Jane Austen (1775–1817) in *Northanger Abbey*

Every year in October, the Old Cemeteries Society celebrates Women's History Month in Canada with a women's history tour. Women's History Month was established to commemorate "the great goals achieved" that Susan B. Anthony mentions above. This uniquely Canadian observance was set in October to mark the "Persons Case," in which women were finally acknowledged to be persons under Canadian law on October 18, 1929.

For those of us of the female persuasion, it may come as a surprise that our personhood was ever doubted. The idea that women were not persons was based on the use of the pronoun "he" in the British North America Act of 1867. The BNA Act was the closest document Canada had to a constitution until the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 was signed into law by the Queen. In the BNA Act, the words "person" and "persons" were used to refer to people in general, but the pronoun "he" was always used to refer to individuals. On this wispy basis, many legal authorities maintained that a person or persons under the law could only be a man or men.

The Persons Case

Sometimes society changes because of mass movements where large numbers of people take action, like the fight for women's right to vote or the civil rights movement in the United States. Other times it takes powerful and dedicated people to influence politicians to create change. The "Famous Five," as they became known, were such a group: Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung (buried in Royal Oak Burial Park), Louise McKinney, and Irene Parlby. (You can learn more about them at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Famous_Five_\(Canada\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Famous_Five_(Canada)).)

In 1927, they asked the Supreme Court of Canada this question: "Does the word "person" in Section 24 of the BNA Act include female persons?" To their shock and dismay, the Supreme Court decided that women were not persons. But they did not give up. They took their case to the Privy Council in London, at that time the highest court to which Canadians could appeal. On October 18, 1929, the Privy Council decided "that the exclusion of women from all public offices is a relic of days more barbarous than ours. And to those who would ask why the word "person" should include females, the obvious answer is, why should it not?"

Women's History, Women's Lives

Since 1992, October has been Women's History Month in Canada, and since 1993 the Old Cemeteries Society has been giving women's history tours every October. But our tours are not potted histories tracing the progress of women in achieving rights. That is a fascinating topic that weaves through our tours but it is not the focus.

My great joy in doing the women's history tour each year is in discovering what details I can of the lives of the women who lived here before us. And that's not easy! Researching women's confirms the truism that history, even local history and individual's histories, tended to be written by and for men. How many times have I found an obituary for a Victoria woman and was excited to see that it filled a good part of a column in the newspaper? But in reading it, I discover that the only information in it about her is her death date and the names of her husband and possibly her children. The bulk of the information is about her husband's exploits. Sometimes it is challenging just to determine a woman's first name: she may be constantly referred to either as simply Mrs. Smith or, as the convention was, Mrs. John Smith, using her husband's full name but not her own. The Ross Bay Cemetery records are a big help with this.

Over the years, I've been able to talk about the role that women volunteers played in developing social services for the poor and ill in Victoria. It's shocking to realize that the early hospitals in Victoria were only for men. Women were expected to be nursed at home, but this wasn't possible for many poor women. It was through the efforts of well-off women, such as Catherine MacDonald and Mary Cridge, that a "Female Infirmary" was built. Such women (indeed many of the same ones) founded rescue homes for prostitutes and helped found the BC Protestant Orphanage (now called the Cridge Centre for the Family).

Through doing these tours, I've learned that women, contrary to the image many of us have of the Victorian period in particular, were not all homebodies bound to their domestic lives. There

were adventurers like the prospector Nellie Cashman, the aviatrix Mary Sweeney, the women who came on the bride ships, and the writer and traveller Agnes Deans Cameron.

I've also learned about the more dire aspects of some women's lives — early death related to childbirth, the loss of children to disease and accidents, destitution after the early death of a husband, prostitution, mental illness. These too were aspects of women's lives.

The rich and varied history of individual women in Victoria and BC reflected the larger forces affecting society — local women such as Maria Grant and Cecilia Spofford were driving forces in the fight for women's suffrage; mothers and wives coped with the loss of sons and husbands in the Great War; Victoria women joined the Canadian military as soon as they were allowed to.

Our annual women's history tours are not designed to present the march of history. While it might be possible to construct such a tour, our aim is to focus on lives — what was it like to live in Victoria back then. We offer glimpses into the past through "the door of memory."

If you have an interesting woman ancestor in your family who is buried in Ross Bay Cemetery, we would like to know about her. No outstanding achievements are necessary — we would be delighted to learn about more milliners and dressmakers, teachers, and war brides. The more we learn about our past, the richer our lives will be today. Please contact me by phone at 250-595-0386 or email at yvanr@telus.net.



Maria H. Grant



Nellie Cashman

Tombstone House

[Diane Persson](#)

The Tombstone House in Petersburg, [Virginia](#) is a wonderful example of waste not, want not. Or is it waste not, haunt-not? Only the owners would know.

Though it may look like a typical stone house, its foundation has macabre origins. The building was constructed in 1934 from the bottom half of government-issued marble tombstones that previously topped the graves of Union soldiers in Poplar Lawn Cemetery.

The soldiers all died in the siege of Petersburg, which lasted for nine months at the end of the Civil War. They were eventually buried at Poplar Lawn Cemetery. After their original wooden

grave markers rotted away, the government installed upright marble headstones to take their place.



However, during the Great Depression, maintaining the cemetery and the headstones suffered because of scant funding. The city decided to cut the tombstones in half and lay the top halves, which were engraved with the soldiers' details, on the ground so they no longer stood erect. These makeshift flat graves saved money on mowing and maintenance costs.

The bottom halves of 2,200 tombstones were then sold for the princely sum of \$45.

Their new owner, Oswald Young, used them to build his house, chimney, and walkway. Must be nice and cool (ghoul?) in the summer, but it may not be the most inviting door to knock on during Halloween.(from Atlas Obscura, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/>)

Editor Needed!

[Gerry Buydens](#)

Russ Stewart after many year of successfully being the editor of Stone Cuttings has decided to step down due to ill health. We will miss his interesting and well planned Newsletters. If you are interested in this position, contact myself or any member of the Executive.

A job description is [available upon request](#). If you have any question, do not hesitate to contact me.

Membership Renewal Form

It's time to renew your OCS membership for 2022. Please circle type of membership: Individual \$30 Family \$45 Student \$20 Donations are greatly appreciated.

Income tax receipts issued for donations over \$10.00

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Make cheques payable to The Old Cemeteries Society and mail to P.O. Box 50004, RPO Fairfield Plaza, Victoria BC, V8S 5L8 Membership cards are issued only if requested.