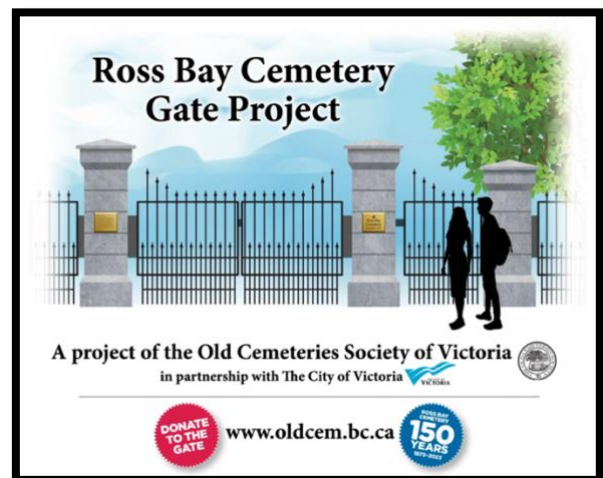


January – February 2023

## Ross Bay Cemetery Memorial Gate Project

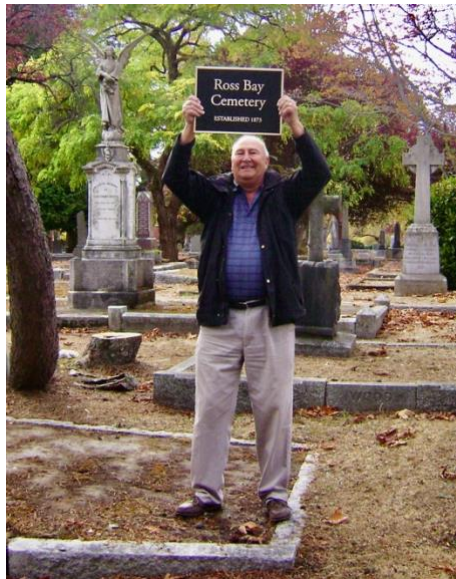
Project Manager **Wilf Bruch** provides the following update: “As with everything else in the world these days, the supply of needed goods and services seems to have problems. We had planned for the new gate pillars to be clad with granite by the end of November or mid-December at the latest. As of December 19, we still have no firm delivery date from our quarry suppliers. We have assurances from our stone masons, Lennox Masonry, that the cladding will be installed as soon as it arrives, but no firm date yet. We are keeping our fingers crossed that it will happen before the New Year. We will send out updates as soon as we see progress. Also check for updates and pictures on the ‘Gate Project’ page on our [website](http://www.oldcem.bc.ca).

Our fundraising efforts have gone fairly well and stand at around \$14,000. If you have a bit of cash left over from Christmas, we could still use a few more dollars. A huge ‘THANK YOU’ to all of you who have already donated.”



*Ross Bay Cemetery Gate pillars awaiting their granite cladding*

*Photo by Diana Pedersen*



*Photo by Diana Pedersen*

At the Sunday tour on October 23, Project Manager Wilf Bruch announced the arrival of the two brass plaques that will be mounted on the new gate. (See photo at left.) The recently repaired Bossi Angel can be seen looking on approvingly, and the stump of the fallen pine tree that removed the Angel's wing last January is also visible.

The Old Cemeteries Society's Memorial Gate Project needs your support and welcomes all contributions. Donations can be made by using the Ross Bay Cemetery Gate Project [GoFundMe](#) page organized by OCS Board member Paul Taylor, by means of an electronic money transfer at [oldcem@pacificcoast.net](mailto:oldcem@pacificcoast.net), or by [mailing a cheque](#) to the OCS. The Old Cemeteries Society is a registered non-profit and donations are tax deductible. Receipts will be provided.

## President's Message

Gerry Buydens

The Old Cemeteries Society has completed another year of successful tours and continued its work of repairing damaged monuments, including restoring the Bossi Angel's wing. The Ross Bay Cemetery Memorial Gate Project is well underway and we look forward to its completion in time for the cemetery's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023. The Board thanks you for your support in 2022; unfortunately, we lost quite a few members in the disruption caused by the pandemic.

Please note that the end of the year means that it's time to renew your membership. You'll find a new membership renewal form on the last page of this issue. It can be completed and mailed along with your cheque or brought to one of the tours. This year there is also the option of paying by e-transfer. The 2023 tour schedule will begin on February 19. It is our intention to hold the OCS Annual General Meeting in June 2023. A specific date, time, and location will be announced in the New Year. Happy Holidays to everyone!



*John Adams' annual Christmas Tour at the Old Burying Ground*

*Photos by Diana Pedersen*



## Ross Bay Cemetery, then and now ...

Wilf Bruch and Diana Pedersen

Once upon a time, Ross Bay Cemetery had a gate at its formal entrance on Fairfield Road opposite what is now the [Ross Bay Villa Historic House Museum](#), housing the office of the Old Cemeteries Society. Carriages wound their way through the cemetery, exiting opposite Stannard Avenue, where the new Memorial Gate will be located. The original gate disappeared sometime in the late 1920s and no plans have survived—only a very few photographs showing a painted wooden Gothic-style structure. The best of these, taken in 1921, appears below. Careful examination shows that the lattice-patterned carriage gate, between the first and second pillars from the left, is open; it would have been closed at night. Barely visible is a smaller closed pedestrian gate between the second and third pillars from the left. The original wooden fence surrounding the entire cemetery has been removed, and the beginnings of a yew hedge block any view of Fairfield Road. The house across the street is not Ross Bay Villa but a larger house that once stood at the corner of Arnold Avenue, where the green apartment building stands now.



*RBC Gate, 1921*

*OCS Collection*

*Whitfield grave, right foreground*

*Photo by Diana Pedersen*

The 1921 photograph, showing the grave of William Henry Whitfield (M86 E4), was donated to the OCS by his descendants, possibly when they arranged for the much more recent headstone inscribed, “In loving memory of William Henry Whitfield 1867-1921.” Whitfield was born in Staffordshire, England, and emigrated to BC in 1885. He settled in Nanaimo, working first as a house carpenter and then a ship’s carpenter, marrying Sarah Elizabeth Thompson in 1892. They had two sons and then moved to Alberta where two daughters were born. William may have been saving to buy land; the 1901 census indicates that he took up farming near Red Deer Lake, south of Edmonton. In 1916, he applied for a homestead in Wetaskiwin County.

In 1920, William turned the farm over to his eldest son, Ernest, and moved with his wife and teenage daughters to Victoria, where his other son, Arthur, had returned from the war and was employed as a janitor. Perhaps William was no longer able to work the farm due to injury or ill health. The Whitfields moved into a house on Birch Street, almost across the street from the Royal Jubilee Hospital where William died a little over a year later in July 1921 at the age of 53. The photograph of the grave, and the gate, was likely taken by the family to send to William’s son on the farm in Alberta. There are no other family members buried in this grave.

## Ghost Tour and Halloween Patrols



*Ghost tour groups, above and below*

*Photos by Diana Pedersen*

The **Ghost Tour** at Ross Bay Cemetery, offered since 1990, is the biggest event on the Old Cemeteries Society's annual calendar and its success depends on the contributions of many volunteers—not only the all-important storytellers but also the pilots, ticket sellers, and helpers at the information and merchandise table. Everything came together on October 30 thanks to planning and coordination by OCS President **Gerry Buydens** and Past President **John Adams**. This year, everyone involved deserves extra credit for perseverance. After months of drought, the end of October brought not merely rain but an “atmospheric river,” making it difficult to stay dry even with an umbrella. Not surprisingly, the turnout of 290 people was down this year but still a testament to Victorians' interest in local history of the spooky variety.

Given the recent vandalism at Ross Bay Cemetery on Thanksgiving weekend, the **Halloween Patrols** by OCS volunteers seemed especially advisable this year. The City of Victoria Parks Department granted special permission to the OCS to be in the cemetery after dark and to use the caretakers' shed for warming up the volunteers with tea and coffee. Board member **Gudrun Leys** notes that this year was “amazingly quiet” with few people walking through the cemetery and no noisy parties. Because of the heavy rain—which also tends to deter vandals—the Sunday night patrols were cancelled, but twelve volunteers turned up for Saturday night and eight for Monday night, Halloween. Gudrun reports that on Saturday night “one lonely male sat drinking on a grave



and we left him in peace until he suddenly called for help from some of us walking around. Being drunk he had fallen and lay on the ground saying he had broken his arm and could not move. Gerry called 911 for an ambulance as this person was inebriated and obviously in need of TLC. Just a small drama.” On Monday night, “apart from a group of children trick-or-treating through the cemetery and a man taking photos of his girlfriend, dressed in white, hiding behind a gravestone possibly pretending to be a ghost, nothing untoward happened.”



## Around Town



OCS members will enjoy an hour-long video produced for the **British Columbia Historical Federation** (BCHF), [1922 Victoria, BC—A Re-creation—John Adams](#). Last year's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary BCHF conference on the theme of Memory was co-hosted by the Victoria Historical Society and delivered in an online format over four days (June 2-5). **John Adams** of [Discover the Past](#) recorded a **walking tour of Victoria sites to evoke the city in 1922**. It includes a tour of the original home of the provincial archives and an interesting discussion of Victoria's deliberate campaign to style itself as "a little bit of olde England."

✱



This vintage postcard view of **Ross Bay Cemetery**, taken from what is now Moss Rock Park and looking east, bears a 1914 postmark. It appears in a 16-minute video, [100 Old Pictures of Victoria BC](#), set to music and recently uploaded to YouTube by [Paul's Picture Place](#). Enjoy **over 100 similar videos** featuring locations in BC and across Canada, all made from high-quality vintage postcards.

✱



The [Point Ellice House Museum and Gardens](#) in Victoria's Rock Bay, a National and Provincial Historic Site, was the **home of the O'Reilly family**, whose substantial plot at Ross Bay Cemetery (B93/94 E29/W30) is frequently visited on OCS Sunday tours. Since 2019, when the historic house was [taken over by the Vancouver Island Local History Society](#), the Museum has mounted exhibits and special events, and maintained an **informative blog** with posts about artifacts in the collection, ongoing restoration of the house and gardens, and a project to transcribe and digitize Kathleen O'Reilly's diaries. One interesting blogpost recounts the circumstances of the death in 1899 of **Caroline O'Reilly** (mother of Kathleen and wife of Peter) and the recent [successful search for her lost grave](#) in a neglected and overgrown English churchyard.

## No Stone Left Alone in St. Luke's Cemetery

On a wet and dismal November 3, [St. Luke Cedar Hill Anglican Church](#) welcomed over 500 students from Cedar Hill Middle School for a special ceremony to honour the 158 veterans who are interred or commemorated in the church's historic cemetery. St. Luke's Cemetery is one of Victoria's earliest church burial grounds; its first recorded interment was in 1886, and many pioneer settlers from the Cedar Hill, Lake Hill, and Gordon Head districts are buried there. The Old Cemeteries Society has occasionally visited St. Luke's churchyard for a Sunday afternoon tour, most recently in 2020. The church has an [active Cemetery Committee](#) that organizes regular clean-ups, researches the graves, maintains a database of burials, and produces a newsletter.

This year, for the second straight year, the Grade 6-8 students walked with a police vehicle escort from Cedar Hill School to St. Luke's. (Yes, 500 students were assembled in the small churchyard!) They joined students in 150 communities across Canada participating in a No Stone Left Alone Ceremony—school children honouring veterans buried in local cemeteries, learning their stories, and placing poppies at their graves. At St. Luke's, the students placed small stones decorated with painted poppies at the graves of veterans. There was a military presence for the ceremony but the Grade 8 students conducted much of it themselves, reading the poems and explaining the significance of “The Last Post” and “Reveille.”



No Stone Left Alone Ceremony

Photos by Gillian Davidson, courtesy of St. Luke Cedar Hill Anglican Church

The [No Stone Left Alone Memorial Foundation](#) (NSLA) is based in Edmonton where it was launched in 2011 by one very determined woman who began by placing a poppy at the grave of her mother, a Second World War veteran, every November; she then set her sights on all the veterans' graves in Beechmount Cemetery's Field of Honour. Experiencing [remarkable growth](#) in just over a decade, the Foundation has a mission to ensure that no veterans' graves in Canada are left alone during Remembrance Week and that new generations of school children will honour them and learn the individual stories of those who served. This initiative now receives substantial funding, government and military support, and the patronage of the Governor General.

In a partnership with Global News, the annual NSLA Ceremony at Beechmount Cemetery is livecasted to classrooms across the country. (In this video of the [2022 ceremony](#), four Cedar Hill students in St. Luke's churchyard make a brief appearance at 29:15.) A [follow-up report](#) from Global News explores the impact of the NSLA project on students, teachers, veterans, and other participants in 2022. Every year, a theme is chosen to focus and engage the students—in 2021, it was Afghanistan and in 2022, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dieppe Raid. Last year, a new [teacher and student learning resource package](#) was produced for use in classrooms. Assistance with [finding cemeteries and pre-registration for 2023](#) is now available. [Who do you honour?](#) is the question posed to everyone by the No Stone Left Alone Memorial Foundation.



## Tour Notes

On October 23, cooler fall temperatures had finally arrived and sixty-four people turned out for **John Adams'** popular seasonal tour, **Spiritualism in Victoria**. John explained the spread of spiritualism after the American Civil War—because of its promise to connect parents with their dead soldier sons—and its popularity in Victoria from the 1860s onward. Many people turned to spiritualism for comfort after losing a child. We learned about spiritualist practices such as spirit photography, automatic writing, and holding séances, and met Victoria residents, including some prominent names, who were active in the Victoria Spiritualist Society.



*John Adams at the grave of the O'Reilly family*

*Photo by Diana Pedersen*



On November 6, an unexpected respite from days of rain made for a pleasant afternoon at **John Azar's** annual **Remembrance Day Tour** at the Esquimalt Veterans' Cemetery (God's Acre). Twenty-two people turned out for the tour. This year, John was joined by **Susan Raby-Dunne** who spoke about her fascination with soldier-poet John McRae ("In Flanders Fields") and his relationship with his horse, Bonfire, that resulted in two books. John shared his knowledge of the history of the cemetery, a [National Historic Site](#), from its establishment by the Royal Navy in 1868 to the recent expansion including columbaria and a scattering garden.



*Esquimalt Veterans' Cemetery*

*Photos by Diana Pedersen*



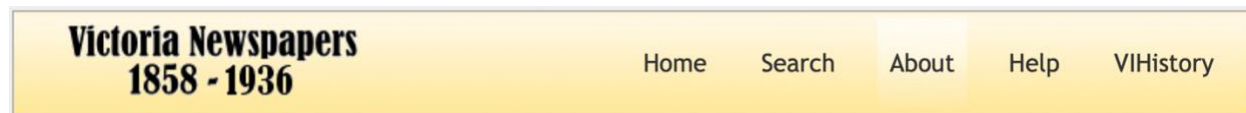
**It's Membership Renewal Time!** Don't forget that your OCS membership for 2022 expires on December 31. Please use the form on the last page of this newsletter to renew for 2023 and continue receiving your copy of *Stone Cuttings* every two months.

*Victoria's Victoria* is a website that was launched twenty years ago as a joint project by the History Departments at the University of Victoria and Malaspina University College (now Vancouver Island University) and several regional archives. It is a valuable resource for Victoria local historians, cemetery tour guides, and interested members of the public. With a focus on the years of Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901), it showcases the research of students in Professor John Lutz's pioneering undergraduate history course, *Microhistory and the Internet*.

Microhistory is a methodology that has been described as looking for the answers to large questions in small places and in the mundane details of everyday life. It is well suited to student team projects and to the goal of sharing scholarly research with a wider public using the Internet. **Click on the banner below** to access the site.



Because the website has not been updated over the past decade, some of the links to resources no longer function, but the most ambitious and well-researched student projects are still accessible. These illustrated pages offer much interesting material for researchers and for anyone looking for enjoyable reading on a winter evening. The projects are described and listed by category on the [Themes](#) page. Some of the most fascinating topics include: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church; bicycling in nineteenth-century Victoria; Colonial Cricket; the Freemasons of Victoria; the Sisters of St. Ann; Wharf Street in 1881; the influence of the Pemberton family on the Victoria landscape; the murder of Constable Johnston Cochrane; BC's French-Canadian Lieutenant Governor; early dance halls; medicine in 1860s Victoria; the smallpox epidemic of 1862; the BC Protestant Orphans' Home; and early newspapers, 1858-1863.



Since 2006, *Victoria's Victoria* has also provided an online home to the **Index of Historical Victoria Newspapers**, an important research tool compiled by **Leona Taylor** and **Dorothy Mindenhall**. Leona, a long-time member of the OCS and former head of the Research Committee, began work on the index many years ago, long before there was an [online edition of the \*British Colonist\*](#), when newspaper research required endless hours at microfilm readers in the BC Archives. With its emphasis on social rather than political history, the index has been invaluable to OCS researchers in the development of new theme tours of local cemeteries. The index provides access to approximately 45,000 transcribed summaries of articles appearing in Vancouver Island newspapers, mainly the *Colonist*, between 1858 and 1936. It incorporates several smaller indexes of stories pertaining to the West Coast of Vancouver Island, the Boer War, and Victoria's early built environment. **Click on the above banner** to check it out.



## Tour Schedule

*There will be **no tours** in January and early February. Tours are on Sundays at 2 PM. Charge: \$5 for non-members; \$2 for members. No reservations needed. Rain or shine. Tours at Ross Bay Cemetery (RBC) start at the cemetery entrance on Fairfield Road opposite Stannard Avenue.*

Feb. 19. RBC. **Ross Bay Cemetery: A Heritage Treasure.** Ross Bay Cemetery was founded 150 years ago. It is one of the most outstanding Victorian-era cemeteries in western Canada and is a designated heritage site. John Adams, author of the *Historic Guide to Ross Bay Cemetery*, will trace its history and why it was designed based on 19<sup>th</sup>-century principles of cemetery planning that originated with Napoleon. He will explain the significance of the winding carriageways lined with trees, the styles of monuments, their epitaphs and symbolism that evoke Victorian values, and how the cemetery's layout reflected contemporary class and religious distinctions.

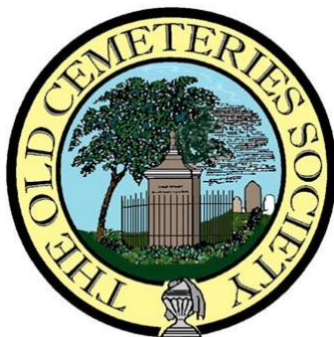
Feb. 26. RBC. **Black History.** Each year in February, the OCS joins with the BC Black History Awareness Society to mark Black History Month by touring some of the many graves of Victoria's Black pioneers buried at RBC. Escaping increasing discrimination in California, about 600 came here at the invitation of Gov. James Douglas. Douglas is included on the tour because of Black ancestry on his mother's side. This year's tour will also include some recently "rediscovered" Black pioneers whose stories have not been told on past tours.

**Editor's Note:** If you are interested in submitting photographs, news items, or articles to future issues of *Stone Cuttings*, please contact the editor at [ocsnewslettereditor@gmail.com](mailto:ocsnewslettereditor@gmail.com)



Remembrance Day Ceremony at Ross Bay Cemetery

Photos by Diana Pedersen



### The Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria

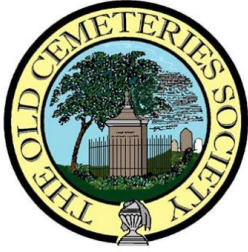
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website: <http://www.oldcem.bc.ca>

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/OldCemeteriesSociety>



# The Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria

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Since the early 1980s, members of the Old Cemeteries Society have protected, preserved, and promoted Greater Victoria's more than twenty heritage cemeteries; most activities centre on Ross Bay Cemetery. Volunteers engage in historical research, lead Sunday walking history tours, conduct school tours, provide assistance to genealogists, catalogue and computerize burial records, combat vandalism, clean graves, and restore damaged monuments. Membership dues, tour admissions, and donations all support the ongoing work of the OCS.

Benefits of OCS membership include email notices of Sunday tours and other events; reduced admission to the Sunday tours; and an email newsletter, *Stone Cuttings*, sent out six times a year. Annual memberships run from January 1 to December 31.

## Membership Application

To become a member or to renew your membership, choose one of these two payment options. Fill out the form below and mail it with your cheque to the address provided at the top of the page OR send an electronic transfer, labelling it "Membership," to [oldcem@pacificcoast.net](mailto:oldcem@pacificcoast.net).

☐ New membership

☐ Renewal

☐ Individual \$30

☐ Student \$20

☐ Household \$45

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

## Donations

The Old Cemeteries Society is a registered charitable organization and will issue tax receipts for donations over \$10. Any amount will be greatly appreciated. Please consider supporting our fund for a Memorial Gate to commemorate Ross Bay Cemetery's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023.

☐ I would like to support the ongoing work of the OCS. Please specify amount. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to donate to the Memorial Gate Project. Please specify amount. \$ \_\_\_\_\_