

March – April 2024

Message from the Board

Members of the Executive of the Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria (OCS) would like to take this opportunity to thank our retiring President, **Gerry Buydens**, for his many years of service, both as a member of the OCS and also as President. For almost twenty-five years, he has shared with the Executive his vast knowledge of historical data and information on other societies, all of which has been invaluable to the Old Cemeteries Society. We wish Gerry the very best in the years ahead.

The Old Cemeteries Society launched its thirty-seventh tour season with two successful theme tours to commemorate Heritage Week (third week of February) and Black History Month. This year's exciting program, developed by OCS tour coordinators **John Adams** and **Yvonne Van Ruskenveld**, will feature tours on forty-four different topics, offered at several of our heritage cemeteries. You can find the [complete 2024 tour schedule](#) on the OCS website.

Mark your calendars! The Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria will be holding its **Annual General Meeting** at 7:00 PM on **Thursday, April 18, 2024**, at the [Kiwanis Pavilion](#). This non-profit care facility is located at 3034 Cedar Hill Road, Victoria, BC, V8T 3J3 (Bus #24).

It's membership renewal time! Please note that your OCS membership for 2023 expired on December 31. You can use the form on the last page of this newsletter to renew for 2024. Support the work of the OCS and continue receiving your copy of *Stone Cuttings* every two months.



The OCS 2024 tour season began at RBC on February 18

Photos by Diana Pedersen

Thanks to Gerry Buydens

Wilf Bruch

After more than two decades of service on the Board of the Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria, our President, Gerry Buydens, is retiring. As Gerry's Vice-President in 2005, 2006, and 2007, and then as Past President of the OCS since 2013, I have the privilege of composing this tribute to Gerry and the past many years that he has served as President.

Gerry was first elected to the OCS Board as a director in June of 2000; he has been on the Board in one capacity or another ever since. He served as Vice-President to Don Reksten in 2003 and to Wilf Bruch in 2012. He was first elected President in 2004 with Robert Beardsell as Vice-President, and then in 2005, 2006, and 2007 with Wilf Bruch as Vice-President. In 2013, Gerry was again elected President and he has served in that capacity for the past ten years. In total, Gerry has served as our President for fourteen years, and this is not the end of his association with the Old Cemeteries Society! He will now serve as Past President for our 2024 Board of Directors.

Gerry has held our society together with his tireless work in keeping the office and computers working, recruiting new Board members, overseeing projects and cleaning bees,



Gerry Buydens (left) and Wilf Bruch at Ross Bay Villa

organizing events and patrols, giving tours, and most of all by his attendance at most of our tours over the past twenty-odd years. Of course, one of the OCS's major accomplishments during Gerry's presidency was the completion of the Memorial Gate Project—a lasting legacy for our society.

Most organizations are lucky to retain executive members for five to ten years, so we have been extremely fortunate to have had the consistency on our Board that Gerry has brought to it. Thank you, Gerry, for at least twenty-three years of volunteering and dedication to our society.

International Women's Day at RBC

On Friday, March 8, International Women's Day, a special event will take place at Ross Bay Cemetery—a 90-minute walking tour celebrating “**10 Remarkable Women**” who are buried in the cemetery. Sponsored by the Zonta Society, the tour will be offered by **Catherine Deluz** and **Marilyn Jones** of the [Emily Carr Chronicles Walks, Bus Tours and Courses](#). The **Old Cemeteries Society** is a presenting sponsor of this special event. Tours will be offered at 10am, 1pm, and 4pm, rain or shine. Maximum 25 people. Tickets \$20, [available from EventBrite](#). Meet at the Memorial Gate entrance on Fairfield Road.

<p>come & discover</p> <p>10</p> <p>REMARKABLE</p> <p>WOMEN</p> <p>resting in</p> <p>Ross Bay Cemetery</p> <p>Victoria</p> <p>sponsored by</p> <p>ZONTA</p> <p>CLUB OF</p> <p>VICTORIA, CANADA</p>	<p>on</p> <p>International Women's Day</p> <p>March 8, 2024</p>
<p>90 minute tours & graveside presentations on each of these women at 10am, 1pm & 4pm \$20 pp</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emily Carr • Nellie Cashman • Sarah Crease • Amelia Douglas • Maria Grant • Hannah Maynard • Sophie Pemberton • Petronilla Bossi • Isabella Ross • Sisters of St. Ann
<p>produced by</p> <p> EMILY CARR WALKS & TALKS</p>	<p>tickets at eventbrite</p>

Around Town

One of the best-known and most unusual business-women in turn-of-the-20th-century Victoria was photographer **Hannah Maynard**. Her grave at Ross Bay Cemetery (A60 W30) is often visited on OCS tours. ***Be Still***, a 2021 award-winning experimental film by Latvian-Canadian director **Elizabeth Lazebnik**, explores the life and work of “the world’s first surrealist photographer.” The filmmaker, who has been diagnosed with autism, identifies with Maynard’s artistic creativity, her experimentalism, and her obsessiveness. On January 16, the director appeared at the film’s first and only screening in Victoria; this was followed by two screenings in Vancouver. Gregor Craigie [interviewed Lazebnik](#) for the CBC’s “On the Island” (7 minutes). The screenings received full coverage in the [Times Colonist](#) and [Pancouver](#), including more information about Hannah Maynard and her work, the film, and the film-maker, as well as still images from the film and a link to the trailer.



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Victoria’s most famous canine celebrity—**Muggins**, the white German Spitz who canvassed the Inner Harbour and raised thousands of dollars for the Red Cross during the First World War—has recently been in the news. His remarkable story was told in a [2021 “biography”](#) by **Grant Hayter-Menzies**. Muggins was considered a war hero when he died from pneumonia in 1920, and his body was sent to a taxidermist; he was still appearing in Red Cross displays during the Second World War. The mystery of what ultimately happened to Stuffed Muggins was doggedly pursued by Red Cross historian and

blogger **Paul Jenkins**, who was finally rewarded with the recent discovery of his quarry in a View Royal shed—in remarkably good condition. Muggins has been refurbished by another taxidermist and his reappearance has delighted local media. (See reports from the [Times Colonist](#), [CHEK News](#), and [CBC News](#).) The amazing tale of Muggins and his contribution to Victoria’s war effort will be included in an OCS tour, **Animal Stories**, at RBC on August 25.

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In December 2022, the world learned the exciting news of the discovery of the lost wreck of **SS Pacific** south of Cape Flattery—the triumphant conclusion to a [thirty-year quest by a Seattle-based marine salvage operation](#). On November 4, 1875, the aging steamship sailed from Victoria, bound for San Francisco, and sank hours later in a storm. Only two of the hundreds of passengers and crew survived; some of the recovered bodies were buried at Ross Bay Cemetery.



(*Stone Cuttings*, [Mar.-Apr. 2023](#), p. 4). Many of the passengers were American miners returning home from the Cassiar gold rush and were known to be carrying gold dust; a treasure in gold bars was also listed in the ship's cargo. A year after the announcement of the discovery, the window has closed for descendants to document any valid claims to a share in the treasure, clearing the way for full exploration of the wreck and planned expeditions to

recover artifacts in 2024, according to the [Times Colonist](#) and [CHEK News](#). There may be a BBC TV series in the works, and Rockfish, Inc. is collaborating with the [Northwest Shipwreck Alliance](#) to create a museum dedicated to the maritime heritage of the Northwest.



Last spring, during a spurt of unprecedented activity at **Ross Bay Cemetery**, dozens of new military-style grave markers appeared on the previously unmarked graves of veterans, courtesy of the **Last Post Fund** (LPF) and Veterans Affairs Canada. Applications for these markers were submitted by dedicated LPF volunteer researcher, **Corporal (Retired) Kyle Scott** of Whitecourt, Alberta. (*Stone Cuttings*, [May-June 2023](#), pp. 4-8.) In November, the *Times Colonist* brought this heartwarming story to a wider Victoria audience in an *Islander* [Remembrance Day feature](#) that included a visit to Mortimer's Monumental Works Ltd., which produces and installs the markers. (Unfortunately, the spread is illustrated with a photograph of Commonwealth war graves at RBC, not Last Post Fund markers.) OCS tour-goers should watch out for another spring crop of new LPF grave markers to start popping up at Ross Bay Cemetery in the next few weeks!



To celebrate Black History Month, the **Vancouver Island Local History Society** (VILHS) has published a fascinating and well-illustrated new blogpost—historian **Patrick Dunae's** consideration of the [social prominence of Moses R. Smith and his family](#) in 19th-century Victoria. The Smith bakery, established in 1858, supplied the Royal Navy and grew to become the largest bakery in the Pacific Northwest. The post includes a photograph of the Smith family plot at Ross Bay Cemetery (B25/26 E32). See also two previous Black History Month posts from researcher **Chris Hanna** on [Augustus Christopher](#), also buried at RBC (G32 E11), and on [keeping Victoria clean](#) in the 19th

century. VILHS staff and volunteers include the former managers of **Point Ellice House Museum & Gardens** (2019-23). OCS members should be aware that much of the research material from the defunct Point Ellice House website is now available on this [VILHS blog](#) and [resource site](#). This includes many items about members of the **O'Reilly family**, whose large plot at Ross Bay Cemetery (B93/94 E29/W30) is frequently visited on OCS tours.

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On February 10, the Royal BC Museum hosted a **Black History and Heritage Day** event as part of a series of events scheduled for Black History Month in Victoria. This well-attended three-hour educational exhibition consisted of displays mounted by several local societies devoted to the preservation of Black history and historical records, including the [BC Black History Awareness Society](#) (BCBHAS), the [African Heritage Society of Vancouver Island](#), and the **Old Cemeteries Society**; the OCS display table was staffed by volunteers **Gerry Buydens** and **Linda Richards**. The BCBHAS is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary this year, commemorated with a timely new illustrated publication, [British Columbia Black History Timeline](#).

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At Victoria's annual Black History Month events, many people learn for the first time that BC has an established Black population whose roots go back almost 170 years. The **Black migration west to California and then north to Vancouver Island in the 1850s** was the subject of a recent [short video](#) (7 minutes) and [companion podcast](#) (33 minutes) from *Mossback's Northwest*—a historical video series from KCTS 9 and Crosscut, hosted by Knute Berger. A key player in this story was **Governor James Douglas**, whose grave is one of the highlights of Ross Bay Cemetery tours (H57/58 E/W20). Douglas extended an invitation to members of San Francisco's Black community, promising that they would enjoy more rights living under British rule. In 1858-59, some of the new arrivals settled in Victoria, some on Salt Spring Island, and others joined the Fraser River gold rush. Many returned to the United States after the Civil War, but some of those Black pioneer settlers are buried at Ross Bay Cemetery.



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The ongoing revitalization of Victoria's Chinatown continues with the recent completion of a [colourful mural](#). The [history of Canada's oldest Chinatown](#) was showcased in a 2013 exhibition at the Royal BC Museum. **Now Victoria's Chinatown has its own museum**. Two stalwart supporters of the Old Cemeteries Society and the Chinese Cemetery have been prominently involved in this project—**John Adams** and **Charlayne Thornton-Joe**, interviewed last year on [Chamber Chats](#) (22 minutes), the podcast of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce.

Victoria Genealogical Society

Mike Woodcock

Editor's Note: Mike Woodcock is a member of the Old Cemeteries Society. He was elected to the Board of the Victoria Genealogical Society in 2023. He is also the current President of the Victoria Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada; in 2023 he led two tours at Ross Bay Cemetery on UEL-related topics (see photo).

If you are reading this article, you are likely a “taphophile”—a cemetery enthusiast or tombstone tourist. As you probably know, cemeteries are an excellent source of information about our family and community histories. The Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria (OCS) tours are a wonderful way of blending family and social history with genealogy under an overall structured theme. When I attend these tours, I think of this great quote from Victoria local



historian and genealogist [Dave Obee](#): “Every person has a birth date and a death date; when they appear on a grave marker, these dates are usually separated by a dash. Life happens in that dash. Our goal as family historians should be to decode that dash.”

If you are fascinated by cemeteries, you should consider exploring the resources and supports available through the Victoria Genealogical Society (VGS). The beauty of genealogy is that by virtue of being born, you have a family history. If you take your family tree back to your second great-grandparent level, you have sixteen nineteenth-century family lines to pursue back in time. The exploration of one great-grandparent led to my learning that I was a United Empire Loyalist (UEL) descendant. This was an exciting discovery that fostered new friendships in the welcoming UEL community.

Since joining the VGS, I have found that family history is more fun and rewarding as part of a Special Interest Group (SIG) led by an expert. For example, while Irish genealogy seems daunting, our SIG leader Kathie Ross challenges the myth that all genealogy records were destroyed in the 1922 Dublin fire; she has helped our SIG team members make real progress in our Emerald Isle ancestor quests. The expertise of SIG leaders in the current VGS region-specific SIGs (Eastern Europe, England, Scotland, Ireland, Ontario, and the USA) is the equivalent of a genealogical treasure trove.

In addition to SIGs, the VGS sponsors a robust program of events, workshops, and seminars. These can be seen on the VGS website at <https://www.victoriags.org/>. Recent featured speakers have included Old Cemeteries Society tour leaders John Azar, Yvonne Van Ruskenveld, Kate Humble, and John Adams. And when most genealogical societies exist only in virtual reality, the VGS actually has a physical space in Royal Oak. This VGS [Genealogy Learning & Research Centre](#) offers a wealth of genealogy materials and access to websites like Ancestry.ca. One of our Genie Buddies is also available on site to answer questions and guide your search. Call or email us with any questions and you can also [sign up](#) to receive our free newsletter.



Reading Old Cemeteries

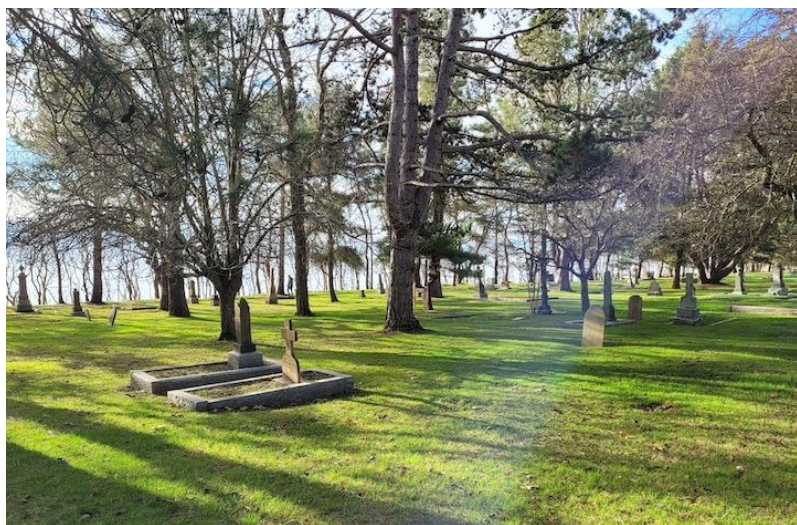
Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

Editor's Note: Yvonne Van Ruskenveld is a former OCS Board member, longtime OCS tour leader, and current co-coordinator of the tour program. She has a particular interest in grave markers and their inscribed symbols and epitaphs. On January 11, she gave a presentation to the monthly meeting of the Victoria Genealogical Society.

For many years, I've belonged to the Victoria Genealogical Society (VGS). VGS members are interested in history beyond that of their own families, so I have given presentations several times about Victoria's history. Recently, I spoke to them about how understanding the cemeteries where they find ancestors' remains can help them in building family stories.

First, I gave an overview of the different sorts of cemeteries they might encounter—churchyards, ethnic cemeteries, small community cemeteries, and larger, designed community cemeteries like Ross Bay Cemetery (RBC). I explained how RBC reflected a revolution in cemetery planning that began in France in the early 1800s, eventually spreading to Britain and North America. RBC is one such planned rural/garden cemetery, with lovely winding pathways, views, and plantings. It is divided mainly by Christian denomination with some space for non-Christians and the poor. It reflects the order of society at the time—the Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Methodists got the higher, dryer parts of the site, while the lowly Catholics, non-Christians, and the poor got the soggy, low-lying part exposed to the wind and waves of Ross Bay.

On tours, people often ask about areas of the cemetery where there are no markers. We know where the graves are because RBC is a planned cemetery, so there is a map showing the grid. Records of people and their locations are maintained by the City of Victoria, which owns RBC.



Old Catholic section of RBC

Photo by Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

Grave markers come in various materials, shapes, and sizes. If wooden, they deteriorated and disappeared over time. If stone, they may have been deliberately broken by vandals or damaged by fallen trees or animals and then removed. And it's always possible that there never was a marker, perhaps because of lack of money or family. For example, the old Catholic section of Ross Bay Cemetery has few markers today but once probably had many wooden markers. (See photo.)

Another frequently-asked question deals with the accuracy of information on markers. Markers don't always list everyone buried in the plot, and in some cases, they list individuals who aren't buried anywhere in the cemetery. Names may be misspelled and dates may be wrong. I spoke about poor records for re-interments because of cemetery erosion and also burials moved from other cemeteries.

As well, I spoke briefly about sizes and locations of markers, mausoleums, and grave fences, and finally about new markers on old graves—thanks to genealogists wanting family members recognized. A lively question-and-answer session followed the talk.

Tour Schedule for March–April 2024

Tours are every Sunday at 2:00 PM. Charge: \$5 for non-members; \$2 for members. No reservations needed. Rain or shine. Tours at Ross Bay Cemetery (RBC) start at the Memorial Gate on Fairfield Road, opposite the south end of Stannard Avenue. Other tours start where noted.

March 3. **ON ZOOM. History of Ross Bay Cemetery.** Last year RBC marked its 150th anniversary and is considered one of the best examples of a Victorian-era cemetery in western Canada. It has been designated as a heritage site. This week's presentation will be on Zoom to enable a wide audience of people who appreciate heritage cemeteries to find out more about the origins, planning, and development of RBC since its origins on a muddy stump-filled farm on the outskirts of town. **John Adams** will present this Zoom talk.

March 10. **Ross Bay Villa Tour.** This historic house from 1865 stands across the street from RBC. In fact, it was there before the cemetery. Today's tour will pay a visit to the house to view its carefully restored rooms, featuring period furnishings and reproduction carpets and wallpapers. Find out about the Roscoe family—the first occupants—and visit the OCS office, which is located in the building. Meet at Ross Bay Villa, 1490 Fairfield Road.

March 17. RBC. **Emily Carr Tour – Part 1.** Emily Carr's grave is one of the most visited at RBC. Every year a team of OCS guides visits the graves of many people Emily knew. Emily herself (a.k.a. **Molly Raher Newman**) will delight us with readings about these people from Emily's prolific writings. A second, different Emily Carr tour is scheduled later this year.

March 24. RBC. **Chatelaines of Government House.** In anticipation of a summer 2024 exhibit at the Government House Costume Museum, we will visit the graves and hear the stories of the wives of one Governor and seven Lieutenant Governors of British Columbia. These women were not only the “keepers of the keys” for Government House, they were interesting and accomplished women in their own right who left their mark on Victoria. The tour will be led by **Nancy Kostyrka**, a volunteer at the Costume Museum.

March 31. RBC. **Alas Poor Yorrick.** When **John Adams** moved across the street from RBC in 1960, he knew no one buried there. Sixty-four years later, far too many of his friends and acquaintances repose in the heritage cemetery. Two years ago, John included half the list on a tour; this year he will talk about the other half. Included will be descendants from famous old families, a popular restaurateur, founding members of the OCS, and a man who was buried with one of his favourite cigars.

April 7. **Jewish Cemetery.** The Jewish Cemetery is the oldest continuously operating non-Indigenous cemetery in BC and has connections to many pioneers from Victoria and other places. **Amber Woods**, author of the OCS's publication *Guide to Victoria's Historic Jewish Cemetery*, will explain why the cemetery's location is away from the synagogue and talk about its people, symbolism, and monuments. Meet at main gates, Fernwood Road at the corner of Cedar Hill Road. Men please wear a hat.

April 14. RBC. **Grocery Wars.** Rumours among the radishes? Debauchery in the dairy section? From small independent grocers who steadfastly served their immediate neighbours to budding entrepreneurs who used their market businesses as springboards to more ambitious projects, **Larissa Ciupka** will introduce us to the individuals who competed to put food on the table. (We'll throw in a ne'er-do-well nephew and a suspect spouse for good measure.)

April 21. **Women of St. Luke's.** On this all-new tour, **Yvonne Van Ruskenveld** will take us to the graves of many remarkable women who helped found and shape their community. Springtime is the perfect setting for a tour in this charming churchyard. Meet in the parking lot off Cedar Hill Cross Road at the corner of Cedar Hill Road.

April 28. RBC. **Twisted History.** **Glenn Perlstrom**, excellent storyteller and one of the OCS's original tour leaders at RBC, is returning with another amazing tour compiled from his research files. Don't miss hearing Glenn's unique approach to history and his ability to find some of the more unusual, gruesome and downright bizarre tales from the past. Long-time OCS members still remember his classic tour entitled “Kaboom!” about people who met their end in explosions. This year's tour will be equally memorable.

Tour Notes

The Old Cemeteries Society's 2024 tour season began on February 18, a mild overcast day with the first daffodils and cherry blossoms already appearing in Ross Bay Cemetery. Forty people attended **John Adams'** new tour, **Layer by Layer**—designated by Heritage BC as this year's theme for Heritage Week to encourage people to dig deeper into the unique pasts of their



own communities. John's stories illustrated every decade since the opening of the cemetery in 1873, starting with our new Memorial Gate and ending with the grave of Isabella Ross. Other highlights included the Lusitania Riots of 1915, the saving of Craigdarroch Castle, the Point Ellice Bridge disaster, the big storm of 1909, the sinking of SS *Pacific*, the founding of the OCS, and John's Grade 9 teacher, Donelda Pearson—a pioneering female science teacher in the 1960s.



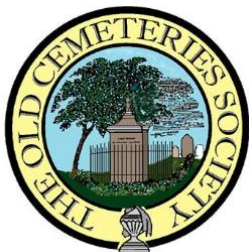
Lusitania Riots at the Dunsmuir grave, below; Mrs. Pearson's grave, above

Photos by Diana Pedersen

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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.

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It's Membership Renewal Time!

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.

☐ New membership

☐ Renewal

☐ Individual \$30

☐ Student \$20

☐ Household \$45

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

email: _____ Tel: _____

Donations

The Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria is a registered charitable organization and will issue tax receipts for donations over \$10. Any amount will be greatly appreciated.

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