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July – August 2016

Mark your calendar!

The OCS Executive invite you to join them for **an evening garden party** at Ross Bay Villa on **August 10th 2016**.

The grounds will be open at 5 p.m. and sandwiches, veggies, coffee/tea and dessert will be served.

Bring a friend to introduce to our society and the activities we are involved in.

RSVP Gudrun Leys, 250-598-8870 or email oldcem@pacificcoast.net by August 3rd.

Cleaning and Restoration

Sharon Welsh & Wilf Bruch

Our cleaning bees are held **one Saturday per month** from **9 a.m. to noon**. We will try to work in areas of the cemetery with working water pipes. We have all the necessary soap, scrub brushes, buckets, brooms, and large and small scrapers. All you have to bring is your own waterproof gloves.

The schedule is as follows:

Saturday, July 9th

Saturday, August 13th

Saturday, September 10th

Saturday, October 15th

As part of the Old Cemeteries Society's continuing restoration program, we chose to restore the grave of George Earnest Coles as this summer's project (Block O, Plot 70, east of row G). George died on January 30, 1910, at the age of 5 years and 6 months. It is also the grave of his mother Annie Elizabeth, who died 13 months later. His father Richard, who died in 1930, is buried in the adjacent plot.

We can imagine the sorrow and heartache that beset this Victoria family, and how hard it must have been for Richard Coles to lose a young son and a wife in such a short period of time. Richard went on to raise his two surviving children, Florence and Cecil, and to remarry. More information about the family can be obtained by contacting the OCS research committee.

The marble tablet had been broken in half many years ago and left lying on an adjacent grave. The base had sunken about sixteen inches and was not visible. Our task was to dig

up the old base, clean it and reset it as it was originally set in 1910. We were surprised to find an ornately carved granite base as most are rather plain and functional. We cleaned the tablet and reattached it to the base completing the restoration. Now after years of neglect, the memorial to little George Earnest Coles can be viewed and remembered as his father intended. Here are some photos:



Obon Ceremony

The annual Obon ceremony will be held this year on **August 21**. This is the Japanese Buddhist Day of the Dead, when graves are cleaned, incense is lit and prayers are said. The ceremony will be held at 2:30 pm at the Kakehashi monument in the southwest corner of Ross Bay Cemetery, near the corner of Memorial Crescent and Dallas Road. The public are invited to the ceremony and to join the reception that follows at Ross Bay Villa at 3:30 pm.

Fern Perkins asked D.J. Richardson to write the following article after a visit to Okunoin Cemetery in Koyasan, Japan:

Okunoin is the largest cemetery in Japan, dating back nearly 1,200 years and harboring more than 200,000 tombstones. But don't imagine a scene like Arlington, of tombstones stretching over acres and acres in endless rows. Imagine a thick forest of tall cedars, high in the mountains, cloaked in mist. A single paved trail snakes along the hillside for nearly two kilometers towards Okunoin Temple, and is where most of its visitors walk. And it's where the tombs and memorials, both ancient and new, are relatively well-tended. But to the left or right, throughout the cemetery, are narrow paths and stone stairways, often cloaked in cobwebs to confirm that no one has explored the path in days or weeks. The paths wind into forest and up the hillside, revealing moss-covered Buddhas and Jizo Boddhisattvas, memorial pillars, lopsided gates and even small wooden temples, each revealing their age, not from wrinkles but from the lichens and mosses that cover their surfaces.

Okunoin is more than a cemetery. It is one of the most sacred places in a country awash with sacred places. It is the home of Okunoin temple, the tombs of early and revered Buddhist leaders such as Kobo Daishi, and the small town of Koyasan. It is like nowhere else in Japan. Visitors don't stay at hotels, but at Buddhist temples, even though the reservations can be booked online as easily as a Westin. The monk's English was excellent. Their vegetarian cuisine was divine, and a religious experience of its own. Some visitors come here for a pilgrimage experience. Others to see famous temples. I came to photograph the edges of the cemetery where the tombstones fight to keep nature at bay.

I visited Okunoin cemetery in early September. Off-season, hot and humid throughout Japan, but cool and misty in the mountains. It was early morning when I crossed Gobyonohashi Bridge and entered the cemetery, after first spending about an hour at the temple where I was a guest, observing their morning prayer services and fire ceremony (expected of each temple's guests). A thick mist rested just above the tops of the tall cedars, and coated the tombstones and statues with a sheen that brought them more alive for photography. In the first hour, I passed maybe three or four people on the main path. But while exploring the side trails, there wasn't another person in sight in almost four hours of exploration.

After a few days in crowded Kyoto and Osaka, and with several more crowded days ahead of me, Koyasan and Okunoin were the perfect respite. Cool, fresh air. Uncrowded sites. Photographic subjects that haven't been photographed a billion times. I passed one bus tour as it was time to leave. Not bad for a morning of sightseeing in Japan. But most of all, I found moments of intense peace and calm, exploring the side trails, gazing on the small, moss-covered statues that have watched so many years pass before them. Temples are never where I feel a spiritual connection, but in forests and on mountains. Surely a single day would have been enough, but there was so much more to see that a return journey—maybe in winter with snow—is guaranteed.

The easiest way to reach Koyasan is a four-hour journey from Osaka. But it's one of the more interesting train trips in Japan, ultimately winding slowly up the mountain pass, terminating at a cable car that climbs the steep mountainside, and finally a short bus-ride into town. The temples of Kyoto will probably blur together in my memory over time. But a single morning spent exploring Okunoin will stand alone as the trip's highlight. Here are some photos:



Volunteer Editor Sought for *Stories in Stone*

We are still looking for a volunteer editor for "Stories in Stone", the Old Cemeteries Society journal which we publish twice a year. If you are interested in writing, collecting interesting stories about cemeteries and the people buried there, or have always wanted to be published, you need to talk to Gerry Buydens about this once in a lifetime opportunity. Call him at 250 383-4873 or e-mail gbuydens@shaw.ca

We would like to express our appreciation to Fern Perkins and Karen Howard for their effort in editing & producing *Stories in Stone*.

BC Historical Federation Conference May 26 – 28 Bente Svendsen

On day one we had a lecture about a local history topic and a workshop about preparing for the new Societies Act. In the evening there was an opening reception at the Revelstoke Museum and Archives. This museum, though fairly small, has lots of

information and artefacts relating to many aspects of local history, including a brand new exhibition about the local First Nations to be officially opened on National Aboriginal Day (we got a preview). There was also an interactive exhibition on snow slides, which is of course an extremely important topic in that area. Exhibitions about ethnic groups other than the Chinese and First Nations and a children's area are two things our own museum really needs. The snow slide exhibition, called "Land of Thundering Snow", can be seen online at the museum's website. Unfortunately I could not spend a lot of time at that museum, but what I saw impressed me. The next day there was an official greeting from a member of the local First Nation (who actually lives in Washington State). After a lecture on snow slides, we had a choice of tours to take. I went on a bus tour to Rogers Pass and Glacier National Park. Unfortunately the weather was bad, so we didn't see much scenery, but it was fun and informative anyway. We saw where the old railway bridges once were, and we learned about the history of the Canadian Pacific Railway there and the construction of the underground railway spiral tunnels and about snow slide control. That evening there was another reception, this time at the Railway Museum. The next day we had our Annual General Meeting and then a lecture about the history of skiing in the area, which turned out to be fascinating. They used to do ski jumping and produced some champions. In the afternoon we were taken to Mt. Revelstoke to see the "Nels' Knickers" ski monument. Nels Nelson was a local ski jumping champion, and we saw the old ski jumping run. They have a metal cutout exactly where he would jump off the platform and go downhill to gather speed. People can put themselves in that cutout and imagine they're him. In the evening there was a gala banquet and awards presentation with Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in attendance because she is the BCHF's honorary patron. It was held at a lodge near Revelstoke, and some of us went on a gondola to get there. It was a fabulous evening. That officially ended the conference. The next day I had a free day, and the curator of the Revelstoke Museum and Archives (who is a walking encyclopedia on local history) took a few of us to the cemetery and told interesting stories about some of its' residents. I spent the rest of the day at the Railway Museum. That place was fascinating and very interactive. They had videos, a rail car you could go into, and a simulator where you could pretend to drive a train. It was realistic because it was once part of an actual locomotive, and there was a movie screen where you could see the track and the scenery. There was also a dedicated play area for children that was done up to look like the inside of a caboose. Appropriately, it is located on Track St. right beside real railway tracks. I saw lots of freight trains and fantastic mountain scenery.

John Azar Recognition

The Executive of OCS want to congratulate OCS member John Azar, who was awarded an Annual Recognition Award by BC Historical Federation at the Revelstoke Conference in May 2016 for his work relating to the Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Opening and use of Victoria's Bay Street Armouries. BCHF President Gary Mitchell presented John with a Certificate of Merit.



Letter Published in the Sooke News Mirror on June 22, 2016

I am a member of the Victoria Old Cemeteries Society and you can imagine my surprise when I found 25 children from Sooke's Journey Middle School gathered around the gravesite of Nellie Cashman, "The Miners Angel," at Ross Bay Cemetery on May 27.

Teachers had organized a visit to a number of prominent gravesites in the cemetery and two children were selected to give a presentation to the rest of the class regarding each grave visited.



I listened to a very informed presentation on Nellie Cashman, the lady who rescued a large number of miners who were trapped in winter snows near Dease Lake in 1875. I visited a number of other gravesites with the children, including Billy Barker and Peter Leech, the man who found the gold that led to Leechtown.

I would like to take this opportunity to give credit and applause to the two teachers who took the time to organize the tour and who helped to motivate the students to write such good reports on each individual gravesite.

Nellie Cashman is the subject of 10 books and is on an American postage stamp called Legend of the West. She has also been selected to be placed on a prominent area of the Ireland Canada Monument that is planned for Vancouver.

Congratulations to the teachers who arranged this tour: Michelle Kiefert and Cherise Bouvier. In this day of computers and smartphones it is wonderful to see teachers taking the trouble to give such a joyful hands-on experience. Kudos to Journey Middle School.
Patrick Perry Lydon, Victoria

Nellie Cashman Fund

Pat Lydon

Nellie died in 1925 and the Executive Committee of the Old Cemeteries Society has formed a **Nellie Cashman Fund** to finance an enhancement to her gravesite, which is in the Sisters of St. Ann plot in Ross Bay Cemetery, on the centennial of her grave. We have time to work out the details, but as Shakespeare said "The readiness is all"! We hope that the many friends of Nellie Cashman, "The Miners Angel", will ensure that the anniversary of her death will not be forgotten and that her lovely gravesite will be embellished and restored to celebrate the life and the legend of this remarkable human being. Friends and admirers of Nellie in the USA and Alaska, in Ireland and Dawson City in the Yukon will be contacted to encourage contributions to this noble cause. Donations can be made to the Nellie Cashman Fund, care of the Old Cemeteries Society. The Fund has a donation of \$600 to start the ball rolling and we'll keep the members informed of developments.

After-Death Options

From your editor's desk

It's often said that the only constant is change, and even after-death practices are changing. In earlier generations the body would typically be placed in a coffin and within

a few days of death taken to a church for a traditional funeral service. The body in the coffin would then be buried in a cemetery.

Almost imperceptibly this has changed. Now, in Victoria at least, more than ninety percent of bodies are cremated. If this trend continues we may be seeing the virtual end of the traditional cemetery. Even if the ashes are interred centrally in columbaria the amount of room required will be far less.

Other after-death science-based options are emerging rapidly. Several years ago at least one company was offering to flash-freeze your body, crush it into ice pellets, and use the pellets to fertilize a tree. The Bios Urn is a fully biodegradable urn designed to convert you into a tree after death. Mainly composed of two parts, the urn contains a seed which will grow to a tree in the name of your loved one. According to the manufacturer the Bios Urn turns death into a transformation and a return to life through nature. Cost is \$145.00 US.

According to Jack Knox's recent column in the *Times-Colonist*, you can opt to have your DNA preserved for posterity. Your fingerprints can be lifted and etched into pendants and cufflinks. Your ashes can be used in a tattoo, or for a starting price of \$3699, compressed and super-heated into a diamond. Ashes can be shot into space or packed into fireworks. It's a brave new world.

Trees of Ross Bay Cemetery

Diana Pedersen

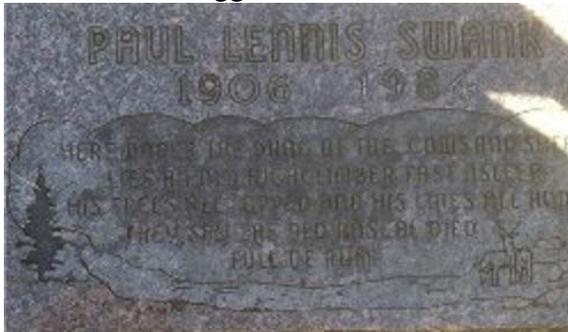
A fascinating article about a community mapping project that locates and identifies significant Victoria trees, both native and non-native, explains the new website, treesofvictoria.com. This website features a detailed tree map of Ross Bay Cemetery created by local biologist, James Clowater.

See Maleea Acker's article, "Big Trees, Big Dreams: James Clowater's urban arboreal vision" in the May/June 2016 issue of Focus Magazine, www.focusonline.ca

To identify trees in Ross Bay Cemetery, go to treesofvictoria.com. Under Parks, go to Ross Bay Cemetery. Click on Trees (in blue). Zoom in on a location in the cemetery. Don't forget to check the little box called Trees on the left of the page above where it says Trees of Ross Bay Cemetery. This makes little green circles appear on all the trees. Click on any green circle to identify that particular tree.

Tombstone Oddities

Tombstone of logger Paul Lennis Swank in the Canyonville Cemetery, Oregon.



*Here Under the Dung of
the Cows and Sheep
Lies an Old Highclimber
Fast Sleep.
His Trees all Topped
and His Lines all Hung.
They Say the Old Rascal
Died Full of Rum.*

Last Words

Karl Marx: "Go on, get out! Last words are for fools who haven't said enough!"