



Victoria Historical Society Publication

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SPEAKERS FOR THE 2008 ~ 2009 SEASON

All meetings begin at 7:30 at the James Bay New Horizons Centre, 234 Menzies Street except the December one

25 September

The Ker Family of Victoria, 1859 - 1976. John Adams, well known local historian, will give an illustrated talk on this pioneer industrialist family of Western Canada who were based in Victoria.

23 October

Victoria's South Park School. Linda Picciotto and Debbie Marchand will give an historical overview of the school — the subject of a book they have written on its one-hundredth anniversary. (October is Canadian Women's History Month).

26 November

Victoria's Soldier Poets of World War I. Robert Taylor, history professor and member of our Victoria Historical Society will speak, with readings from their poetry. (We connect this with Remembrance Day).

4 December

Christmas Dinner and Seasonal Celebration at Gorge Vale Golf Clubhouse, 6:00 pm. The evening will include a musical and story presentation on aspects of British Columbia's history, by Kelt Eccleston, local actor and performer at Royal BC Museum's 150th Exhibit. Cost of the dinner is \$28 and this will be collected later in the autumn.

22 January 2009

H. R. Macmillan, the Man Who Gave Away. The Rev. Robert MacRae will tell about the man who made

millions in the forest industry and proceeded to give a lot of it away to BC institutions and causes.

26 February 2009

Here Before Christ: The Hudson's Bay Company in BC. Richard Mackie has done extensive research on the company that in many ways founded and developed the early British colonies.

26 March 2009

The Trail of 1858. Greg Dickson will give a visual talk on the events of 1858 around the goldfields — the subject of a recent book by Greg and Mark Forsythe.

23 April 2009

Victoria's Industrial Harbour. Bob Spearing, local historian of our maritime history, will describe the evolution of the harbour.

28 May 2009

Making the News: A Times-Colonist Look at 150 Years of History. Dave Obee, Editorial Page editor of the Times-Colonist, will speak and illustrate aspects of this history as seen by journalists.



~ CORRECTION ~

An typographical error occurred in the last newsletter in the article concerning Admiral of the Fleet Sir Frederick William Richards. The dates when the Ganges was on-station in Esquimalt should have read "from 17 October, 1858 to 22 December, 1858 and again from 05 August, 1859 to 10 September, 1860" Perhaps you would be kind enough to correct your newsletters accordingly.

~ **HAPPENINGS** ~

Billy Barker Memorial

Elaine Edgington, g.g.granddaughter of Billy Barker, will be in Victoria to unveil a new monument to her renowned ancestor at Ross Bay Cemetery. 26 September, 2008

Victoria's Community Well

An unveiling of by the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, The Honourable Steven L. Point, will take place on Saturday, 27 September, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. at William Stevenson Memorial Park, 1200 block, Pembroke Street. Join the community in celebrating the restoration of this important part of our heritage. A short account of the history of this facility appeared in the Summer, 2008 newsletter.

Scoundrels, Eccentrics and Originals: Characters from Victoria's Past.

At the Central Library, the Local History Librarian will discuss the lives and exploits of some of the region's colourful citizens of earlier years. 18 November, 2008, 7:30-8:30 pm. Call 250 413 0389 to register.

The Hunt for Frank Liddell.

Dave Obee delves into the mystery surrounding the early life of Frank Liddell — a detective story with on-line genealogical sleuthing. 04 December, 2008. 7:30-8:30 pm. Nellie McClung Branch Library. Call 250 477 7111 to register. Limited seating.

Meet the Author and Book Signing

Jean Barman, author of *British Columbia: Spirit of the People*, and the Editors of *Victoria Underfoot* will be available to talk about their latest contributions to historical research 04 October, 2:00-3:00 pm at Munro's Books, Government Street, Victoria.

Women's History Network of BC hosts a fall conference in Victoria:

03-04 October, 2008 *Raising the Bar: Historical Perspectives of Women & the Law*. Info at www.members.shaw.ca/whnbc/ or whnbc@shaw.ca

The Old Cemeteries Society presents its annual "Emily Carr Tour" at Ross Bay Cemetery with stories of people associated with Emily. 05 October, 2008

The Old Cemeteries Society presents Yvonne Van Ruskenveld's popular "Women's History Tour" at Ross Bay Cemetery featuring new stories of B.C.'s amazing & inspiring women. 12 October, 2008

The OCS tours are Sunday afternoons at 2 p.m. at Ross Bay Cemetery. Meet in front of Starbucks

Coffee at Fairfield Plaza, 1516 Fairfield Road. \$5 for non-members, \$2 for members. Info at 598-8870 or www.oldcem.bc.ca

In anticipation of its 100th Anniversary in 2009, the British Columbia Women's Institute has produced a commemorative history: *100 Years of the BC Women's Institutes 1909-2009* Info from: Jean Johnson at: granby@sunshinecable.com



~ **THE PEOPLE'S HISTORY** ~

This year, you can become part of BC history. The Royal BC Museum wants your story — and your help in spreading the word about The People's History Project, a website where people from across the province can share memories and stories of British Columbia from a personal point of view.

Filled with photographs, text, audio and video submissions, The People's History Project is accepting story submissions until Jan. 11, 2009. Then it will live-on in the BC Archives as an electronic time capsule of BC history as seen through the eyes of British Columbians in 2008 - the province's 150th anniversary year.

You can make a big difference to this project. Here's how: Pass the word; Share your own story about arriving, growing up, working or living in BC. Your submission can be as simple as a family photograph.

Visit the website at:
<http://www.freespiritbc.ca/peopleshistory>

Thank you for helping the Royal BC Museum record The People's History for all British Columbians to share.



~ **BOOK REVIEW** ~

BRITISH COLUMBIA: SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE
Jean Barman. Harbour Publishing, 2008, 192 pp.

Jean Barman's book is a wonderful celebration of British Columbia, one of the finest publications that have come out in 2008.

The book is divided into five chapters: an over-view of the geographical regions of the province with exquisite photographs in full or double-page spread, three chapters devoted to historical

divisions of history, and a final chapter that projects into the near future.

In all chapters, text and photographs or reproductions of paintings illustrate people and their context in the story. The inclusion of photographs of paintings adds wonderfully to the sense of history from artists. Personal stories and accounts bear out the subtitle: Spirit of the People. The economic bases of the province, the growth of transportation and communication links are not forgotten, along with social, political and artistic developments. Additional text has been imaginatively presented in sidebars.

A chapter devoted to “The Promise of the Twenty-first Century” concludes with 2010 when British Columbia will host the Winter Olympic Games.

This book will have a wide appeal to newcomers and to those who know our history well. Specifics of B.C.’s “regions” will delight all readers via text and photographs. A good index enables quick and easy access to details.

The author, Harbour Publishing, and the B.C. Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts are to be commended for this first-class book. It is one to treasure in one’s own library and to give to others. Public Libraries will want this in their collections.

Arnold Raneris



CHINESE LABOUR CORPS AT WILLIAM HEAD QUARANTINE STATION 1917 — 1920.

When the steamship *Empress of Russia* arrived at William Head Quarantine Station (WHQS) in April 1917 with 2,056 Chinese Labour Corps (CLC) men on board this was the first of 84,473 who would arrive here on their way to France. These volunteers from Shantung province in northern China were recruited with the help of British Missionaries and traders under an agreement signed between the British & Chinese governments to provide non-combatant labour for the western front, and thus free up regular troops from the tasks of stevedoring, construction and transportation behind the front lines.

Before leaving China, the CLC men (called “coolies” in the vernacular of those times) were under the control of Chinese police. Heads were shaved, pigtailed cut; they were medically examined,

photographed and given a khaki uniform. Each man was numbered, wore a wooden clothing tag and had a brass band riveted on his wrist. Upon arrival at WHQS, a case of smallpox was discovered which required all passengers to be quarantined for 18 days. WHQS annual reports state that most ships were infected with mumps, scarlet fever and smallpox. Unfortunately, the facilities at the station were unable to accommodate such a large number and some had to remain on board the *Empress* until the following day when tents provided by the military were erected adjacent to the quarantine station. Thus the Camp was born. The overall supervision of the CLC had been assigned to the 5th B.C. Regiment Canadian Garrison Artillery. Conditions deteriorated from the start. Wet weather had turned the ground into a quagmire. The CLC men “helped themselves to anything which would keep them off the wet ground, including doors of buildings, sheds, fences and the entire walls and roof of the blacksmith’s shop”.

Things got worse. A letter to the Provincial Secretary dated January 1918 from an A. J. Johnson complains of the CLC men roaming the countryside committing “depredations”. There were complaints from Metchosin ranchers; specifically Mr. Weir and Mr. McPherson regarding removal of fencing for firewood. There was at the time a settlement of Chinese at Pedder Bay and it is claimed that some of the CLC men were lured away from the camp to work at the settlement for higher wages than they would earn in France. Apparently, the CLC men received \$2.50 separation allowance on leaving China and were to be paid from one to three francs a day once they reached France.

Once the quarantine period was over, the CLC continued to Europe by sea via the Panama Canal or by train to eastern Canadian seaports. Arrivals at WHQS continued until July 1918 after which the camp was closed until September 1919 when returning CLC again passed through WHQS on their way back to China. Before discussing this return phase however, and to understand changes in camp administration, we will look briefly at the experience of the CLC in France.

The base depot for the CLC was at Noyelles-sur-Mer on the Somme estuary. There were eventually thirty-two camps established on the Western Front. The corps was subject to British military discipline which could be harsh. Their contracts called for a seven day working week with 10 hour days. Consideration was given for celebration of Chinese festivals and burial customs. However, it was the era of revolution and a syndicalist movement was evident within some of

the CLC groups. The first trouble started over a cut in the supply of rice, resulting in a strike. This was ended by re-instating the ration but only after a large scale brawl between factions within the CLC which was broken up by armed guards. The next episode was enemy bombing of the CLC camp and docks at Dunkirk in September 1917 which resulted in 27 Chinese casualties. The men fled to the sand dunes and refused to work. Under British military law, this constituted mutiny. The labour contracts they had signed stipulated they were not to be employed in combat areas. However, the reality was that any part of northern France was subject to enemy aerial bombing and long range artillery. In October 1917 there was a "serious shooting incident" in which five Chinese were killed and fourteen wounded. Details are murky, but the official inquiry stated it was a disciplinary matter. In December of that year there were at least two incidents involving bullying by British NCO's resulting in casualties in both the CLC and the British military. On Christmas day 1917, a mutiny near Poperinge on the French-Belgian border involving number 151 company of the CLC was put down by the Royal Engineers and Royal Welsh Fusiliers resulting in nine Chinese casualties. A number of ringleaders were imprisoned. Some were court martialed. Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) records indicate that between 1918 and 1920, ten CLC men were shot by military firing squad. Some of the above information has only recently come to light.

Some of the work undertaken by the CLC was dangerous, such as unloading and transportation of munitions in the dock yards. After the end of hostilities in November 1918, CLC men were in France until the spring of 1920 engaged in "clean up" duties. Some of this was no doubt unpleasant and dangerous work due to unrecovered battlefield corpses and unexploded ordinance. CWGC records nearly 2,000 CLC deaths during the war.

In September 1919, The first 2,000 of the returning CLC men arrived by sealed train from eastern Canada at Coquitlam. These men were kept under heavy guard "to prevent them being overcome with the attractions of Canada" and were transported to WHQS on the steamship *Princess Royal*. The return trips to China were made by the steamships *Empress of Asia*, *Ixian* and *Harold Dollar* among others. The camp adjacent to WHQS was now surrounded on three sides by barbed wire with the shoreline on the fourth side. Strict discipline was enforced at the camp by the two officers and sixty guards. In addition there was a flying piquet of six. There is photographic evidence of a court martial in progress at the camp. Thirteen deaths occurred at

the station between April 1919 and March 1920, the deceased being interred in unmarked graves.

For the returnees, boredom was the main reason for discontent which manifested itself in grievances. There are unconfirmed reports of a breakout from the camp and CLC men disappearing into Victoria's Chinatown. This alleged event took place at a time when the camp was closed, so its actual occurrence, at least at the claimed date is unlikely. Perhaps if regimental records of the 5th B.C. Canadian Garrison Artillery can be located the truth will come out. Eating arrangements were handled by the Canadian Pacific Railway, which also provided the camp staff and food. Eventually, the CLC men were permitted to cook their own. To alleviate boredom, community groups such as the YMCA became active in encouraging games and musical activities.

The last of the CLC men left WHQS on April 4th 1920 and the camp was dismantled and closed on April 17th.

Cliff Chandler



~ CAPTAIN JOHN NEWBY ~

John Newby was born in Liverpool, England on 28 March, 1847, (also given as 1849) and became a sailor at an early age. On his first voyage his vessel was wrecked off the Labrador coast and he travelled in an open boat south to safety in the province of Quebec. This experience apparently did not deter him from pursuing a career at sea, and he attained his Master's ticket at the age of 21. He received his first command, the bark *Grasmere*, in 1878. He later left her to take a position as first officer on the steamship *Ben Gore*, running in the Liverpool and Mediterranean trade

In 1880 he was made master of the barque *Tiger*, out of South Shields, chartered to carry lumber from Vancouver to China. On the third and last voyage of this vessel in 1883, Captain Newby was returning from China and, while still in the China Sea, encountered a distressed Japanese fishing vessel. After initial suspicions that it might have been a decoy vessel for pirates, he allowed one of the Japanese to come on board the *Tiger*. The fisherman explained as best he could the situation in which he and his fellow crew members found themselves and, satisfied with the story, Captain Newby sent a party, which included his brother-in-law George Kermode, to the vessel to retrieve the mariners. Deciding that the vessel was irreparable and a hazard to navigation, Captain

Newby sank the vessel and returned to Canada with the crewmen, variously given as 12 or 13 in number.

Shortly after landing the distressed mariners, the *Tiger* was caught in a storm while at anchor at Royal Roads, near Esquimalt, blown ashore and wrecked, becoming a complete loss.

The Japanese mariners were shortly after returned to their native country. They were believed to have been the first Japanese to reach Canada. A picture of Capt. Newby with the crew of the Japanese vessel is held in the BC Archives, ref. Call Number: B-08405

Captain Newby returned to Liverpool and was sent to Australia to join the *Chrysolite*, and on his return to London he was awarded a diploma and medal by the Japanese government in recognition of his lifesaving efforts. Some sources call this the Order of the Red Ribbon (Shokum Kioku). Other research points to this being officially known as a Medal of Honour, Koju-hosho (Red Ribbon Medals) awarded "For a person saving a life at their own risk".

In 1885 he left England to pursue a career in British Columbia, becoming master of the barque *Nanaimo*, again employed in the lumber trade between the Moodyville mills and China. Following the sale of the *Nanaimo* in China he returned to BC and joined the Pilotage Authority, for which organisation he worked until his retirement. He had the distinction of being the longest survivor of the founding group of the Pilotage Authority.

He died in Victoria on 06 April, 1926 following a collapse while visiting the home of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Fraser, and is buried in Ross Bay Cemetery.

He was predeceased by his wife, Millicent, born in Liverpool, England, who died on 05 August, 1908 at the age of 59, and a son John, born in Liverpool,

England, who died 01 June, 1899 at the age of 13. Both are buried in Ross Bay cemetery. His daughter, Millicent Greasley Newby, married Gilbert Goodwin Fraser.

An interesting side-light to this story is that the Kermode, or Spirit bear is named in honour of Captain Newby's nephew Francis, who was curator at the BC museum at the time the animal was identified as a separate sub-species.

Mike Harrison

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Detail of Decorative Brickwork From the Recently Demolished Telephone Building on Blanshard Street

