

St. Luke's Cemetery News – May 2019

Cemetery Open House/Cleanup Day Saturday, May 25th

by Barb Prescott on behalf of St. Luke's Cemetery Committee



You are invited to a Cemetery Open House/Cleanup Day on Saturday, May 25th from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. Everyone is welcome! Please drop in at any time that morning to help with the cleanup, see what's new in the cemetery, and ask questions of Committee members and others who will be there. For example, Carl Hughes from Meadowlark Memorials will be available to answer questions you might have about cleaning family markers. Cemetery Committee members will be able to help descendants find family graves.

Descendants and family members of those buried in the cemetery and members of the community are invited to come and clean their family graves and see what's new in the cemetery. In other countries such as Mexico, one day in the year is set aside to do this. In Mexico it is the Day of the Dead (known as *Día de Muertos* in Spanish), which is celebrated between October 31st and November 2nd - not an ideal time in our climate! On this holiday, Mexicans remember and honour their deceased loved ones. It's not a gloomy or morbid occasion, rather it is a festive and colourful holiday celebrating the lives of those who have passed on. Mexicans visit cemeteries, decorate the graves and spend time there, in the presence of their deceased friends and family members. (From: <https://www.tripsavvy.com/day-of-the-dead-in-mexico-1588764>) We are hoping that we might be able to start a similar tradition but at a spring cleaning time of the year!

The Open House/Cleanup Day will include a short tour starting at 10 am. Pam Gaudio will lead the tour and will provide information about the history of the cemetery and stories of some of the interesting people buried there. As well the church will be open and visitors are invited to take a self-guided tour of the church. Tea, coffee, and light refreshments will be served in the church.



We have a number of recent improvements in the cemetery. One example is a new marker for James Stewart Simpson, applied for last July through the Last Post Fund of Veterans Affairs Canada, which was installed in December. James served in World War I and suffered multiple injuries during the war. He died in 1926 as a result of his war injuries. The process of applying for his marker was started by Gord Young of Lakefield Heritage Research in Peterborough researching the Stewart family history. James Stewart Simpson is the grandson of George Alexander Stewart who was the first superintendent of Banff National Park. The Stewart family was a well-known pioneer family in the Peterborough area. More information about this family will be a story included at the cemetery page of St. Luke's website.

We now have new row markers in the cemetery. As you may know, the layout of the cemetery is a bit confusing since the graveyard was expanded in several directions over the years. We hope these row markers will help visitors and parishioners find their way around the cemetery. Thank you to Wilf Bruch of the Old Cemeteries Society for donating the markers and to Carl Hughes of Meadowlark Memorials for engraving and installing the markers.



We recently had a dry stone wall in the cemetery repaired. See pictures below and at St. Luke's website telling this story. Dry stone walls are somewhat unusual in this part of the country. They are common in Eastern Canada and in Europe. In BC, most walls are mortared but a well-built dry stone wall will withstand the weather over the years better than a mortared wall. Christopher Barclay, who specializes dry stone walls, repaired this wall and would be happy to work on other walls for us as our funds permit.



The wall fallen down before the repair Christopher Barclay working on the wall The repaired wall
Photo credit for the pictures in this article: Barb Prescott

If you would like to make a donation towards the cost of engraving and installing the row markers (costing around \$2700 to engrave and install), repairing the dry stone wall (costing around \$2000), or to the general upkeep of St. Luke's Cemetery, St. Luke's would be most grateful. We have plans for several more projects including repairing other stone walls and building a shadow box to hold a map at the entrance to the cemetery. Donations received will allow us to work on these projects. Please visit the Make a Donation to St. Luke's Cemetery link at the Cemetery page of St. Luke's website (<https://www.stlukesvictoria.ca/community/st-lukes-historic-cemetery>) to find out how to make a tax receiptable donation by cash or cheque, or using a credit card or debit card.



We hope to see you at the Open House/Cemetery Cleanup on May 25th when you can see all the "new and exciting things" happening in St. Luke's Cemetery. Now, isn't that a bit of an oxymoron for a cemetery!

Cemetery Symbolism

by Pam Gaudio

Pictures and symbols on gravestones tell stories about loved ones. If you can't read gravestone language, you're missing a big part of the deceased person's story.

The Webster Dictionary definition of symbols is "something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention or accidental resemblance." The key word in this sentence is "suggests." In the end, a symbol is still a symbol. Symbols can be interpreted differently by many people. In St. Luke's Churchyard, there are a variety of cemetery symbols.

A metal anchor is embedded in the cement top of the Clark grave (Row D, Plot 23). Although an anchor could mean the person was a sailor (one family member was in the navy and became an officer), it also is a symbol of hope. The Bible references an anchor in connection with hope in Hebrews 6: 18-19, "...lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast..." Those without hope may be like a ship tossed on the sea, their emotions being carried in every direction.



Anchor symbol on the Clark grave.

Photo credit: Pam Gaudio

Angels are one of the most common symbols found in cemeteries.

They are carved on gravestones and perched on top as statues.

Angels signify the departed has taken flight into heaven. Although St. Luke's Cemetery does not have any free standing angel symbols, there is an etching of an angel motif on Eric Russell's granite marker located in Row D.

A book monument on a grave can symbolize the good deeds of the departed, as recorded in the book of life. St. Luke's Churchyard has one book monument that could represent many different things including the book of life often represented as the Bible. This style of monument may also indicate a scholar or teacher is buried at the gravesite. An open book, like the Irvine monument located in Row D beside the church, can signify an early death for someone whose life story was not yet fully written.



Crosses in St. Luke's Cemetery
Photo credit: Barb Prescott

A Celtic cross can be a religious or secular symbol. Its arms are of equal length and it is surrounded by a circle. Sometimes it is referred to as a "sun cross" because of the outer circle. Irish legends indicate that St. Patrick designed the cross as a way to link Pagan symbolism with Christian symbols. St. Patrick overlaid the circle with a cross, a symbol of Christ's sacrifice. The Celtic cross as seen in Row A on the Duke burial plot may indicate an Irish or British Isles heritage but generally it represents eternity.

The cross or crucifix on a grave is a significant symbol to Christians. In early times the Latin cross was referred to as God's

mark. It is a symbol of eternal life and resurrection. The three ends may represent the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of the Trinity or faith, hope, and charity.

In St. Luke's Churchyard, there are many flower symbols. Although many of the church's parishioners were farmers the flower symbol can also represent the deceased was in their full bloom of life. The rose symbol seen on a few tombstones may signify the blood of Christ. It is also a reminder that the soul achieves its most perfect state after physical death.



Source: A free image from the Internet.



*The Peter monument has a dove and grapes.
Photo credit: Pam Gaudio*

Only one monument in St. Luke's Churchyard has an ascending dove and grapes. This is the Peter monument in Row A. The dove on the monument represents the transport of the departed's soul to heaven. The grapes symbolize the blood of Christ, God's care, or Jesus' Last Supper.

St. Luke's Churchyard has a variety of symbols not mentioned here. There are many military symbols including planes to commemorate service in the air force as well as freemason symbols. A few graves have urns placed on the top of the monuments. There are images of cats, seascapes and wedding rings intertwined between two hearts.

Why not take a stroll through St. Luke's Churchyard and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere amid the large Garry oak trees? You may encounter deer, squirrels or other wildlife. Read the tombstones and see what symbols you can find in St. Luke's Churchyard.



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