

Family History Newsletter



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The Family History group supports members in researching their family history research. Members have ancestors from around the globe.

They meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 7pm at the Maple Ridge Library.

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The Last Post Fund, Unmarked Grave Program

by Gina Leigh

In the spring of 2016 the Maple Ridge Family History Group received an email inquiry from England from the great niece and nephew of Frederick and Albert Sykes, looking for information about their lives in Canada. The Sykes brothers had immigrated to Canada in 1910 and settled in Maple Ridge. They enlisted together on November 6, 1916, serving with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in England and France during World War I, in the Canadian Forestry Corp, 230th Battalion. They returned to Canada in 1919. Frederick lived in Maple Ridge until his death in 1948; his English war bride wife returned to England a few years later. Albert and his wife (who had been raised in Webster's Corners) moved to Little Fort. He died in Kamloops in 1952 and is buried there in Hillside Cemetery; his wife moved from the area.

I was saddened to discover that both brothers lay in unmarked graves, and gave some thought as to how to remedy the situation, but could come to no viable solution.

Then, last year, in the week leading up to Remembrance Day, I read an article in *The Vancouver Sun*. The article mentioned the Last Post Fund, Unmarked Grave Program. I quickly went to their website www.lastpostfund.ca

The Last Post Fund was created in April 1909, championed by Arthur Hair, a veteran of the South African War, who worked as an orderly at the Montreal general hospital. When a homeless man was brought to the hospital and subsequently died, his remains would have been turned over to science for medical research as was the practise. Hair had ascertained the man was a veteran of the same war and was dismayed that a veteran would be treated this way. He set about raising money from friends and colleagues to give the soldier a decent and dignified funeral.

In 1996 the Last Post Fund created the "Unmarked Grave Program" with the objective of providing a military-style marker for eligible veterans who lie in unmarked graves.

I telephoned the Last Post Fund in Montreal and spoke with one of their Counsellors, Kelly Martin, briefly describing the background of the Sykes brothers. It appeared they met the criteria for grave markers. I completed and returned the Preliminary Information application form together with their British Columbia Death Registrations. Their military personnel files were soon to be digitized by Library and Archives Canada and available on LAC's website.

This spring a marker was installed for Frederick Sykes at Maple Ridge Cemetery.



Photo by Gina Leigh

A marker was installed for Albert Sykes at Hillside Cemetery a few days ago.



Photo courtesy of Hillside Cemetery, Kamloops

If this were the end of the story it would be a happy ending. But there's more!

ALLCO Infirmary, the provincial hospital which operated in Maple Ridge for more than three decades, was the last home to hundreds of men in poor health and without family to care for them. It occurred to me that some of the residents would surely be veterans of the First World War. I contacted Sandra Ayers, who is working on a cemetery project of her own, and asked whether she could isolate the ALLCO residents in her database. She very quickly emailed a list of the men buried in Maple Ridge Cemetery together with their birth and death dates.

Looking into hundreds of names appeared a daunting task. I decided to narrow the search by birth year, surmising the servicemen would have been born between 1880 and 1899. To capture anyone older or younger than I expected, I looked at men with birth years from 1875 to 1905. I checked the LAC database for attestation documents, then downloaded the death registrations from BC Archives <http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy> for those men who had served.

I submitted applications for 12 men who were veterans of the Canadian Expeditionary Force during World War I. All have been approved and grave markers have been installed at Maple Ridge Cemetery for all but the name beginning with the letter "W" – LAC has only recently finished digitizing all the WWI military personnel records.

Name	Rank & Unit	Birth & Death Years	Where Served
Ausneau, Stanley Isaac	Sergeant, Canadian Engineers	1880 – 1960	England
Brown, Christopher	Private, BC Regiment	1885-1958	Canada
Connell, Charles Edward	Private, BC Regiment	1880 – 1944	England
Gilbert, Frederick	Private, BC Regiment	1883 – 1959	England
Hermiston, Clifford	Private, 31 Battalion	1889 – 1945	England
Hodges, Claud	Private, 68 Battalion	1885 – 1943	Canada
Humphrey, Frank	Private, BC Regiment	1884 – 1940	Canada
Lawrie, James	Private, Canadian Armed Service Corp	1885 – 1963	Canada
Manning, Dr John Gardiner	Captain, Canadian Army Dental Corp	1882 – 1955	England
Reed, John Earl	Private, 96 Battalion	1890 – 1958	Canada
Simkin, Herbert George	Private, Manitoba Regiment	1875 – 1945	Canada
Williams, Parker Albert Smith	Private, 175 Battalion	1882 – 1944	Canada

I find unmarked graves of any sort terribly sad. That veterans who fought for our country should lie unacknowledged is beyond sad. I am extremely grateful to the Last Post Fund for their generosity in sponsoring these gravemarkers.

Online Resources

1926 Census of the Prairie Provinces

www.bac-lac.gc.ca

The Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1926 (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) was transferred to Library and Archives Canada on June 1, 2018.

They are currently developing an index and plan to make the data from the census available on their website; no release date yet.

LAC Completes CEF Service Files Digitization

www.bac-lac.gc.ca

The Library and Archives Canada has completed the digitization of all Canadian military personnel records from the Great War. It took five years, encompassing over 30 million digitized images—LAC now has a complete list of more than 620,000 files accessible online.

Roots Ireland

www.rootsireland.ie

New Roman Catholic records for County Galway:

- Ballygar: Baptisms, 1804-1897
- Kilmacduagh: Baptisms, 1848-1872
- Leitrim: Baptisms, 1815-1917
- Portumna: Baptisms, 1830-1917
- Tynagh: Baptisms, 1816-1917

Isle of Wight: Cemetery Records

<https://www.iw-bereavementservices.co.uk/>

Almost 100,000 Isle of Wight cemetery records are now available online. The new website holds records for twelve Isle of Wight cemeteries, with around 72,000 burial records and burial ground information for each of the cemeteries.

The British Colonist

www.britishcolonist.ca

Another 20 years has been added to the digitized *British Colonist* newspaper collection; it now goes from 1858 to 1970.

University of Lethbridge Library Digital Collection

- Lethbridge Herald: <http://digitallibrary.uleth.ca/cdm/landingpage/collection/herald>
- Southern Alberta Newspaper Collection: <http://digitallibrary.uleth.ca/cdm/landingpage/collection/sanews>

Family History Events

Abbotsford Genealogical Society

Studio 2 The Reach

<http://abbygs.ca/index.html>

- **Casting the Net: Seek Your Ancestors on the Internet** with Brenda L. Smith Sept 20, 2018 1:30 pm.
- **Sharing Help and Research Experience (SHARE):** moderated by Members of your AGS Board.

Cloverdale Library

www.surreylibraries.ca

Register a 604-598-7327 or by email: familyhistory@surrey.ca.

Limited parking until further notice, parking is unavailable at Cloverdale Library due to construction.

- **Orientations**, Saturdays, 10:00-10:50 am, Sept 8, Oct 6, Nov 3, Dec 1, 2018. Pre-registration recommended. Fee: free.
- **Fun Family History Fridays**, Fri, Sept 7, Oct 5, Nov 2, and Dec 7, 2018, 2:30-4:00 pm.
- **Rock and a Hard Place** with Ann Buchanan, Sat Sept 15, 2018, 10:30 am-12:00 pm. Fee: Free.

- **Dig into Family History** with Jamie Brown, Sat Sept 22, 2018, 10:30 am-12:00 pm. Fee: Free.
- **Start Searching Your Family History** with Brenda L. Smith, 5 Tuesdays: Sept 25-Nov 20, 5:30 pm-8:30 pm. Fee: \$100 for the series.
- **Prison and Court Records** with Andrea Lister, Tue Oct 2, 2018, 6:30 pm-8:00 pm. Fee: Free.
- **Why Write Your Family History?** with Brenda L. Smith, Sat Oct 27, 2018, 10:30 am - 12:00 pm. Fee: Free.
- **Ancestry Library Edition Workshop** with Jamie Brown and Carmen Merrells, Wed Nov 7, 2018, 7:00 -8:30 pm. Fee: Free.

Kelowna & District Genealogical Society

www.kdgs.ca

- **Harvest Your Family Tree Conference**, Sept 28-30, 2018. Details later at Kelowna and District Genealogical Society. \$95 for Saturday conference, additional Friday workshops available.

Maple Ridge Public Library

www.fvrl.bc.ca

- **Local Voices**, Mondays: Oct 8, Nov 5, Dec 3, 2018, 7:00 pm.

Surrey Family History Centre

www.findingyourroots.ca

- **Finding Your Roots Seminar**, Oct 13, 2018 all day. Schedule online. Registration opens September 1. Free.

Maple Ridge Family History Group, Wednesday, September 5, 2018, 7pm at the Maple Ridge Library.