

Family History Newsletter

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The Family History Group meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 7pm at the Maple Ridge Library.

Find us on the web:

www.mapleridgemuseum.org

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Subscriptions are a benefit of membership in the Maple Ridge Historical Society. Please send membership applications, with \$20 to the Maple Ridge Historical Society.

Family History Group Meetings

The December meeting will be December 1, 2010.

My 21st Century Privilege

By Jennie Bedford

I stand quietly in the hushed, cool sanctuary. I think I can hear people breathing around me – gently, shallow breaths. Now I hear a muffled cough, a shuffling of feet, a whisper of a turning page. Quiet again, I look out through the window and see the lush greenery of the crisp day that only England can conjure up in May. The sky hangs heavy with the ash cloud from Iceland. Is some Supreme Being mad at us all, I wonder. My mind drifts.

Suddenly I hear a sound to my left. I turn. A pair of doors open from the inner sanctum and a quintessential English lady dressed in sensible brogues, a tweed skirt, and a twin set walks silently towards me. She has both hands outstretched, as if in supplication. But she is carrying a vast cushion. My attention is riveted as the woman walks slowly towards me. Reverently she places the cushion on the table in front of me, pauses, and then with one, swift, incongruous hand chop, makes a perfect crease in the middle of the top edge of the cushion. I wait. Not a word is spoken. The lady smiles benignly and walks away from me. Am I imagining things? Is my jet-lag catching up to me? No, the cushion is there.

I wait. I hear a buzz followed by the gentle rustle of clothing and

the squeak of a shoe fall. I tense. Those sounds take me back to my school days with the nuns. I turn, fully expecting to see Mother Superior bearing down on me for yet another infraction against the Lord. Phew! Just a woman passing through the security-controlled door and entering the inner sanctum.

I wait. The double doors open again. Is there an operating room back there, I wonder? It is my sensible English lady again. This time she is wheeling in a two-tier trolley with a large cardboard box on the top. Silently the trolley approaches. Not a squeak, not a whirr. Slowly, my “lady” opens the mystery box and inside is the most beautifully bound tome I have seen for many years. She lifts the enormous book out of the box – no staggering, no wincing – and places it reverently upon the cushion. The spine eases comfortably into the crease of the cushion. My “lady” opens the exquisite tome to a predefined page, smiles, and whispers softly that when I have finished my research to leave the book in place – not try to move it.

I take a deep breath. This is what I have been waiting for. A book of probated Wills – perhaps some of them belonging to my ancestors. I take another deep breath. The penmanship is quite exquisite. I close my eyes for a moment and can see the

Dickensian young law clerk sitting on a high stool, his feet curled round the rungs. In front of him, an old-fashioned desk. His quill pen is poised to record history — those Wills probated in yesteryear. The history that I am now about to unveil. A slight noise behind me — back to reality. Another deep breath. Dare I touch these hallowed pages? Now I understand why no pens, no knapsacks, no coats are allowed in this restricted Country Records Office. How devastating if any of these wonderful historical documents were to be ruined by a careless 21st century hand.

As I settle down to read the documents, how privileged I feel to be allowed to gently turn the pages of time.

Further Information

Documents Online at the National Archives

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/willsdeathduties.asp>

The Archives of Ontario

http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/english/guides/rg_206_find-will.aspx

Online Resources

The Regimental Rogue

<http://regimentalrogue.com/> This site has a step by step guide for researching Canadian Soldiers of the First World War.

2Learn.ca Remembers

<http://www.2learn.ca/specialedition/remember/remembrance.html>

Regina Leader Post

Google news has issues of the Regina Leader Post from the 1930s to the 1980s online at http://news.google.com/archivesearch/advanced_search

Be sure to put Leader Post in as the source.

Quesnel Cariboo Observer 1908 - 1976

http://www.quesnelmuseum.ca/CaribooObserver_form.html

Upper Canada Land Petitions 1763-1865 (index only)

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/whats-new/013-479-e.html>

New at Ancestry

Canada, CEF Burial Registers, First World War, 1914-1919

Canada, CEF Commonwealth War Graves Registers, 1914-1919

These new records at Ancestry are not part of a WWI service file when you order one. The first is a document which gives you the circumstances of death for the soldier who died overseas. It will give a short description on how they died, what unit they were with and where they are buried. The second record gives you info on their grave location and next of kin. Both records have two pages so don't forget to obtain a copy of the back of the document.

Family History Events

Abbotsford Genealogical Society

Meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Clearbrook Library 32320 George Ferguson Way in Abbotsford.

- **Can You Prove That? Standards of Proof for Family History Research** with Brenda Smith, Nov. 16, 2010.

Surrey Libraries

5642-176A Street, Surrey offers free orientations the 1st Saturday of every month 9:30 – 10:30am.

- **Start Writing Your Family History: A Communications Workshop in 5 Lessons** with Brenda L. Smith, Saturdays: January 22, February 5, 19, March 5, 19, 2011, 1:30pm – 4:30pm. Fee \$100 for series.
- **Cemeteries: the Archival Collection** with Brenda L. Smith, Saturday, February 26, 2011, 10:30am - 12:30pm. Fee: \$10.00.
- **Discover Your Past, Discover Yourself!: an Introduction to Family History** with Laurie J. Cooke, Saturday, January 15, 10:30am – Noon. Fee: \$10.00.

Pre-registration is required – please check the Family History section of the Surrey Libraries website www.spl.surrey.bc.ca or call us at 604-598-7328.