



# ROCKLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

*P.O. Box 5276, Station B, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4*

## Spring 2013 Newsletter

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**Please share a copy of the RNA Newsletter with a neighbour.**

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### COUNCILLOR'S REPORT by Ben Isitt

Dear Rockland resident,

I hope you are enjoying the spring weather. With the season comes an exciting line-up of festivals and events in our community, including many events right here in Rockland. Please have a look at the CityVibe catalogue on the City of Victoria's website ([www.Victoria.ca](http://www.Victoria.ca)) for information on musical events, public markets, cultural festivals and other recreational activities. I look forward to seeing you at many of these events, including the Moss Street Paint-In on July 20.

Here is an update on a few happenings in the neighbourhood and city:

### PARKLAND ACQUISITION

I have had several productive discussions with Rockland residents, members of your neighbourhood association,

and City staff about options for parkland acquisition in Rockland. The neighbourhood has one of the smallest inventories of public parkland in the City of Victoria. While this is offset by substantial greenspace at provincially-owned Government House, by non-profit holdings such as the Craigdarroch Castle grounds, and by school district lands at Central Middle School, actual City parkland is extremely scarce: two small lots on Terrace Avenue and Joan Crescent.

Options include partnering with private landowners to acquire lots for park purposes, including upon disposition of an estate with the passing of a Rockland resident, if the estate wishes to dispose of a property. All or part of the land value can be provided as a philanthropic contribution to the community, resulting in charitable tax benefits for the estate. The City also reserves funds for parkland acquisition, in order to create and improve parks and greenways. The long-term vision of the Pemberton Trail -- a midblock greenway running west-east between Fort Street and Rockland Avenue -- could be acquired either through the outright purchase, subdivision and re-sale of lands to create a pathway, or alternately by the registration of a pathway easement on title as land is redeveloped.

All of these options can help us move closer to a neighbourhood with enhanced community greenspace and stronger greenway connections internally, as well as with surrounding neighbourhoods. I look forward to working with residents and the Rockland Neighbourhood Association to advance this vision.

### TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

I have received several complaints from residents of Rockland Avenue and St. Charles Street relating to the noise and air-quality impact of commercial tour bus operations on their streets. While I understand that operators have taken some steps to mitigate this impact, I believe we can do more. Earlier this spring, the City issued a Request for Proposals for commercial-vehicle parking stands. Applications were

encouraged from operations that utilize low-emission and electric commercial vehicles. Unfortunately, no eligible applications were received. Fortunately, the City granted a short-term license for these stands, meaning there will be a fresh competition and greater encouragement for low-emission, low-noise vehicles.

It is my hope that the City will play an active role encouraging the “greening” of commercial vehicle fleets. This would have an immediate positive impact on public health, air quality and noise levels in residential neighbourhoods such as Rockland. It would also have a positive impact over the longer term on operators’ financial bottom line as fuel costs continue to rise.

Another item relating to transportation is the newly formed City of Victoria Cycling Task Force. I serve as a member of this task force, which is preparing to engage the public on updating the Cycling Master Plan -- in order to determine gaps in the City’s existing cycling network with a view toward increasing “mode share” (the percentage of commuters travelling by bicycle) as well as safety and convenience for recreational cyclists. Cycling infrastructure will be considered within the broader context of the City’s Pedestrian Master Plan and Greenways Plan, so this process will allow residents to share their vision for multi-modal transportation and propose specific improvements in Rockland and throughout the city.

## **ROCKLAND’S VOICE AT THE WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

It is my pleasure to announce that Bob June, chair of the Rockland Land Use Committee, has been appointed by the Capital Regional District Board to the Regional Water Advisory Committee. Bob was appointed following a competitive application process to fill one of two vacancies this spring. Bob’s service to the Rockland neighbourhood, as well as prior serve in Saanich and professional expertise, contributed to his successful application.

Bob will now join citizens from across the Capital Region in providing oversight for the sound management and operation of our public water supply at Sooke Lake. While this water system is in very good shape, with 98% of catchment lands publicly owned, filtration and conveyance facilities up to date, and monthly testing conducted for more than a dozen potential substances in order to ensure water quality, the Water Advisory Committee continues to play an important role. It provides oversight on everything from finances to environmental stewardship, while helping to connect residents, scientists, CRD staff and elected members of the Regional Water Supply Commission. Welcome to the committee, Bob!

Ben Isitt is the City Council liaison to Rockland and also serves on the CRD Board and Provincial Capital Commission. He can be reached by telephone (250-882-9302), email (Ben@Isitt.ca) or via his website: www.BenIsitt.ca.

## **PRESIDENT’S REPORT by Janet Simpson**

Our new Board for 2013 consists of 6 incumbents (Bob June, Dave Clark, Norman Clark, David Hambleton, Jane Wheatley and I) and 2 newcomers (Tamsin McIntosh and Robin Gubby). Along with his energy and commitment to the neighbourhood, Robin has brought interest in revitalizing the Safety Committee and is looking for volunteers to join him.

In the Board’s first 3 meetings, we have discussed all sorts of issues, from the developments on Pemberton and Oak Bay Avenue to a summer soiree at Government House to the need for neighbourhood parkland to a special presentation in the fall to the possibility of a community garden. Check out the website for more details in the minutes or feel free to contact the committee chairs.

Rockland is seriously short of parkland – this is noted in our neighbourhood plan and recognized by the City. Although there is plenty of money in the acquisition fund, there is no master plan for acquiring land; therefore, neighbourhoods such as Rockland watch in frustration as potential sites (many of which feature our rare, endangered Garry oak ecosystem) risk being built upon. Our councillors need to hear from us how important it is to preserve land for urban parks while there is still some left.

I noticed in the news yesterday that Vancouver is reviewing its laneway housing policy this week. Apparently some of these new houses are “looming over the neighbours [sic] backyards” (CBC May 13/13) so staff is recommending that they be limited to single storey. According to the article, “concerns continue to be received about:

- shadowing on neighbouring yards and gardens;
- loss of privacy - upper storey windows and balconies creating overlook;
- perceived size - particularly where a LWH is developed on a previously vacant rear yard and/or adjacent to a vacant rear yard; and
- loss of private views.”

When I read over these concerns, I am struck by their similarity to concerns voiced over several new developments in Rockland, which provide their owners with maximum massing but have a decidedly negative impact on their neighbours. Developers are unlikely to

“under-develop” a property, so it falls upon neighbourhood associations to keep the pressure on City Hall to bring the zoning bylaws into line with what protects our “unique and attractive neighborhood features” (RNA Plan, 1.10).

## **SAFETY COMMITTEE** by Robin Gubby

The RNA is looking for members to participate on the Safety Committee. The Safety Committee is responsible to the RNA Board for identifying, monitoring, and resolving issues and concerns in the following areas: Crime, Public Safety, and Emergency Preparedness

To facilitate this responsibility, the Committee will form liaisons and coordinate as required with: City of Victoria Engineering & Public Works Dept, Police Department, Fire Department; City of Victoria Emergency Management Agency; and Local Block Watch committees.

The committee meets one evening each month. If you have an interest in any of these areas and are willing to serve on the committee, please contact Robin Gubby, Safety Committee Chair, at Tel: 250-595-6762 or e-mail: [ergubby@yahoo.ca](mailto:ergubby@yahoo.ca).

Safety Committee representatives are meeting with Rob Johns, the VEMA Emergency Coordinator on 14 May to look into any emergency preparedness issues that are specific to Rockland, and will also be attending the Victoria Police Board Neighbourhood and Business Association Meeting on Tuesday 21 May. A report on any items of interest coming out of these meetings will be included in a future Newsletter.

## **NEWS FROM CRAIGDARROCH CASTLE**

The Craigdarroch Castle Historical Museum Society was thrilled with the number of viewers who tuned into CHEK television for the airing of our documentary video, Victoria’s Castle. This 52 minute educational video tells some of the stories of the Dunsmuir family and subsequent institutions who occupied Victoria’s Castle and highlights Craigdarroch’s relationship with the city of Victoria’s development.

Watch the promo and buy it online [HERE](#).

## **AT LANGHAM COURT THEATRE**

### **Calendar Girls**

A COMEDY BY Tim Firth

DIRECTED BY Michael King



Tickets on Sale May 21st

What do sunflowers, comfortable settees and tea cakes have in common? The Calendar Girls! A group of ordinary women do something extraordinary and spark a global phenomenon when they persuade one another to pose for a charity calendar with a difference! Based on an inspiring true story, Calendar Girls is quirky, poignant and hilarious.

SUITABLE FOR MATURE AUDIENCES

THIS IS AN AMATEUR PRODUCTION

\$21 for Adults

\$19 for Students/Seniors (65+)

\$16 each in groups 10+

2 for \$20 Wednesday Preview - Jun 12th, all patrons

2 for \$30 Tuesdays - Jun 18th & 25th, all patrons

2pm Saturday Matinees - Jun 22nd & 29th

Nightly Showtime: 8pm

No shows Sunday or Monday



**YOU ARE INVITED TO THE ROCKLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION RECEPTION  
HOSTED BY  
THE HONOURABLE JUDITH GUICHON, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ON FRIDAY, JULY 12, 2013 AT 5:30PM  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, 1401 ROCKLAND AVENUE, VICTORIA**

**5:15** The doors open and guests gather in the Foyer  
**5:30** The receiving lines begins  
**5:45** Her Honour and the President of the RNA are piped in  
Her Honour's remarks  
President's remarks  
Reception  
**7:00** Event concludes

**FREE to RNA Members - RSVP required before July 5, 2013**

**Please invite your neighbours to join the RNA for this private event.**

**RNA Membership form at [www.rockland.bc.ca](http://www.rockland.bc.ca).**

**RSVP Watch for your members invitation in the mail**

**RSVP New applicants. Hurry. Be sure to leave lots of time to have your membership processed and invitation mailed.**



## ROBERT WARD AND HIS HOUSES by Helen Edwards

The first house on the southeast corner of Rockland Avenue and Langham Court was built as early as 1874. Although its Gothic Revival style indicates an earlier date of construction, it does not appear in the Assessment Rolls until 1874. The land on which the house was built was owned by J. W. McKay described as “a trusted officer of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the discoverer of the Nanaimo coal-fields.” McKay is listed in the 1871 and 1874 City Directories as chief factor for the Hudson’s Bay Company. “Improvements” first appear on the 1874 Assessment Roll; 5/6 of an acre including the improvements was sold to Robert Ward.

Robert Ward came to Victoria from England to join his brother William, and official of the original Bank of British Columbia who lived in the Rockland area. In 1871, Ward joined the firm of Welch, Rithet and Company, then five years later, Stahlschmidt and Co. Importers. Robert Ward met Mary Pauline King, a stepdaughter of Thomas Lett Stahlschmidt; they were married October 1876 at Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria with the Right Reverend Bishop of Columbia officiating. They moved into the house on Rockland Avenue, living there for 14 years. Ward became sole proprietor of the import business when Stahlschmidt moved to England. It became one of the leading import-export businesses in Victoria and one of the City’s largest insurance firms. He also served on City Council, was a magistrate, pilotage commissioner, and consul for Sweden and Norway.

As the Ward family’s fortune grew, they wanted a larger, more prestigious house and, as was common in those days, moved the smaller house by literally rolling it down the hill to its present location. The date of the move is verified in the assessment rolls. The 1889 assessment for improvements on the Rockland property drops from \$2,000 to \$400 in 1890, indicating the removal of the building from the site. At the same time, the value of improvements on the Richardson Street lot jumps from zero in 1889 to \$1,600 in 1890. The house at 1261-1263 Richardson with its three steeply pointed gables that give the building its nickname has suffered over the years. It was used as a nursing home, then as a very crowded rooming house, at some point being painted green.

By the 1980s, most of its distinctive Gothic detailing had been lost and it was in a very dilapidated state. In 1990, it was moved again, closer to the corner, raised slightly (it had been set too low in the original move), converted to a strata duplex, and had townhouse units built behind it. The exterior detailing was replicated using historic photographs



*Green Gables, 1977 (top) and 2010*

as a reference point. The building now looks very similar to the original house that was rolled down the hill over 100 years ago and its rehabilitation has preserved an interesting slice of Victoria’s history.

While the Wards were on one of their frequent trips to England in 1890, the new home rose on the Rockland Avenue site. Called The Laurels it was described in the November 20, 1890 issue of The Colonist as “.. with well laid out grounds in front, the house faces the northwest, the main entrance being very imposing. The principal feature of the front is the large Moorish window, above which are graceful balconies.

The newspaper article further reported on two large homes being built and told its readers: “The well to do character of Victorians is well illustrated in their homes. Almost everyone is the owner of his place of residence, and spares neither pains nor expense in making it as attractive and convenient as can be. Artistic architecture is making its appearance in the cottage of the artisan as well as in the mansion of the professional man, and a house must be much more now than it was ten years ago, in order to give satisfaction. The building list for 1890 promises to be double that of any previous year in Victoria’s history,



*1249 Rockland Avenue, when it was operating as St. George's School for Girls, c. 1912.*

and all the architects in the city say that they have already enough work on hand for next year to keep them busy until midsummer. Mr. T. C. Sorby is one of the most prominent of the Victoria architects, his specialty, apparently, being residential work. He has prepared the plans for several of the most magnificent mansions now in erection, notably among which are the now homes of Mr. Robert Ward and Mr. D. R. Harris, which will be ready for the owners in a few weeks.” [Note: If you wish to read the entire article visit [britishcolonist.ca](http://britishcolonist.ca) and search for November 20, 1980, page 3.]

On the main floor, the home featured a 35-foot long hall, a 30 x 20 feet drawing room with a double dance floor, a 18 x 30 feet dining room, a 16 x 18 foot breakfast room, and a 29 x 19 foot day nursery that was intended to used as a billiard room. The second floor originally had eight bedrooms and two dressing rooms and an assortment of linen rooms, closets and storerooms. With steam heat, electric light and an ensuite bathroom for the master bedroom, the conveniences were modern. Above the two main floors was the Belvedere or observatory-smoking room. The highest point of the building, a weathervane atop the cupola was 90 feet from the ground. The contractor for the project was George Mesher who was paid \$25,000 for his work.

The Wards returned to England and, in 1903, the Laurels became the home of the Collegiate School that had been

started in 1861 on Churchway. In 1912, that school moved to a different site on Rockland Avenue (now the site of an apartment block and townhouses to the rear). The Laurels was then occupied by St. George's girls' school that had opened in 1907 on Yates Street with Mrs. Suttie as principal. Twenty-five of the 100 girls boarded when they moved in. At the time, it was the only school for girls to include cricket in its sports program. The school was forced to close in 1928. Langham Court Theatre is housed in the old school gymnasium.

At some point in its lifetime, the building was covered with a layer of stucco that served to hide most of the ornamentation. It was converted to 15 suites in 1958 with an additional suite added in 1965. Recently it has been redecorated and upgraded. Despite the many changes over the years, it maintains its landmark status due to its size and location atop the hill.



## JOIN US ON FACEBOOK

To spur interest in the activities of the Rockland Neighbourhood Association and to attract new members, we have recently established a page on Facebook.

Check out <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rockland-Neighbourhood-Association/444293285610322> and “Like” us to receive future updates.

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## RNA BOARD OF DIRECTORS – 2013-2014

President: Janet Simpson  
Vice President: Bob June  
Secretary: David Clark  
Treasurer: Norman Clark  
Directors: Robin Gubby  
David Hambleton  
Tamsin McIntosh  
Jane Wheatley

## RNA Email Server List

Would you like to hear more about events in Rockland? Please join the neighbours list through the RNA website at [www.rockland.bc.ca](http://www.rockland.bc.ca).

## CAN WE HELP YOU?

Is there a building in Rockland that you would like to know the history of? Do you have an old photo that needs identification? Let me know at [heritagelady@gmail.com](mailto:heritagelady@gmail.com) and I will see what I can find.

## AT THE ART GALLERY

### Edge of Nowhere

June 30, 2010 - June 30, 2013

Although Emily Carr described herself as an “isolated little old woman on the edge of nowhere” her work has an appeal that is universal in its expressive messages.

Events:

May 26 2013 - 2:00pm - 3:00pm - Drop In Tour

May 30 2013 - 7:00pm - 8:00pm - Drop In Tour

Jun 6 2013 - 7:00pm - 9:00pm - Film Screening - Winds of Heaven: Emily Carr, Carvers & The Spirits of the Forest

Jun 8 2013 - 1:00pm - 3:00pm - Lecture & Book Launch

Jun 16 2013 - 2:00pm - 3:00pm - Drop In Tour

Jun 29 2013 - 2:00pm - 3:00pm - Drop In Tour

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## ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The Rockland Neighbourhood Association Newsletter is published during the year. It is distributed electronically to all members. Submissions from members on issues of interest are always accepted and photographs are particularly welcome.

### Deadlines for the next issue is:

August 15, 2013

All submissions should be sent to Newsletter Editor, Helen Edwards at [heritagelady@gmail.com](mailto:heritagelady@gmail.com).