

President's Note

David Hill-Turner, President

Thank you to members and guests that were able to attend our in-person AGM on March 10. With the continuing relaxing of restrictions, our April meeting was mask-free and vaccine passports were no longer required. However, public health officials are encouraging us to wear a mask when in public gatherings. We will respect your decision.

The board for 2022-2023 includes: President, David Hill-Turner; Vice President, Sue Creba; Treasurer, Tony Orchard; Secretary, Gord Miller (temporary) and Directors at Large, Susan Garcia, Darrell Ohs and Ted Lord. Welcome Ted to the board. After many years of service to the society, Gord would like to step back and pursue some personal interests. If you are interested in assisting with this key position, please contact me.

There are many opportunities to explore the long cultural and natural history of Nanaimo. While much has been written about the coal mining era, Nanaimo has seen many changes as the city evolved from a resource-based economy to a service economy. We are working on a variety of ideas to research and tell these stories, but we need your help. Your board is very dedicated, but we need your knowledge, expertise, and energy to make these projects happen. If you have time to spare, please contact us via the web site. April 14 was our last public meeting until September. The Programme Committee has been working very diligently to create a field trip. It will be a 'Welcome Back Picnic on June 18 at Morden Colliery Historical Provincial Park, South Wellington. Full details are on page 2.

Morden Mine Picnic June 18

Join us on Saturday, June 18 for our “Welcome Back Picnic” at Morden Colliery Historical Provincial Park, South Wellington between noon and 2 pm. The cost for this event (Members \$10, non-members \$15) includes a picnic lunch (sandwiches, veggies, drinks, desserts, etc.) and a guided tour by Liam Hall, principal of Heritage Masonry. Liam is the restoration contractor who oversaw the entire conservation project to preserve the Morden Mine concrete headframe — one of only two such reinforced concrete coal mine headframe/tipple structures in North America. There are a limited number of spaces. **Attendees must pre-register.** Please reserve your space no later than June 11 by PayPal on the home page of our website, by e-transfer to nhspayments1953@gmail.com or by mailing a cheque or cash to Box 933, Nanaimo BC V9R 5N2.

NHS Website Now Live!

The brand new website for the Nanaimo Historical Society went live on the same day as our Annual General Meeting on March 10, 2022. It features upcoming and past events, news and resources and much more! We invite you to visit <https://www.nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca>

NEW! NHS History Microgrant Program

The Nanaimo Historical Society is offering micro-grants for projects that will improve our knowledge and understanding of the natural and cultural history of the Nanaimo area.

- Individuals and organizations based in the Nanaimo area are eligible to apply.
- In most cases, the Society will provide a one-time-only award to an individual or organization to encourage community engagement in our history and heritage.
- The value of a grant will not exceed \$2,000 and is subject to available funds.
- The project’s purpose must be connected to the natural or cultural history within the Nanaimo area.

For grant guidelines, parameters for activities and application process, please visit <https://nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca/get-involved/microgrants/>

Spring 2022 Programme Recap

March 10, 2022: immediately following our AGM, NHS board member Susan Garcia presented 'What Did Justice look like in the Gulf Islands in the 1870's? How one murder on Mayne Island played out across Plumper Pass.' Susan revealed her research about the murder of her great-great-grandfather Robert Clarke and the ensuing investigation, search for the murderer, and trial, which was presided over by Judge Matthew Baillie Begbie in 1871. This presentation is available for viewing on our YouTube channel.

April 14, 2022: Local historian Sean Enns presented '*A Conversation with Charlie*', the story of Charlie Abbot, Chemainus' beloved hermit, exploring his origins and how he arrived to become the Hermit of Chemainus. Charlie appeared in Chemainus in the late 70s, though few know where he came from or how he got there. Today, his trails through the forests of Chemainus stand as Charlie's love letter to the land he lived on and cared for over a decade. Charlie passed away in 1989 at the age of 87. (Available on YouTube)

Watch NHS Events Online

Did you know? You can watch online presentations and field trips of the Nanaimo Historical Society on our YouTube channel <https://bit.ly/30OltRR> Here is the lineup:

- ~ October 2020 - Christine Meutzner "Wellington Cemetery tour"
- ~ January 2021 - Show and tell meeting and Tony Orchard "History of the Colliery dams"
- ~ April 2021 - Dave Bodaly on Sayshutsun (Newcastle) Island and family history
- ~ June 2021 - Virtual field trip to Mt. Benson site of October 1951 crash of Queen Charlotte Airlines Canso aircraft
- ~ September 2021 - Hayley Healy "Vancouver Island Women"
- ~ October 2021 - Greg Fraser "Joseph McKay biography"
- ~ November 2021 - Brian McFadden "Dam Busters, Nanaimo connection"
- ~ January 2022 - Annual Show and Share Meeting
- ~ February 2022 - Catherine Marie Gilbert "The history of Strathcona Provincial Park"
- ~ March 2022 - Susan Garcia "Murder on Mayne Island"
- ~ April 2022 - Sean Enns "Charlie Abbott, the Chemainus Hermit."

Shirley Birrell 1924-2021

Shirley Eleanor Hopper Birrell (nee Bradfield) passed away on November 5, 2021 Born July 19, 1924 to Arthur and Flossie Bradfield at McRae's Nursing Home on Albert Street, she grew up on Milton Street She was an outgoing and dramatic child who enjoyed piano, dance and voice lessons. A talented soprano, she performed as a soloist throughout her life. Shirley was incredibly social and enjoyed an active outdoor life boating, skating, dancing and attending picnics on Newcastle Island. She met her first husband, Alec Hopper, a soldier based in Camp Nanaimo, and they were married in 1946, when he returned from WWII.



At 14, Shirley started work in her uncle's jewelry store (Harding's) learning the business from the ground up. Following the war, her husband Alec used his VA grant to go to watchmakers school. The couple then bought Thorneycroft's Jewelry Store on Commercial Street, renaming it "Hopper's". They became active members in the city's business community and were instrumental in starting the Nanaimo City Centre Association, predecessor to the Downtown Nanaimo Business Improvement Association.

Shirley served as President of the Soroptomist Club of Nanaimo and worked alongside Alec who was the Kiwanis Club's Lt. Governor. She was very proud of the work her Soroptomist Club did with Kiwanis and 14 other organizations to develop, fundraise for, build and run the Kiwanis Village which supports low income seniors. Alec and Shirley were a dynamic pair throughout their marriage of over 40 years. In 1975, their son, Ron, returned to Nanaimo and joined them in the family business, working together until Alec's death in 1987. In 1990, Shirley married David Birrell,

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Shirley Birrell 1924-2021

and they traveled extensively for many years. From India and Portugal to Scotland and Arizona, they were always on the go, returning to their home at the Beacon until David passed in 2009. Incredibly involved in community organizations, Shirley maintained active memberships until her death in a variety of Nanaimo organizations including the Nanaimo Museum, Nanaimo Historical Society, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Empire Days and Eastern Star.

The highlight of her final year was becoming a "GG" (great-grandmother) in December 2020, and having the chance to meet and hold her great-grandchild this past August. Shirley leaves her son Ron, her grandchildren Keith (Chantelle) and Deborah, her great-granddaughter Lilyanna, and her beloved nieces, nephews and grand-niece. A celebration of life will be held this spring. Donations may be made to Kiwanis Village (1233 Kiwanis Crescent, Nanaimo V9S 5Y1) or the BC Cancer Foundation.

Jill Stannard 1927-2022



Born in Nanaimo on June 29, 1927 to George and Edna Stannard, Shirley Jean (Jill) Stannard enjoyed a happy childhood. She was especially close to her sister Jackie and they were well known as "Jack and Jill" on Franklyn Street. When young, she was a keen basketball player.

Jill was always devoted and passionate about the history of Nanaimo, dedicating many hours serving in the Nanaimo Historical Society, Nanaimo Archives, and on the Nanaimo Historical Heritage Commission, as well as being a lifetime member of Friends of the South End. In 2018

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Jill Stannard 1927-2022

she was appointed the Parade Marshal during Nanaimo Heritage Days, which was the ultimate recognition, as she loved being the centre of attention. She provided walking tours for Friends of the South End, having an impeccable memory for names and details of who lived in each home in downtown Nanaimo.

Jill was active in the IODE, played golf at the Nanaimo Golf Club, volunteered for the Claytree Society and was an avid bridge player. She enjoyed traveling, taking many trips to Europe and RV trips with Ab to Mexico, the US and throughout Vancouver Island and Western Canada.

She was independent all her life, living on her own until her last few weeks. She was outgoing, witty, vibrant and never hesitated to offer her opinion. She took pride in looking her best and loved fashion and jewelry. She worked as the hostess at Nanaimo Harbour Lights Restaurant, and for many years at La Boutique, in Woodgrove Mall, including modeling in theirs and others' fashion shows.

Jill passed away on April 13, 2022. Predeceased by her parents, sister Jackie Clavora, infant granddaughter Jennifer, son-in-law Randy Johnson and her long time companion and partner Ab Seriani, Jill leaves to mourn her 3 children; Rick Rispin (Linda), Kathleen Milosz (Tom), and Michael Rispin. Affectionately known as Bubi, she will be deeply missed by her 10 grandchildren Geoffrey, Lesley, Dean, Katrina, Braydon, Breanne, Brittney, Amber, Spencer, and Curtis as well as 18 great grandchildren. She also leaves behind her much loved extended families the Serianis and Clavoras.

Donations can be made to Jill's favourite organization, the Nanaimo Community Archives, 150 Commercial St., Nanaimo BC V9R 5G6. A celebration of life will be held at the Nanaimo Golf Club from 2 to 4 pm, Sunday July 17, 2022.

** Jill Stannard was an active long time member of our Historical Society. She was on the refreshments committee, was a terrific greeter, and helped out in many capacities*

Kath Gusola 1928-2022

We say goodbye in sadness but we marvel at our good fortune that our mother, grandmother and great grandmother Kathleen Gusola (Blank) lived and loved for 94 years. She passed away peacefully on March 15, 2022.

Mom was born in Nanaimo, grew up on Machleary Street and attended John Shaw High School. Mom met Alex Gusola at his smoke shop on Commercial St. and they were married in 1950 until his death in 2006. Being involved in the community was important to her and she had many wonderful friends. Mom was kind.

She leaves behind her children: Joanne (Wes), Alex (Joan), Maria, Gina (John) and Michael (Tracie). Her grandchildren: Tracie-Lei, Dawn, Talia, Katie, Hayley, Devon, Dylan, Maia, Nick, Alex and Mike. Great-grandchildren: Ashley, Kyle, Alisha, Hayley, Jeremy, Karly, Oliver, Lucian, Corbin, Everett, Rosalie, Elliott, Alexander, Caden, Kennedy, Kayson, Cambree and Cannon, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Our family will gather to celebrate Mom's life this summer.

** Kath Gusola was an active long time member of our Historical Society. She was on the refreshments committee and the book table for many years.*



1951 Plane Crash featured in BC History Magazine

Darrell Ohs' article "***On Hallowed Ground: The crash of Queen Charlotte Airlines Flight 102***", about the 1951 plane crash on Mount Benson was published in the Spring 2022 issue of BC History magazine. Congratulations Darrell!

Both the video recording (recorded and edited by Tony Orchard) of the June 2021 field trip and a copy of the article can be found on our website here: <https://nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca/2021/10/31/the-wreck-of-queen-charlotte-airlines-flight-102-17/>

The Word on the Street: Roads that Built Nanaimo

Nanaimo Museum's spring community gallery exhibit presents the history of Nanaimo through the stories behind the city's intriguing street names.

Prepared by Vancouver Island University history students (including our board member Susan Garcia), the gallery reveals a variety of themes, including Indigenous history & immigrant connections, using rarely seen maps and photos from

Nanaimo Community Archives. See Nanaimo's transformation before your eyes and finally get the scoop on Jingle Pot Road and other quirky street names.

This exhibit is free to view at the Nanaimo Museum's Community Gallery. Observe the hard work of VIU students and check out if the street you live on is featured! The exhibit is open from April 13 to June 25, Tuesday to Saturday from 10am-4pm.



Important Membership News

Beginning with the 2022 year, Nanaimo Historical Society membership fees will be:

- personal membership - \$10
- family membership (2 or more members at same address) - \$15
- group membership (business or other organization) - \$15
- student membership - \$5

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2022, please contact Gordon Miller at nanaimohistoricalsociety@shaw.ca

Last summer the British Columbia Historical Federation decided to cancel the bulk subscription program for ***British Columbia History***, their quarterly magazine. As a result, the British Columbia Historical Federation will be contacting you directly when it is time to renew your subscription. ***British Columbia History*** will be available in either paper or digital editions. Renewals will be \$25 and can be made by mail or online.

Member opportunities

The Nanaimo Historical Society is a volunteer-run society. As the society reorganizes and prepares for new programs and events, please consider joining us as a volunteer at the board or committee level. It is an opportunity to meet people who share your interest in history and is an opportunity to share skills or develop new ones. (Note: some Committees meet regularly, others 1-2 times per year)

- Board of Directors: We welcome the addition of people with adult learning, project planning and communications experience and interest..
- Governance Committee - advises the board on policies and procedures
- Programme Committee - speaker support (new!), developing learning programs, organizing refreshments, organizing rideshare
- Communications Committee - website, Facebook, YouTube, newsletter, media promotion
- Leynard Microgrant Program - developing our community grant program

About the NHS

Founded in 1953, the Nanaimo Historical Society has been an influential partner in advocating for the awareness, understanding and appreciation of our community's diverse heritage.

Nanaimo Historical Society

President:	David Hill-Turner	Directors at large:	Susan Garcia
Vice President:	Sue Creba		Darrell Ohs
Treasurer:	Tony Orchard		Ted Lord
Secretary:	Gordon Miller		

How to reach us

web

<https://www.nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca>



nanaimohistoricalsociety@shaw.ca



facebook.com/NanaimoHistory/



<https://bit.ly/30OItRR>

Mailing address Box 933, Nanaimo, BC V9R 5N2

We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw people from whom Nanaimo takes its name.

Nanaimo Historical Society Tapes Digitized

Nanaimo Historical Society owned many tapes going back decades of interviews and lectures on historical topics. They have now all been digitized by Vancouver Island University and are available for listening here: <https://viurrspace.ca/handle/10613/14188>

Thank you Vancouver Island University Library for this service!