



Vol. 3—2012

Founded in 1990

CONTACT

Newsletter Winter Edition

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Important Dates

Chinese New Year
Family Dinner & Dance
Sunday, February 24, 2013
6pm to 11:30pm
Continental Seafood Restaurant
150-11700 Cambie Road,
Richmond, BC



CURRENT OFFICIALS

President: Violet Chan

Vice President: Michael Liu

Hon. Secretary: Mei Lam

Hon. Treasurer: Clement Yapp

Committee Members:

- ◆ Tim Chandra
- ◆ David Choy
- ◆ Alice Crestejo
- ◆ Rey Halim
- ◆ Phillip Lee
- ◆ Sunny Loo
- ◆ Michael Mok
- ◆ Sharon Lim
- ◆ Alan Chu

Immediate PP: Jim Foo

Internal Auditor: Michael Leong

Legal Advisor: James Reynolds

Hon. Advisor: Sing Lim Yeo

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VSC Contact Newsletter

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A Message from President Violet Chan and Editor Michael Liu



2012 has proven to be a jam-packed year full of exciting, memorable get-togethers at VSC! Since our last Autumn edition of Contact, we have had 3 highly successful member events! In September, we had our 2nd Members-Meet-Members at the East Side Craft House attended by about 50 members and guests and in October we had our Kawan-Kawan Fun & Fellowship Night at Kaya Malay Bistro. The evening, filled with door prizes and a 50-50 raffle draw proved to be quite the hit as the event was sold out 3-4 weeks prior to event day! The combination of fun, great food, prizes, reunions of old friends and meeting new friends at the newest and hip South East Asian restaurant, "Kaya Malay Bistro" proved too difficult to resist! In fact, VSC Ex-Co was quick to add a follow-up "Kawan-Kawan" (K² for short) event on November 3 so that those on the waiting list for the previous event had an opportunity to partake in the K² activities...this time with a costume party element à-la Halloween! Over the course of these fully sold-out events, we had nearly 300 people participate! Amazing turn-outs for sure.

We aim to maintain and extend this ground-swell of interest in VSC and have therefore committed to an ongoing schedule of exciting events throughout the remainder of 2012 and into 2013. Not only is VSC a fun social club, it is one that allows old and new members to network and to learn about various opportunities to grow, both personally and professionally. To this end, it is imperative that we grow our membership base. So far we have grown our Club by adding over 100 new members this year. We have generated a lot of interest among the community by having both a very active VSC website (www.singaporeclub.ca) as well as a burgeoning presence on Facebook.com/vancouveringsingaporeclub. Both serve as avenues to promote the club, to provide important updates as well as places to post event news and photos. We have received a lot of positive feedback on the use of this media and traffic to both our website and Facebook pages have increased significantly over the last few months. It is our goal to keep leveraging this multi-media approach (including our newsletters) to accelerate our membership growth. While technology can help grow our Club, it **cannot** replace **YOU**, our members, to ultimately help strengthen our membership. We plan to have a Membership Drive event soon and ask that all of you help us make Vancouver Singapore Club even stronger! Let's all of us help promote and invite more friends to join our club, a club we are all proud to call our very own. On behalf of the VSC Executive Committee, "Thanks for your support in 2012! Have a wonderful holiday season and Best Wishes for 2013!"



Violet

Violet Chan, President (2012-2013)

Michael

Michael Liu, Vice-President (2012-2013)

Events, Events, Events!

VSC enjoyed an incredible turn-out to 3 consecutive sold-out events since the release of the last issue of *Contact*! In September we had our **2nd Members-Meet-Members** at East Side Craft House - a real hit attended by a good cross-section of members and friends. It was a fairly intimate occasion given the smaller size of the venue which is perfect for the aptly named event where the objective is to provide an atmosphere conducive to "members meeting members". A great time was had by all as friends regaled over a beer or 2 (for some 3 or 4 or more) and scrumptious appetizers.



On October 13th we had our Kawan-Kawan Night at Kaya Malay Bistro. The event attended by 100 members and friends was celebrated in the spirit of "kawan-kawan" - a Malay word for "friendship". We enjoyed the evening with a delicious 9 item meal which included satay, mee goreng, beef rendang and Hainanese Chicken. We also had a 50/50 raffle and prize draws...our lucky winner of the 50/50 \$125 cash was Shelly Chau and Angela De Silva won the grand prize of a beautiful art piece, donated by VSC President Violet Chan.





Due to the overwhelming popularity of the K² Event on October 13th, VSC Ex-Co decided to organize another event at the same location, same time on November 3rd. This way, we were able to accommodate members and friends who were on the long waiting list from the previous event.

The November 3rd event featured the same great food, a "new" group of wonderful friends and a whole different set of fun draws and prizes with a best costume contest to boot (photos below and on p. 6)!





Pictured on the right from L-R:
Scott, Violet, Minister of State for Multiculturalism, John Yap, Harmony, Eunice, Michael L. and Michael M.

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New General Members

Congratulations and a warm welcome to the following new members (2012):

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Beh, Henry / Glenda | Hsu, Harry / Lam, Portia | Picard, Daniel / Cheng, Jacqueline |
| Chang, David / Anna | Kong, William / Annie | |
| Chau, Kim / Shelly | Law, Katania | Roan, Cory / Sunarti, Ati |
| Chee, Chai / Susan | Lai, Kim / Flora | Scully, Jean |
| Chen, Claire | Lee, Florence / Shun Lam | See, Patrick |
| Chen, Kelly | Lee, Gary / Josephine | Sheares, Jeannine / Moon, Steve |
| Cheng, Ian / Au, Olivia | Lee, Kee | Soh, Alice |
| Cheung, Liza | Lew, Russell G. | Su, Susie |
| Chiu, Eileen / Simon | Li, Lily Fung / Chan, Derek | Tan, Dominic/Magdelaine |
| Chong, Boo Jock/Janice | Liu, Peggy | Tan, Steffi |
| Chong, Karen | Loy, Wee Wang / Ng, Geok Lian | Tapia, Carmelita / Ed |
| Chong, Lillian | Lui, Winston / Phung, Caroline | Tong, Alicia Mun Wah / Wong, Chee Keong |
| Choo, Shirley / Tennyson | Miller, Gillian | |
| Chua, Lynn | Ng, Bong Chong / Chan, Cheng Hwee | Wong, Kenneth / Helen |
| Elridge, Martin / Leonora | Ng, Bonnie | Wong, Roger / Cecilia |
| Fung, Cecil / Angela | Ngui, Wen Fang | Yew, Peter / Yeo, Esther |
| Gok, Felicia | Ong, Yanny | Yong, Peter / Rosalinda |
| | | Yu, Norman / Winnie |

For New Membership Application Form, please download from www.singaporeclub.ca

Members' Column

Tidbits of Singaporean history – Can you trace your ancestry to Bukit Brown Cemetery?

Feel free to respond to this article by email to

sharonjeanlim@gmail.com

Sharon Lim, History Honors Student at the University of British Columbia

饮水思源 *Drink the water, but remember the source*

What is at stake in Singapore's Bukit Brown Cemetery?

Bukit Brown Municipal Cemetery was officially opened in January 1922, on the grounds of the existing 'Seh Ong' cemetery, which was primarily reserved for members of the Ong Clan.¹ Designated by the British colonial authorities as a public burial ground, Bukit Brown was open to the wider Chinese community, regardless of one's wealth, social standing or dialect group, until the government's decision in 1973 to close the cemetery for further burials.² Accounting for 40% of Chinese burials by 1929, many Chinese-Singaporeans will be able to trace their ancestors at Bukit Brown and the area is believed to be the largest Chinese cemetery outside of China.³

From May to September 2011, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore made a series of announcements that the land has been earmarked for redevelopment as a dual four-lane road to ease traffic congestion⁴, and more than 3700 graves have been staked for exhumation in early 2013.⁵ Since the official announcement, there has been much ongoing debate on the historical value of Bukit Brown Cemetery and fundamental importance of the site to the nation's collective memory⁶.

Being a site that is invested with different social, cultural meanings by individuals, I hope to share with you how Bukit Brown cemetery can help

us engage with Singapore's past. 'Seh Ong' cemetery, the site that would later constitute a much of present-day Bukit Brown cemetery, was the largest Hokkien Chinese cemetery at 213 acres.⁶ The distinctly Hokkien influence that persisted at Bukit Brown (*Kopi Sua*, as its referred to in its Hokkien name) are recognizable from the earlier graves of the individuals interred at the cemetery in the late 19th and early 20th century. The inscriptions on these gravestones tell us that their ancestral homes are in Southern Fujian, a specific region in China where the Hokkien language originated from.⁷ Hokkien tombs can be identified by its distinctive 'horseshoe' shape and the use of bricks to create a boundary around the grave mound. This design is meant to be shaped like a mother's womb and symbolize the cycle of life: reconciling birth, death and the afterlife.

Historian Chua Ai Lin and sociologist Terence Chong argues that, "the graves allow Singaporeans to draw links between abstract street names and real people."⁸ Yet beyond the famous names, such as those with streets and other landmarks named after them, Chua and Chong additionally suggest that, "in preserving the graves or ordinary people we are acknowledging the blood, sweat and toil of those who have contributed to the development of our city port."⁹ This emphasis on the contributions of less-prominent participants in Singaporean history stands in contrast to the above-mentioned letter writer's calls to collectively honour the nation's "famous sons." From this perspective, these immigrants, whether well-known, little-known or even anonymous, are all considered in the shaping of Singaporean history, with Bukit Brown cemetery as the site that collectively all these figures together.

The impending development of Bukit Brown cemetery makes it all the more important to

¹ Kartini Saparudin, "Bukit Brown Municipal Cemetery," 13 July 2009, Singapore Infopedia, http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_1358_2009-07-13.html (accessed 13 April 2012)

² Ibid.

³ "Bukit Brown Cemetery," 26 November 2011, Singapore Heritage Society, http://www.singaporeheritage.org/?page_id=1352 (accessed 13 April 2012)

⁴ See Appendix I

⁵ Rebecca Lim, "Singapore to drive road through historic cemetery," *BBC News Singapore*, 5 April 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17594008>

⁶ Elizabeth McKenzie, "Bukit Brown: A Garden of History and Heritage" in *Spaces for the Dead – A Case from the Living*, ed. Kevin YL Tan (Singapore: Ethos Books, 2011), 58.

⁷ Leok-Har Chan, "A Study of Information Structure and Sentence Mood in Hokkien Syntax," (PhD diss. University of Hawaii, 1982) 4, <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/9919>

⁸ Terence Chong and Ai Lin Chua, "Saving Bukit Brown: An Op-Ed Article for the Straits Times," 10 February 2012, Singapore Heritage Society, <http://www.singaporeheritage.org/?p=1919> (accessed 13 April 2012)

⁹ Ibid.



identify what would be lost with the cemetery's development. Bukit Brown is a historical open space that symbolizes the 'coming of age' for the Chinese community in Singapore during the early twentieth century. Each gravestone is a monument to the Chinese immigrant community in Singapore, and their contributions to early nation-building. Within this vast, ambient space, one can find a variety of different types of gravesites, from the pauper's section to the rich family plots. This latter category is exemplified by the graves of Mr. and Mrs. Ong Sam Leong.⁸ Ong (1857-1918) was a Chinese businessman, who made his fortune as a supplier of mining workers.⁹ At six hundred square meters, Ong's burial site is the largest and most elaborate at Bukit Brown, approximately the size of ten standard three-room apartments in Singapore.¹⁰ Guarding his tomb are sculptures of a uniformed Sikh guard, identified by his turban and full beard. While the presence of these Indian statue figures may seem strange in a Chinese cemetery, their presence is reflective of the early twentieth century practice among well-to-do individuals of hiring north Indian men, Sikhs in particular, to protect them.¹¹ This point of connection suggests a common or shared colonial experience between subjects of the British Empire in South and Southeast Asia. The first Indians in Singapore were sepoys and lascars from the Bengal Native Infantry that arrived with Sir Stamford Raffles, who founded Singapore as a British colony.¹² Most of the early Sikh migrants held occupations as policemen or security officers, as the British extensively recruited them in a bid to improve the police force's efficiency in the thriving colony.¹³ In addition to the Indian guards that continue to protect their employer in the afterlife, Ong's grave is also guarded over by a pair of Guardian Male and Female Lions which served to keep evil forces at bay.¹⁴ Furthermore, symmetry of the two Indian statues and the lions also preserve the aspect of *fengshui*, ensuring harmony and

balance for Ong and his wife, who shares this spectacular burial site.

From the grandeur of Ong's grave, we should also look at the more modest graves occupied by paupers in Bukit Brown cemetery. The graves at the pauper's section are smaller than the standard plots, and have less-complex designs, but they are important as they shed light on the lesser-known side of history. The stories of paupers are not traditionally included in the historical narrative, which tends to focus on the successful Chinese migrants (as shown by the naming of 'Sam Leong Road' after Ong Sam Leong). However, their gravestones are a testament to their blood, sweat and toil, and journey in search of a better life outside of China.

Upon close examination of the Bukit Brown cemetery and the proposed highway development, we can see the unique historical value offered by the cemetery as a reservoir of memory. At the same time, we learn how that historical value is dependent upon Singapore's present-day political environment. As Singapore, a multicultural nation moves towards a secular-oriented hegemonic system that prioritizes economic concerns over cultural ones, it may be argued that Singapore needs a sense of the past as represented by Bukit Brown cemetery more than ever as the threat of "Cultural Alzheimer's" looms.¹⁵ In the long run, it will deprive future generations of the historical, cultural and familial heritage essential to situate their identity within a time before the most recent period of Singapore's history. Without history, we will be ignorant citizens as we will have no indicators to benchmark our progress upon.¹⁷



⁸ See Appendix III

⁹ Elizabeth McKenzie, 84.

¹¹ Hwee Hoon Lee, "Ong Sam Leong," 16 February 2009, Singapore Infopedia, http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_1461_2009-02-19.html (accessed 13 April 2012)

¹² Elizabeth McKenzie, 88.

¹³ Elizabeth McKenzie, 88.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Elizabeth McKenzie, 72.

¹⁶ Sharon Lim, "Beware of Cultural Alzheimer's," 15 June 2011, The Straits Times Forum, http://www.straitstimes.com/STForum/OnlineStory/STIStory_679792.html (accessed 13 April 2012)

¹⁷ Ibid.

News Update

VSC's Honorary Advisor, Sing Lim Yeo is the recent recipient of *The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal* on 24 November, 2012. The medal recognizes deserving Canadians who have contributed to our nation, and who have helped to define what it means to be Canadian.

Sing Lim Yeo, senior vice-president of Royal Pacific Realty Group and president of New World Realty, is a skilled volunteer fundraiser who played a leadership role in raising nearly \$3.5 million in 2011 for local charities and international disaster relief, including \$1.6 million in assistance for victims of the earthquake in Japan.

Sing's activities include promoting multiculturalism and heritage through events such as the Chinatown Chinese New Year Parade, S.U.C.C.E.S.S Walk with the Dragon and Gala Charity Dinner.

In November 2011, the Vancouver Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals honoured Sing Yeo with the Giving Hearts Award of Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser. This recognition celebrates his exceptional leadership skills in coordinating and motivating groups of volunteers for major fundraising projects in Greater Vancouver.

Congratulations Sing! We are proud to have you on our team!



Sing Lim Yeo and wife, Patricia - Congrats to the both of you!

Acknowledgements

We take this opportunity to express our thanks to Mr. George Tan & his wife, Vena Ho and VSC President Ms. Violet Chan for their sponsorship on our latest project of VSC Membership Pins.

A brief introduction of George & Vena:

- George & Family Members are Permanent Residents of Canada.
- George & Vena ran a Notary Public practice in New Westminster, B.C.
- Due to national service requirements, the family has just returned to Singapore to fulfill their obligations.

The Vancouver Singapore Club Pin (currently on order) proudly features our current club logo with the distinctive maple leaf dotting the letter "i".

These pins will be presented to all Life Member and are available for purchase by General Members for a nominal sum of C\$5.00 each. Wearing these pins will further add to our pride and identity of being a Vancouver Singapore Club Member...a club we can truly call our own!!

We will provide an update as soon as the pins arrive. Stay tuned!!

Meanwhile, the President & Ex-Co hope that George & Vena had a pleasant flight home and wish them a Very Merry Christmas and a Joyous New Year 2013!



Baby Announcement

Zachary Ji-Yan Mok was introduced to this world on 19th November, 2012 with a weight of 12.5Lbs (5.586kg).



Melvin Mok and wife Li Zhao are the proud parents. Michael Mok, our VSC Ex-Co Director is Zach's proud Grand Uncle! Which makes Annie a Grand Aunt!

Objectives of Vancouver-Singapore Club

1. To promote opportunities for members to meet socially and organise cultural and recreational activities.
2. To serve as an informal source of information and advise on doing business, working and living in Vancouver to members and newly-arrived Singaporeans.
3. To organise informal meetings and exchange of views with eminent Singaporeans visiting Vancouver on subjects of general interest.
4. To carry out such other activities which promote the general welfare and interests of the members and the Club as determined by the Executive Committee in a manner which is consistent with the objectives stated above.



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