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First prepared in October 2006 by the Survival Research Institute of Canada (Debra Barr and Walter Meyer zu Erpen). Capitalization of any name or subject in the text below indicates that you will find an entry on that topic in the forthcoming third edition of Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits* (October 2007).

Adams, John (1949-)

Historian, public servant, author, raconteur of ghost stories and ghost tour guide. John Adams was born on 21 June 1949, in St. Thomas, Ontario. He completed his history degree (BA) at the University of British Columbia, and later a Master of Museology degree at the University of Toronto. For many years he worked for the British Columbia government in the heritage conservation field, retiring in 2004. For 25 years, Adams also taught museum studies as a sessional instructor at the University of Victoria.

Adams grew up in Victoria where his family lived across from the historic Ross Bay Cemetery. Interested initially in the cemetery as a source of historical information, he became the founding President of Victoria's Old Cemeteries Society. It inaugurated a program of Sunday tours to educate the public about the historical role of the cemetery, in an attempt to curb vandalism. During tours, local residents began to tell Adams about their ghostly encounters in the cemetery and elsewhere.

He now heads the society's annual Halloween Ghost Bus-tours®. Started in 1993, they have continued to increase in popularity, selling out every year. During one bus tour, while Adams was telling the story of the frequently encountered ghost of DORIS GRAVLIN, some participants spotted her spectre off in the distance at the Victoria Golf Course. In 2000, expanding upon the ghost bus tours, the Ghosts of Victoria Festival was initiated in collaboration with Tourism Victoria. Events are hosted at a number of historic sites.

In addition to his activities with the Old Cemeteries Society, Adams and his wife Donna now operate their own company, Discover the Past. It offers dinner ghost parties, ghostly and neighbourhood walks throughout the city, as well as school programs. Adams is the author of several publications, including a *Historic Guide to Ross Bay Cemetery* (1983) and *Ghosts and Legends of Bastion Square* (2001). He has appeared in the *Creepy Canada* TV series.

The Adams' home in Victoria is frequented by a friendly ghost, and John Adams has upon occasion sensed that presence. In other locations, he has been able to smell the scents associated with a ghost. Only recently did he see something

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that could not be explained by other means, that he attributes to a spirit presence. That experience caused Adams to recall a childhood incident in Ontario that had similar qualities.

In an interview with *Victoria News*, Adams offered his personal views on the subject. "People know the ghosts are there without actually seeing them," he said. "I remain sceptical, but I've heard so many people's accounts that are well documented. There are stories I've heard that are absolutely believable." Adams has his own theories to explain the phenomena. For example, he believes "energy fields" surround us all. "When we die, a form of that energy remains...Often it's undetected by many people. We see this energy, sometimes we can hear it, we can smell it, a strong scent of perfume or pipe tobacco. We can feel them, a cold feeling." He likens this energy to the personalities that people possess in life, which he speculates remain in the afterlife. "The majority of the stories are not about good or bad ghosts. They're just there."¹

Recently, Adams elaborated: "One of my missions as a collector and teller of ghost stories is to show people that it's normal to have a ghostly encounter, and that such an experience need not be frightening. Of course, many people are terrified by ghosts and some even enjoy the thrill of being scared. Inevitably I tend to tell my stories in an entertaining and dramatic way. However, I'm always conscious of the need to present and explain them in such a way that the listener will understand and appreciate the spirit world a little more regardless of their own beliefs."²

The research and compilation of local stories by individuals such as John Adams contributes a great deal to the study of ghosts and spirits.

Halloween Ghost Bus-tours® is a registered trademark.

Further Reading:

Adams, John. *Historic Guide to Ross Bay Cemetery*. Victoria, BC: Heritage Architectural Guides, 1983.

Adams, John. *Ghosts and Legends of Bastion Square*. Victoria, BC: Discover the Past, 2001.

¹Jeanine Soodeen, "He Seeks Dead People," *Victoria News*, 22 October 2004, p. C1.

²Email from John Adams to the authors, 30 October 2006.