

Tip of the Peninsula

Police seek suspicious male

SIDNEY — Police are asking the public for assistance in identifying a suspicious male who was observed in the area of Greenpark and Lands End Roads in North Saanich on the afternoon of January 9, 2015.

The male is described as Caucasian, in his 30s or 40s with brown hair. He was driving a red van (possibly an older Dodge Caravan).

This male is alleged to have inappropriately watched and whistled at an 11-year-old girl who had just disembarked from the school bus.

If you have any information on the identity of this male or the vehicle please contact the Sidney North Saanich RCMP at 250-656-3931 or CRIME STOPPERS at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). — Sidney North Saanich RCMP

Steamship of 1918 remembered at the Butchart Gardens

CENTRAL SAANICH — On January 24, 1918 at 10:30 a.m., Jennie Butchart broke a bottle of champagne across the bow of a ship christening her the War Yukon.



That act is part of the Butchart Gardens' annual historical display which opened this week.

The War Yukon is remembered with photographs along with the top portion of the champagne bottle moulded to a wooden replica of the G.H. Mumm bottle. The photographs not only show the ship prior to and during the launch, but also show the early days of Victoria's harbour. The ship was the first of several built by Cameron-Genoa Mills Shipbuilders, Ltd. at a yard at Point Ellice. The War Yukon was part of an ambitious plan by the British government's Imperial Munitions Board to build the number of ships required for the war effort.

Butchart Gardens' historical display run through March 15.

— Submitted by the Butchart Gardens

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Masterful pour

Michael Nicolson of Sidney brings 36 years at some of Scotland's best distilleries to this weekend's Victoria Whisky Festival

Steven Heywood
News staff

Whisky can be intimidating for the uninitiated, but Master Distiller Michael Nicolson has ways to help people overcome those feelings and jump right in to the deep end of Scotch whisky.

"I ask a group of people if there are any parents and then ask them if they've forgotten the smell of baby powder," Nicolson explains. "It's not there in front of them, but that's a smell no one forgets. Those same senses apply to pouring and tasting Scotch whisky."

Having spent 36 years at 18 different distilleries in Scotland, Nicolson retired to Sidney 11 years ago, holding the distinction of being named a master distiller. His last posting was at Royal Lochnagar, Scotland's smallest and arguably most exclusive distillery, being located right next door to Balmoral Castle, where Queen Elizabeth enjoys her summers.

He will be pouring Johnnie Walker whiskies on Saturday, Jan. 17 during the 10th annual Victoria Whisky Festival. Nicolson will discuss their range of whiskies, introduce people to their differences and explain why some are more expensive than others.

"It's centred around the tasting," he adds, "and I have a cheat-sheet for people who are tasting it for the first time."

Nicolson grew up around distilleries in Scotland, where his father and grandfather worked and made whisky. By age 19 and out of school, Nicolson found his first job as a lab-boy in the local distillery where his family worked. It was owned by Diageo, one of the largest players in alcoholic beverages in the world.

"A lab-boy washes things," he says. "He tends to the people who work in the labs."

His path to becoming a master distiller was not as straightforward as taking university courses or taking exams to earn a ticket. He spent a lifetime getting to know every aspect of distillery operations, working in a variety of disciplines and gaining experience.

His progression took him through the company's management program and as an assistant manager, found his way to Linkwood, a Speyside whisky distillery in Elgin, Scotland.



Steven Heywood/News staff

Master Distiller Michael Nicolson pours a sample of The Singleton of Glendullan, one of the Scotch whiskies he likes to keep on his shelf at home. Nicolson, who retired to Sidney 11 years ago, spent 36 years in Scotland, honing his craft as a distiller.

"In general terms, in those days if one applied themselves and really took an interest, you could graduate to become a distillery manager."

Nicolson says he got that chance, learning all he could from the people around him and applying this knowledge to the distilleries he went on to manage.

"You certainly can learn something from [books or computers] and the business certainly has changed," Nicolson says, "but some of the new managers today might not know what to do when a man breaks down your door [in a production emergency], carrying a shovel."

He says it's the people who make the difference in Scotch whisky and that's one of the main reasons for the differences in taste. Raw materials, equipment

and the process for making whisky is only the start, says Nicolson, it's the human judgments along the way that can set a whisky apart.

"And that's before the maturation process," he explains, adding that stage involves selecting the type of cask in which to mature the whisky.

Scotch whiskies must be matured in used casks, unlike American bourbon which require fresh, new casks each time.

"It's really an interactive vessel, between the whisky and the wood," he says, noting the influence of what was in the cask before can change the final product quite significantly.

PLEASE SEE:

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