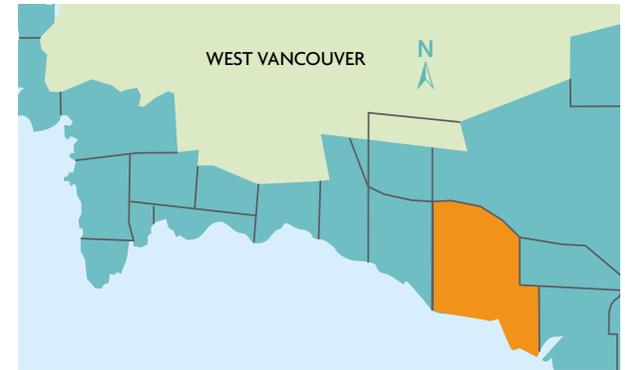# neighbourhoods

A weekly profile of 12 neighbourhoods that help form the North Shore.

› Ambleside

WEST VANCOUVER

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After a blistering weekend, the sun was not so visible Wednesday afternoon at Ambleside beach.

Instead, a dense grey collection of clouds created overcast conditions.

But that didn't deter the many residents out and about including 95-year-old Ken Richardson, who was joined by his five-year-old African grey parrot named Babe.

This is the second Babe in Richardson's life. His first parrot, with the same name, lived for 42 years. Richardson says he thought about naming his new friend Chip so "I've always got a Chip on my shoulder."

Originally from Scotland, Richardson moved to the North Shore in 1948. When told he doesn't look his age, he pulls out a well-folded piece of paper from his pocket. It's a letter from the mayor congratulating him on his 95th birthday. Proof. "Boy, I'm proud of it," he says of the letter.

He reports that he just got a clean bill of health from his

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Next week's neighbourhoods:

Seymour/ Maplewood

Ambleside still enjoys a long stretch of oceanside space perfect for swimming, strolling, and sun. PHOTO **CINDY GOODMAN**

Kinsmen Pool at Ambleside Park (top photo) was a popular neighbourhood attraction from 1954 to 1977 when it closed almost a year after the West Vancouver Aquatic Centre opened. PHOTO COURTESY OF **WEST VANCOUVER ARCHIVES**. The middle photo shows some of the commercial enterprise along Marine Drive. PHOTO **CINDY GOODMAN** Longtime resident Ken Richardson, 95, gets a "kiss" from his parrot Babe in the photo above. PHOTO **ROSALIND DUANE**

doctor, who told him he still has 10 good years left in him. "So I'm going to hold him to it," he says with a laugh.

While the sun wasn't shining, it was still quite warm and a good day for strolling, swimming, fishing, and other beach activities to which Ambleside is particularly suited.

Nestled between 22nd Street and West Vancouver's eastern boundary, Ambleside's other borders include the ocean at the bottom and the Upper Levels Highway up top.

It is considered West Vancouver's "downtown" with its main shopping centre running along Marine Drive, and artists row nestled in a short, oceanside stretch. The history of this neighbourhood is well traced in the book *Cottages to Community: The Story of West Vancouver's Neighbourhoods* by Francis Mansbridge, published by the West Vancouver Historical Society.

According to the book, one of the first European movements into the area was made in 1872. This was, of course, after Coast Salish First Nations had lived in the area for hundreds of years. Further settler occupation occurred, and the area experienced a few different names over the years, finally landing on Ambleside around 1912 (named after a town in England).

Cottages dotted the area, and transportation was key. Ferries served as a critical link to Vancouver for food and supplies. Earlier residents had rowed across on their own, which was sometimes a dangerous endeavour.

It also took a few tries to build a bridge over the Capilano River. After two earlier versions washed out in flooding, the introduction of the Cleveland Dam in 1954 helped with water regulation, and a new bridge was put in that lasted until its recent replacement.

Ambleside's original bus, circa 1913, held seven passengers. Much less than today's busy Blue Bus services.

The development of apartments along the lower edge of the neighbourhood was a planned re-zoning of 20 hectares by council in 1959 to allow for more multiple-family dwellings in an effort to increase population and tax revenue, noted the book.

Many of the buildings had distinctive styles, including the Villa Maris (built in 1965), also known as the "Pink Palace." It borrows its style from Miami resort life.

By 1965, most of the cottages had been removed from Ambleside's oceanfront and Ambleside beach was built using lots and lots of sand and gravel. The 1960s and '70s also saw the growth of commercial enterprise between 14th and 18th streets. An early landmark in the area was Hollyburn Theatre, which served as a social centre on Marine Drive from 1926 to 1958, and featured popular matinees and Friday night shows.

As time marches on, the face of Ambleside continues to change. The early 2000s brought strips of bright green as now well-used artificial turf fields dropped in along Marine Drive, and a planned block-long redevelopment project on the south side of the 1300-block continues the momentum. Revitalization is a current buzzword.

But on at least one muggy day this past week, it appeared as though the buzz, as it often is oceanside, was sun, surf and scenery.