

FRIENDS OF MOUNT DOUGLAS PARK

**Newsletter
November 2003**

SUCCESS!



CELIA ESMONDE

With great regret we report the death, on August 23, of our friend and supporter Celia Esmonde, after a long and gallant battle with cancer.

Celia was born in June of 1924 in London, England. She nursed at Guy's Hospital before coming to Canada and raising four children with her husband Rod. She was a member and supporter of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park from the inception of the Society, and for many years she and Jane Owen undertook to do all the telephoning for the group, an immense and valued service.

She asked that a bench be installed in the Park in memory of herself and her husband. It will stand at the summit of the Park, near the parking lot viewpoint.

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park will miss her.

Access to the South East Summit

This is the summit on which the radio mast stands. Last year we drew to the attention of the former Parks Manager, Dave DeShane, that the approaches from the top parking lot to this summit were becoming badly eroded, as well as non-negotiable by the less than able-bodied. At that time it was agreed (a) that some sort of stairway over the rocks and a path connecting it to the parking lot was required, and (b) that the badly worn trail across the plateau on that summit was in need of clearer definition and a more durable surface. Since then the basis for the path from the parking lot up to the stairs has been laid, but at the moment needs some further grading to make it safe.

This summer we met with two members of the municipality's staff to discuss further plans for the stairway, its precise location, and further design.

- It appears that current safety regulations ordain that it be rather more obtrusive in visual profile than we would prefer. Some sort of balustrade and retaining walls will be required.
- Also the Parks department is in favour of constructing a viewing area to serve as the terminus for the path across the summit plateau. It would command the view to the east. Here again, should it be constructed, our wish is that it should be low in profile. The other platform now at the top of the main summit is the sort of construction we would want avoided.

- Incidental to these modifications, furthermore, the base for the radio mast that was prematurely constructed before the latter was re-sited will be removed.

We expect to be presented with more detailed plans for the whole project fairly soon. Given that something along these lines will be put in place, our hope however is that they will offer a less visible option to visitors than that of taking the path up to the main summit. Otherwise further erosion becomes more likely.

Past ivy pulls

Our June Newsletter reported that last Good Friday about 140 young people from the Mormon Church took part in an ivy pull beside the Glendenning Trail in the Park. On May 28 another group of about 40 from that Church, this time adults, took over where the earlier group had left off. Like their juniors, they too made a considerable inroad into the infestation in that area.

New monthly ivy pulls

Over time we've all realized that we'll never control ivy in the Park (never mind eradicate it) unless we go after it on a regular basis. A couple of months ago, sparked by Andy Jeffs, a member of the Friends, a regular ivy-pull was initiated. The first pull took place on the first Sunday in September. Six volunteers turned out and a healthy pile of uprooted ivy was heaped up in an hour and a half. Volunteers turned out again in October and November.

And now, you're all invited to the December ivy-pull! It's on Sunday, December 7. We meet at 10:00 a.m. in the main parking lot (rain or shine!), and go on from there to a selected crop of ivy. Bring gloves and secateurs if you have them, and dress for the weather.

UVic campus development

The final version of UVic's plan has now been published. It announces itself as confirming, to quote the foreword, "UVic's commitment to promote sustainability in campus planning as the University grows," and further as "the culmination of much effort and a series of public consultation processes both in and off campus, which began in 1998". Resulting, however, from its experience during this process, the University has now established a committee of three chaired by Marsha Hanen, a former President

of the University of Windsor, to review the planning process it had adopted, and to make recommendations for ways to improve that process as the University continues to grow.

Our own concern throughout has mainly been with the impact that the projected increase in the student population will have on traffic to and from the University through areas such as that of the Park. The plan as it stands, however, is still too vague and unspecific to offer much assurance on this issue. What it proposes as actions to be taken consist of no more than

- consultations (with B.C. transit and on-campus user groups);
- completion of plans based on a 'Transportation Demand Study', and a 'Way Finding Study'.

No doubt these are all very necessary measures, but don't as yet amount exactly to concrete action of the radical kind that will be required.

Cordova Bay Road and Mount Douglas Park

As you may have noticed, the road through the park has been closed for a few months and is now scheduled to reopen in mid November. Despite this, motorists have still made their journeys and life has gone on. The downside has been the intolerable burden the diverted traffic has placed on the surrounding communities, particularly the residents along Blenkinsop Road and Mount Douglas Cross Roads. When the road opens again, it will have narrower lanes, good drainage, safe pedestrian walkways, crosswalks and bike lanes: all excellent and positive developments. There will be a new pump station to replace the last remaining septic tanks in Cordova Bay and the removal of the water from the cliffs will increase their stability—again, a positive result. But this time there is a sting in the tail.

With the new station comes the possibility of subdivision and development within the Urban Containment Boundary. The land assemblers are already here and we will see new subdivision plans in a matter of months rather than years. After that, the pressure will mount to shift the Urban Containment Boundary to the edge of Mount Douglas Park, which would create a parcel of serviced land similar in size to Sunnymead. At each stage, the main body of Cordova Bay will receive a new injection of traffic unless an alternative is put in place.

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At the other end of the Bay a similar process is taking place; the Cordova Bay streetscape plan has been used to transform the area around the school, Mattick's Farm and the golf course. The gravel pit is now scheduled to close in January 2004 and the area will then be open for further residential and limited commercial development, meaning more traffic along the road.

Fortunately, these sorts of issues have caught the attention of the Cordova Bay Association and it has sponsored a subcommittee to develop a plan of action for the remainder of Cordova Bay Road, using the streetscape guidelines adopted by Council in 2000 as the starting point. The first meeting attracted about 150 attendees and the overwhelming sentiment was to complete the job from Sayward to Royal Oak as quickly as possible before we are overtaken by events and the moment is lost. The committee coordinating this effort hopes to have a plan of action ready before the end of the year.

However, this summer has provided an important and jolting lesson for everyone and a chilling preview of the future. The intolerable increase in traffic on Blenkinsop and Mount Douglas Cross Roads will become the normal state of affairs, even with Cordova Bay Road open and functioning, if we do not take steps to curb the use of the car.

Storm water

The discerning reader of these newsletters will have noticed that this topic has been absent from the last few issues, mainly because we seem to have hit a wall. After trying several different means of consciousness-raising and trying to persuade the various technical and administrative groups to adopt new approaches to familiar problems, all with limited success, we are at a loss to know how to proceed. At such times, a summary sheet often helps, so here one for the Douglas Creek watershed.

During more than five years we have done the following:

- Supported the fish painting programs on drains;
 - Produced a stick-on-the-basement floor plastic fish as part of a flyer package to alert people to the problems produced when they pour hazardous wastes into their storm drain;
 - Installed and maintained a water quality monitoring site;
 - Partnered the downspout disconnection program in the watershed;
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