

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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- Presented public exhibitions and displays to encourage the public to think of new ways of treating the water supply.
- Generated publicity about pollution damage when there have been spills (latex paints, sewer pipe fractures, furnace oil leakage etc.)
- Lobbied for detention systems on new subdivisions

On the legal and technical front we have seen and supported the adoption of new regulations for identifying and cleaning up contaminated waste water both at the provincial level (based on the work of Peter Law in Nanaimo) and in the Capital Region based on the C.R.D. model by law. These are very slow steps in the right direction.

Examining our general lack of success, it is now clear that this topic, in contrast to air pollution, is not on the general public's radar screen.

For the immediate future, work will follow the path developed along Cecelia Creek, where small coordinated, voluntary actions are making significant improvements to quality of that water.

The progress that has been made came at a time when the general public faced major water restrictions. Now that the Sooke dam has been raised, water consumption is on the rise once again and so, with the increase in population, we have only created some temporary head room in the water supply system. It is safe to predict that the general public will have to face this issue again in the not too distant future and we should be ready.

One of the items that derailed the down spout disconnection program was the fear that it would cause widespread flooding in the event of a major storm. Well, we had that storm in October and the reports we have had to date show that the fear was unfounded. However, if you have disconnected your downspouts, either on your own or under the Saanich program, please let us know how the performed during the downpour. We will need all the rational data we can find if this type of effort is to succeed . Call 658-5873 and leave your message.

Plans for the shoreline

There are no new developments to report on this front since the summer: the consultants and engineers are still preparing proposals that would secure the toe of the cliff in its present location. These proposals will be based on the idea of using cells built from a variety of beach materials and anchored in the sand to prevent the sea from eating away at the cliff. When the cells are in place, the sea will lose much of its energy before it arrives at the toe of the cliff and, because the beach will be slightly higher, the sea will not reach the toe as often. There are a number of other significant benefits from this approach. Firstly, the engineers do not need to find outcrops of rock at either end to secure the structure. This means that it is not necessary to build the whole 700 metres between the end of the old rip rap and the nearest rock outside the park: smaller sections can be completed and tested before extending the protected area.

There are both economic and technical advantages to this approach—it does not require spending a million dollars in one shot and it gives the engineers the time to refine their design based on the real behaviour structure. For these reasons we are looking forward to seeing the designs later this fall.

However, developments over the summer have raised an unexpected but important question. The major factor preventing the opening of Cordova Bay Road on schedule has been the discovery of large quantities of rock under the blacktop, which had to be blasted out before the new roadbed could be put in place. The rock was within three metres of the surface but the bore hole method of estimating the rock content has produced a dramatic underestimate of what is actually there.

The reason this is important for the beach project lies in the fact that all the proposed work on the beach is being done to secure the road. The assumption up to now has been that the sediments below the surface are strong enough to support the road when it is dry, but lose their strength and start to slide in the wet. If these newly-discovered rock outcrops extend through the Park, then it is reasonable to assume that the engineers can create a stable road using them. If this is possible, then work on the beach becomes less critical.

But hope springs eternal, and there is a disused rock quarry close to the site of the latest slide. So, the first order of business when the advisory committee meets again, will be to ask for a fresh survey to make sure we do not overlook a much more elegant and cost-effective solution to the problems of securing the road for the travelling public.

The stream

It would be impossible to begin this section of the newsletter with anything but the major news—during the last week of October, a spawning salmon, the first in decades, returned to Douglas Creek! It's a male coho, estimated to be three or four years old. The first of many, we hope!

The Creek calendar

- 30 May 03 we met with Ron Carter from Saanich Parks and Rob Hagel from the Pacific Forestry Centre to discuss the custom propagation of native vegetation for use in restoration of Douglas Creek stream banks. For now the Society is going to supply seeds or cuttings to Rob and he is going to grow them on, for eventual planting along the Creek. A partner in this project is the Significant Tree Committee, and we will be planting, with the help of the community, on Significant Tree day in Saanich each year.

Seeds and cuttings that we have collected so far as below:

Date Collected	Common/Scientific Name	Number	Type
23-24 June 03	Indian Plum/ <i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i>	300	seed
29 June 03	Red Elderberry/ <i>Sambucus racemosa</i>	several hundred	seed
June-July 03	Salmonberry/ <i>Rubus spectabilis</i>	75	cuttings
16 August 03	Red-osier Dogwood/ <i>Cornus stolonifera</i>	600	seeds
16 August 03	Snowberry/ <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	200	seeds
21 September 03	Big leaf Maple/ <i>Acer macrophyllum</i>	350	seeds
21 September 03	Douglas maple/ <i>Acer glabrum</i>	approx. 200	seeds

Potentially we can expand this list to include other species and other propagule types.

If you walk in the Park regularly, this could be an interesting project for you. Not work so much as fun, especially if you like to grow things in your garden. Cuttings are easy. Or you could work as a volunteer at the Pacific Forestry Centre

on your own schedule —potting the seedlings growing from the seeds we've supplied. We'd like to have someone from the Society help out there, to be more certain of having the green house complex supplying the revegetation project.

- June 23 and 24 found us picking Indian Plum seeds adjacent to the Creek. On June 28 we set 4 minnow traps. We exhausted the supply of salmon roe we use to bait the traps, and substituted corned beef, the only thing we had handy. We saw several coho while we were setting the traps, estimated to be in the 70 to 80 mm nose-to-fork-length range. We also picked some Red Elderberry Seeds.
- On July 10 we met with the Significant Tree Committee in the picnic area of the Park to discuss plans for this year's Significant Tree Day and then toured areas that had been planted in previous years and areas we hope to plant in the future.
- On July 12 we had our first summer flush of the stormdrain system. July 13 we walked the Creek to look for dead coho fry and saw 7 dead coho fry in the 80 to 90 mm nose-to-fork-length range. They were all silver with no parr marks, nice looking fry.
- July 19 there was a spill of potable water and solvents/oil into the Creek. The Municipality could not say for certain how much polluted water actually went downstream because the pipe on Prairie and Kenmore leaked for some time before it actually burst. When the pipe burst, it filled several basements and a garage that happened to hold a parts washer containing 4 gallons of unidentified solvent and some buckets of oil. The garage drain carried the water/solvent/oil into the storm drain system and thence to the Creek. PEP was notified (I checked) but what the ramifications are I don't know. Someone suggested that we should go after insurance companies for damage to the Creek but we thought that the municipality might cover the flood damage for the homeowners, in which case we would end up asking ourselves to pay for the damage to the Creek.
- We walked the Creek July 20th but the indicator pools that usually hold dead fry were too turbid to let us see anything. Saanich placed oil absorbent booms at the weir to pick up any solvents that continued to leach through the system.
- And then, on July 27, yet another spill—this time sewage! Here is the letter that we sent to Saanich Mayor and Council at that time:

"About noon on Sunday, July 27, one hundred thousand litres of sewage spilled into Douglas Creek. The pumps at the Ash Road lift station stopped working

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and in the forty minutes that it took to restart the pumps the damage was done. The beach is still closed because of the ongoing impacts to the invertebrates on this still "wild" beach, and our coho fry are dead.

We do not criticize the long-suffering municipal crews that are routinely called upon to react to these traumatic events. We are, however, astounded that not one of the people who are truly responsible for an environmental catastrophe has stepped forward to propose some means of stopping the endless pollution that is routinely diverted into the municipality's streams, lakes and beaches.

There is no way that the overflow from the Ash Road lift station should be allowed to be directed into Douglas Creek. Anyone living around the new lift station proposed to be built on Cordova Bay Road would be wise to ask what will place the effluent from *that* one will be diverted to.

At the recent low impact development conference in Victoria, we saw—and Saanich municipality should have seen—how modern progressive communities commit themselves to pollution abatement, and how many tools are available to do it. What we haven't seen is the commitment to bring that ethos to this municipality. It is past time to mandate rigorous septic and stormwater treatment and to stop diverting sanitary sewers and storm water into the environment.

This is our home, and natural areas like Douglas Creek are our environmental report cards. Why does Saanich Council still not mind getting a failing grade?"

As it turns out it was actually 130,000 litres of sewage that was spilled. We received a candid letter from the Municipal engineer in response to our letter to Mayor and Councillors. He listed the several lift stations that are constructed to spill into the environment when the pump station fails. He feels he has very few options, since building containment for the sewage overflow could be very pricey—a large containment is the only option that has been discussed openly.

My own view is that the taxpayers in our watershed have been taken for a ride—we have assumed that we have an infrastructure that complies with Environmental and Fisheries laws when nothing could be further from the truth. Every time it rains on this watershed we are getting a Fisheries violation and the sewage spill is clearly out of compliance in several jurisdictions.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is investigating this whole episode. We haven't heard any results yet.

It's not just about the fish. Anything downstream of the faeces/urine/ household toxic chemical slurry is probably dead. The clean water flowing in from upstream will clean the channel and most of the invertebrate population will rebound (although it could take a very long time and some species will probably be gone for good) but there is a long-term impact on the environment. If you head up-Island and walk the beaches there at low tide, you see an ecosystem stocked to take advantage of every viable niche—and there are plenty. When you walk the same type of beach down here what you find in the mid- and higher intertidal zones are only organisms that are pollution-tolerant. The same doleful story is repeated over and over again in the South Island aquatic ecosystems: only the toughest organisms and simplest ecosystems can survive the punishment we are throwing at them.

Be aware that these are the indicators of the health of the territory that we share with them.

- On August 16 we collected Red-osier dogwood and snowberry seeds. On August 30 we seed the minnow traps – used a bit of smoked salmon in each one for bait – and picked them up the following day. Didn't see any fish. Again doesn't mean there aren't any. Using different bait obscures results in an already hazy picture. Fortunately the kind folks at Neptune Seafoods on Fort Street have donated enough salmon roe to keep our traps baited for some time. Next time I am downtown and want a bit of seafood I am going to stop in there.
 - September 18: Charlotte Holtan from Gordon Head Elementary reports:
“We did take some classes to Mount Douglas beach to participate in the Canadian Shoreline Clean Up on Thursday, Sept. 18. As always, the kids get so much out of this activity. They always start out thinking it won't be much of a field trip but at the end of the day they realize it is so much more than just picking up garbage.”
“Four classes walked to Mt. Doug: Mrs. Holtan (Grade 3), Mrs. Gedney (Grades 2/3), Mrs. Walter (Grade 4) and Mr. O'Connor (Grade 4). We spent the morning gathering up the “marine debris” and the kids were amazed at how much they found even though at first so many said, “The beach is already clean. There's no garbage here!” But in the end we collected about 54 pounds of garbage! Actually, the beach was the cleanest I have seen it since starting this annual event 5 years ago. It was all taken back to the school where the kids helped to sort, weigh and count each item. Our total count was: 1,643 items.”
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"We sent our data sheet to the Science Centre in Vancouver, where they will collate our results with the results from across Canada. The kids could see that so many different items make up the garbage that threatens our oceans and the life in and around them. We found . . . glass, plastic, Styrofoam, metal, cloth, wood. Everyone felt proud of our effort. It was a good day."

- On September 26 John Lee, Jason Clark and Dan Fong of Saanich's arboriculture crew felled 4 standing dead trees into the Creek. For now we can leave the trees where they fell; if they need to be moved for greater advantage to the habitat, that can happen during the fisheries window next summer.
- On 28 September 2003 15 friends of the Park walked the length of Douglas Creek and picked up the litter in the channel and in the riparian zone. We started at 10:00 a.m. and were on the beach by noon. Estimate that we picked up two 205-litre barrels of trash, one broken chair, and one chesterfield. It was a beautiful day and the walk down the Creek was considered outstanding by all of the participants. Thanks to all.
- November 2 was Significant Tree Day. Larry Anderson from Saanich Parks organized the planters. The day was overcast and cool with a light frost in the morning, perfect weather for planting. We planted along the Creek banks so the roots of the growing plants will help keep the banks together in the unnaturally high flows that occur from time to time. This year was the most successful planting to date. We are fortunate in having Rob Hagel from the Pacific Forestry Centre to provide us with very good planting stock, some of it custom grown for Douglas Creek. Hope you will join us next year.

Volunteers

Teal Moffet and Matthew Shumaker, both students at Royal Roads University; Stuart Fraser, Herb Reid, and Mat Ewald from the Boys and Girls Club of Victoria; John Block, Diana and Riley Nicholson; Joyce, Julie and Avery Paul; Bob, Kristi, Laura and Robyn Bridgeman

Planters

Bobby Miller, Jamie Reichmann, Adam Splawski, Reyhana Heatherton, Becky Prince, Sean Connie from the Lambrick Park Leadership/Lifelong Activities Class; Sen and Vifeng Wang; Melanie, Laura and Dennis Gold, Sara and Laura Chambers, Maura and Adriane Dewey, Leigh-Anne Soles, and Claire Lawrence from the 32nd Victoria Guides; Bob, Kristi, Laura and Robyn Bridgeman and Riley Nicholson; Thomas Munson, Sara Munson-Rodriguez, Anastasia Munson-Rodriguez and Pilar Rodriguez-Comez; Ron Carter from Saanich Parks; Mary Michel, April and Giuseppe Bucco Liero and Phil, Jittiya, Kate and Teresa Dearden.

Loose ends

- We would like to maintain the hydrometric station in the Creek, at a bare bones cost of \$600.00 a year. Any suggestions where the money could come from?
- The first report from the Royal Roads students is a dandy.—exactly the information we requested, how and where to treat stormwater on this watershed
- Finally, we are working on a public education program based on the Stream of Dreams model. This model is being used in the lower mainland with a great deal of public interest. Thanks to Saanich Parks we have funding of \$3000 for a pilot project, thanks to Saanich Parks. For details, check out the Stream of Dreams website: www.streamofdreams.net.

What to do about broom - three views

1. Lovers

Let it run riot, if it wants to. In the spring it lends a pleasing splash of colour to the hillside. It is a habitat for birds, and it protects against erosion by stabilising the soil and discouraging walkers from straying off trails. Some proof of the latter can be seen in the result of some recent broom cutting on the south east side of Mt. Douglas which has led to some extensive trail-braiding and erosion of soil. Why condemn it as an invasive species? Most of the species that are now called indigenous have invaded from somewhere.

2. Haters

It is a pest. That uniform splash of yellow over the hillside is aesthetically palling. . Also in the spring it suppresses many species of flower that are of incomparable aesthetic value. Let us therefore get rid of as much of it as we can.

3. Controllers

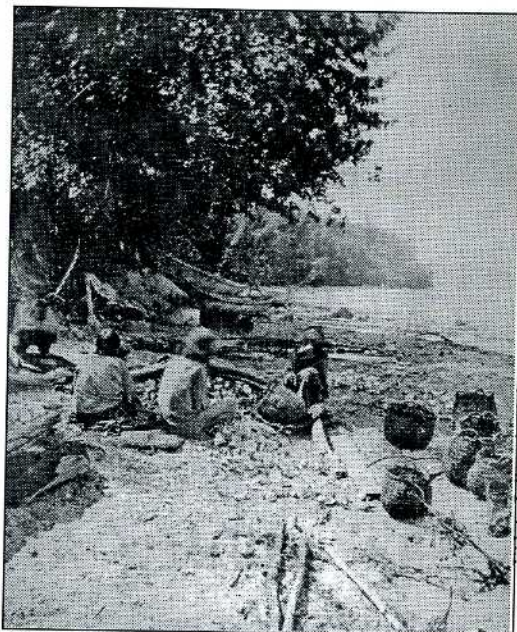
Some broom on the hillside is of ecological value. Yes, it does provide habitat for birds and protection against hillside erosion. In moderation, too, it can contribute in a pleasing way to the variety of colour on the hillside during spring. In any case the task of eliminating it entirely now seems impracticable. Hence efforts to remove it should be limited to preventing it from destroying the habitat of native forms of vegetation, in particular the spring flowers.

A glimpse of history

Here's a copy of a letter from the Royal British Columbia Museum, sent to us from Stacie Harder of 1210 Hillside Ave.

"There is not much information on the shellmidden site at the mouth of Douglas Creek. This site - DcRt 11 - extends along the beach for a distance of about 180 meters and extends inland up to 30 meters. It has been observed to be at least 30 cm deep in some areas. A very basic site record exists for this site but no further archaeological work has been undertaken here.

In our collection we only have a sandstone abrader (likely used for shaping and sharpening bone or slate tools) a stone core from which flakes have been removed, and a few water worn flaked stone objects. A private collector has a perforated stone that was likely used as a net weight.



There are no historic records of aboriginal peoples using this location. One of the rare photographs showing economic activities of First Nations in this region appears to have been taken on the beach below this site. The people, shown steaming clams on the beach, are likely travellers camped at the location and not local Songhees First Nations. The location is just inside the territory of the family group called the Chekonein who were signers of one of the 1850 Douglas treaties. This location would have been excellent for gathering large butter clams, cockles and native little necks and as a fishing site. The forest back of most of Cordova Bay was one of the better localities for obtaining the large cedar trees for canoes and house posts.

Like all sites in the area, this one contains important information about the history of local First Nations. I would certainly encourage any activity that stops or slows down the erosion of this midden.

Sincerely, Grant Keddie, Curator of Archaeology."

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Historian: Pam Lewis

Membership

Please check the label on the cover of this newsletter; if it reads '02 or earlier, your renewal time has come. We hope you will continue to support the work of the Society for another year by sending \$5 for each one-year membership to the address below.

Name: _____

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