



FRIENDS OF BEACON HILL PARK SOCIETY

February 2002

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The *Friends of Beacon Hill Park* is a Society dedicated to preserving the natural and cultural history of Beacon Hill Park and promoting appropriate uses in keeping with its varied ecosystems.

As the population of Greater Victoria continues to grow and place greater stress upon the park, we count on your support to help us continue our projects and work to help protect the park.

Membership is \$5.00 per household. Benefits include the satisfaction of helping preserve the park, input in management of the park for the future use of all, and participating in the Society's activities:

- monitor and keep abreast of park developments
- contribute to the newsletter and share information on the park
- work on projects such as Native Plant Mapping
- guided walks
- organizational - phoning, programme, refreshments, newsletter

You are welcome to attend the monthly meetings of the directors. Please call for date and location.

Emily's Backyard

Emily Carr exhibit is showing at the Royal British Columbia Museum until April 7, 2002

We would like to thank Janet McDonald for inviting Friends to the museum January 19th and 20th, 2002 to a display "Then & Now". Beacon Hill Park was Emily's Backyard since she was born December 13th, 1871 in Victoria at her family home on Government Street. Emily Carr's four-acre family estate backed onto Beacon Hill Park. (Douglas Street did not exist until parkland was cut away in 1912.) Young Emily often spent summer days feeding her love of nature with rambles through the woods and excursions to the shore. Emily would often picnic with her mother in the park until her mother's death 1886.

"The world looks round and small and complete from the top of Beacon Hill, like a toy world with no beyond. The sky fits over the top with beautiful patterned clouds. Sometimes they lid down very low. All around on every side are purple hills or snow-capped mountains on the other side of the straits. You forget all about Asia and Europe and Africa and the rest, and the wars and famines and earthquakes." Emily Carr, (Hundreds and Thousands, 1966)

She attended Victoria High School (a Principal, Ira Dilworth, became one of her estate's trustees upon her death in 1945). Emily Carr studied art and traveled abroad in Europe and along the West Coast. She taught art classes in Vancouver, but in 1913 decided to give up teaching and come back to Victoria and Beacon Hill Park. Emily became impoverished and found ways to make a living by operating a boarding house and breeding farm dogs, chickens and rabbits. The house was designed so that from her upstairs studio, Emily could look out over Beacon Hill Park. Emily's walks in the park resumed and she also frequently sketched in the park.

Her tenant Kate Mather, asked her to make clay objects for sale in her shops. Emily dug the clay from the nearby cliffs of Beacon Hill Park, carrying it home to Simcoe Street in her wicker pram. Emily ground the clay, ran it through a sieve, mixed it with a little fine sand then kneaded it out with a rolling pin. She made a number of objects from bowls and bells to candle sticks and plates. Miniature totem poles, boxes and ashtrays were also popular items. By constructing her own crude kiln she was able to fire them in her own backyard. Often she had all night vigils to make sure she didn't set the neighbourhood on fire.

Emily Carr (Continued from front page)

The firing took 12 to 14 hours and of it, Emily said, "every moment was agony, suspense, sweat!" After a day of cooling Emily mixed enamel paint with sand to dull the gloss, then the pottery was painted.

Her pottery, signed Klee Wyck (the name given to her by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth people) and a reverse question mark, sold steadily at shops in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Calgary and Banff as well as in Victoria and Vancouver. In 1930 Klee Wyck pottery won first prize in the CPR Handicraft Festival in Calgary. In 1928, the Director of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, asked her to exhibit and Emily was back on track as an artist.

Her health failed at the time her artistic ability was blooming. Emily Carr could not make burdensome journeys to the wilderness of the Province and found refuge in her "backyard" at Beacon Hill Park. Young boys would find her sketching in the park and retrieve her discarded sketches and made paper airplanes from them. Soon, all the subjects for her paintings and sketches came from Beacon Hill Park.

"I'm a lucky devil to live near that wildness because it gets increasingly difficult to urge myself to the effort of setting forth on longer journeys for material. Weariness and rheumatic joints try to down me and I have to flog my spirits to rise and fly over them." Emily Carr (Hundreds and Thousands, 1966)

How fortunate that this natural area existed in the city to help her recall the wilderness. Even when she could no longer walk to the park, her need to be in nature remained, and she would ask to be taken to the park in her wheel chair and left to enjoy the peace.

In 1942, when Emily must have felt that her life was nearing its end, she entrusted Beacon Hill Park with the mementos of her life. When her friend, Carol Pearson was visiting, Emily asked Carol to pack into several boxes; a pair of men's gold cufflinks, books of poetry, small dog collars, faded pictures, letters and numerous other items. Carol was then instructed to bury these boxes in the park. They were never recov-

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Illustration by Gordon Freisen

The Elm Invasion of Beacon Hill Park

by T. Christopher Brayshaw

Before 1970, the seaward slopes in the southwest corner of Beacon Hill Park, near the south end of Douglas Street, bore a largely grassy vegetation cover with some Broom and Snowberry.

This grassy slope supported populations of colourful flowering plants. I recall many years ago finding Camass (Camassia quamash), Death-camass (Zygadenus venenosus), Bare-stem Desert-parsely (Lomatium nudicaule) and Chickweed Monkey-flower (Mimulus alsinoides) on these slopes.

Since about 1970, these slopes have undergone a steady change in character. Not only have native shrubs, such as Nootka Rose (*Rosa nutkana*) and Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) risen to dominance; but the introduced English Elm (*Ulmus pro-cera*) has invaded the site, started no doubt from trees planted along Dallas Road. A second, smaller elm thicket is growing on the banks opposite the south end of Cook Street.

This weedy tree is noted for its ability to tolerate the impact on its foliage of salt spray, wind-borne off the sea; but also for its tendency to spread by suckering from its extensive shallow root system, to form expanding thickets.

From its Douglas Street starting point this elm invasion has spread eastward, partly by seed and partly by suckers, until, after thirty years of unrestrained growth, its leading fringe has now reached Finlayson Point. In a westward direction, the spreading has been slower; and the invasion has extended only about a hundred meters.

The eventual effect of this invasion, already partly attained, will be a belt of elm forest occupying this slope, and the closing off of the view of the sea from the park area behind.

It would be desirable to eliminate this weed-tree infestation; which appears to be out of control at present. But how can that be achieved?

An effective central strategy is to starve the root

system until it can no longer support the Spring growth of suckers.

The nutrient reserves in the root system follow an annual cycle.

In Spring, the reserves are drawn upon to support the growth of trees, suckers, and their branches and foliage. Water and nutrients from the roots are transported upward via the woody cylinder in each growing stem; thus depleting the roots' reserves.



Dallas Road Cliffs by Douglas Street photo comparison in 1970's (above) and 1990's (below) courtesy of Mrs. May Porter



The Elm Invasion of Beacon Hill Park

(Concluded from page 3)

There is thus a time, between Spring and Summer, when the roots' reserves are depleted to their annual minimum level. This time, if it can be identified precisely, will be the optimum time to cut off the downward flow of nutrients, in order to starve the roots.

Means to fight this invasion could include: (a) cutting of all elm stems down to ground level, (b) girdling, but not cutting the girdled stems, (c) brush-control spraying, and (d) controlled burning.

- (a) Simply cutting the trees and suckers will stimulate the roots to produce new growth with their available reserves; and will have to be repeated probably many times over a period of years, before the roots die.
- (b) A combination of girdling and leaving standing all stems large enough to be treated this way, while cutting of all stems that are too fine to girdle, would go furthest toward depleting the reserves in the roots.
- (c) Brush-control spraying with herbicides should be effective if the 'right' chemical is chosen. This may be the least labour-demanding, and therefore the most cost-

effective, method. However, it could meet with public objection.

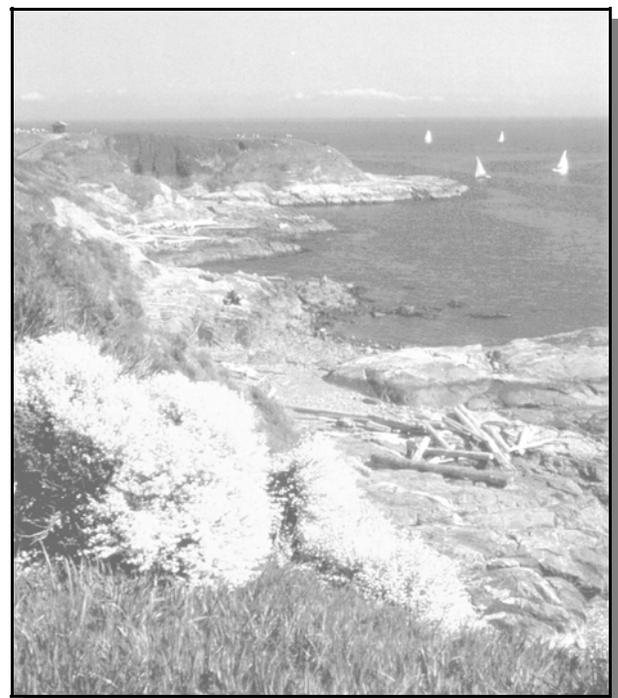
- (d) Controlled burning could, I believe, be used to duplicate the mechanism and ultimate effect of girdling and cutting. However, it would be labour-intensive since the Fire Service would have to be involved to control it; and so would be costly. It also could cause alarm in the nearby residential neighbourhood. I therefore feel that this method would be unsuitable for use here, in an urban environment.

Whatever control methods are chosen, they will be labour-intensive, and therefore costly; and possibly unacceptable to nearby residents in the case of brush-control spraying or controlled burning; and they will probably have to be repeated at least once.

Meanwhile, during the year or two or three that the process takes to achieve its objective, the area will look very unsightly by reason of the large patches of dead and dying suckers and foliage. This could draw local criticism; but such is the price of doing nothing for thirty years. ❖



Photo of English Elm foot of Douglas Street and prior comparison courtesy from Dr. T. C. Brayshaw



To the Editor: Dear Sir/Madam

January 30th, 2002

Despite its best efforts and over one hundred hours of meetings, the Environment Sector, along with the Community Sector, was unable to give consensus at the Round Table on Beacon Hill Park.

To: Mayor Alan Lowe and Victoria City Council

From: Environment Sector, Beacon Hill Park Round Table

The consensus process would, perhaps, be of some use in the creation of a NEW park. However, Beacon Hill Park has been in existence for more than a century and has particular governances in place to protect it, on behalf of all the people, from the self-interest of the few.

The Environment Sector has participated in the consultative process conducted by Accord Canada and AXYS Consultants as requested by the City of Victoria.

The Round Table, by oversight or design, never examined these governances or the history of Beacon Hill Park and similar parks of its era so that it could come to a clear understanding of what is permissible in the Park according to the Trust, two Supreme Court Rulings and current environmental principles.

You will appreciate that the Environment Sector represents particular and general concerns for the maintenance and well-being of Beacon Hill Park. As such, we were unable to unilaterally endorse in its entirety the document cobbled together by the Round Table. In fact, for some, the mere hint of utilizing the park in some of the ways suggested by the Round Table is considered unacceptable.

The term 'commercialism' insinuated itself into the discussions (rather than the more apt phrase 'profit and utility') to the extent that it became the *raison d'être* for the discussion and skewed the tenor of the meetings. Commercialism (profit and utility) and all its trappings clearly are not permitted in Beacon Hill Park and should not have played such a pivotal role in the Round Table discussions. Indeed the Downtown Coordinator Director in a letter dated September 7th, 1999, to the Victoria International Running Society RE: Times Colonist 10 K Run stated *appropo* Justice Wilson's Ruling being upheld, "...the City must obey the Court and would not permit any commercial activity as part of an event held in Beacon Hill Park."

In November 2001, we were optimistic that some of our concerns regarding the wording of the Round Table recommendations might be alleviated. By December 2001, this seemed unlikely, and we offered to withdraw from the round table. Our offer was rejected and we remained. The remark made by the City Sector representative that, should consensus not be reached, the City might seek to be relieved of the Trust by the new Provincial Government did not make our decision an easy one.

It can only be thought that such emphasis was given to achieving consensus on commercialism so that the judgments of the past forever would be eclipsed by an inaccurate sort of 'people's consensus document'.

It is our position that policy can be nothing more than just policy and that any activity authorized or permitted to occur in the park must fall within the parameters of allowable uses as established in law and contemporary environmental practices. We trust the foregoing is regarded in a positive fashion and advanced not with a view to complicating matters, but rather to ensure the integrity of the Trust, the continued utilization of the park in the fashion it prescribes, and the desire of the informed citizens of Victoria as reflected in the AXYS survey.

Yours most truly,
J. Goldman

Should you require a more comprehensive explanation of our reason for not reaching consensus, please do not hesitate to contact the parties listed below.

Ed. Note: See relevant notice on back page of this newsletter ❖

Correspondence

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We look forward to continuing collaboration with you regarding Beacon Hill Park.

Yours most truly,
Helen Oldershaw
Roy Fletcher
J. Goldman
Chair, Environment Sector,
Beacon Hill Park Round Table

Allaying Fears

For those who saw the Times Colonist editorial regarding the province's intent to deed parkland and roads to local municipalities, and drawing on these concerns for Beacon Hill Park, a request to our local MLA for an inquiry provided us with this reassuring memo:

"I checked with Minister Nebbling, Minister Responsible for the Community Charter. Any changes to the Local Government Act will NOT affect Beacon Hill Park, as it is governed under a Trust. Therefore, nothing we are doing provincially will impact Beacon Hill Park.

Thank you for your query, and you can also call me at the legislature 356-6775 if you have any additional questions.

Jeff Bray
MLA Victoria-Beacon Hill"

The Romantic Tree by Fiona Hyslop

The story that has come down through our family concerns my maternal grandparents who were both born in Victoria.

My grandmother Rose Ellen (Nellie) Todd used to drive her dog cart, pulled by a black gelding Joe. On this particular day in 1905 she had as passenger Alexander Gillespie. It was while driving through Beacon Hill Park (I think along 'lovers' lane) that Al proposed to Nellie. They were married in Decem-



ber of 1906, spent part of their honeymoon camping in Sooke, and lived in Victoria for the rest of their lives – my grandfather dying in 1948 and my grandmother dying in 1980. As children during the war years, my brothers and I would tease our grandparents about the romantic tree in Beacon Hill Park under which the proposal was supposed to have taken place!

Keep up your good work with the Park. For all these projects it is so important to be vigilant!

Thank you Fiona Hyslop and brothers Malcolm & David Anderson MP, for your love of the Park, and your whole family's commitment to what we hold dear in Victoria and the Environment.

Beacon Hill Park provides many of us with a strong personal as well as historical bond. Please feel free to submit your favourite memories of the park. ❖

FBHP Charitable Status

First the good news, it's official, we now have charitable status as a society. This means that we can give you a tax receipt for any money you give to us over the \$5.00 yearly membership fee. This took effect on September 27, 2001 so some of you will be receiving a tax receipt with this newsletter if your cheque was dated after this date. Thank you in advance for your contributions. Keep them coming.

Now as to yearly membership fees, we confused you last time. We put little green inserts in with the newsletter. They were suppose to only go into the envelopes of those who hadn't paid up this year, but everyone got one. So in the mix up, thirteen people paid their 2002 membership fees in advance. Membership fees are not due until the Annual General Meeting. No big problem. Any dues we get from now on will be applied to the 2002-year. So if you are not sure if you are up-to-date with your membership fees, look for that red dot on your address label. That means we'd really appreciate your \$5.00. This barely covers the cost of producing and mailing our quarterly newsletter, which I'm sure you'll agree is worth it.

Agnes Lynn—Membership Director

The Christmas Bird Count and Beacon Hill Park

Written by Agnes Lynn with input from Tom Gillespie, Beacon Hill Area Coordinator for the Christmas Bird Count

Each year in mid-December, the Victoria Natural History Society does a massive Christmas Bird Count covering all of Greater Victoria. Beacon Hill Park is an excellent area for birding this time of year. The usual count is about 50 different species of birds. The following is a summary of what you might find.

The particular day of the count was very windy so they didn't note as many off-shore birds as usual. Normally, you might see lots of loons, cormorants, grebes and similar birds. Right now if you went down to Clover Point, you'd see the very colourful harlequin ducks and also a large number of common golden eyes. For other water birds, go to the ponds near the petting zoo. There you will find lots of mallards, also, many American widgeons. If you search through the widgeons, you might find a few Eurasian ones. They are with the red heads. Of course, you'll see lots of gulls. Most are the common glaucous-winged gulls but there are, also, many mew gulls. These are smaller and they really do "mew".

There are only a few herons near the herons' nests along Douglas Street right now. Who knows where they go. We are pretty sure the eagles are still out at Goldstream gorging on the salmon. If you want to see raptors, check out the area under the bald eagle's nest near the Band Shell or stop by Mayor's Grove. The Cooper's hawks should be nesting there soon so don't be surprised to see them around there. The park has a number of woodpeckers, mostly downies. The oak trees attract the flickers. I love the way they fly in big swooping motions. It's too urban to attract the Stellar jays even with so many oak trees. Likewise, we only get crows and not ravens who need the big timber trees which are gone from the park.

In the wooded areas, there will be lots of chickadees, nuthatches, bushtits and wrens. The wrens are the ones with the upturned tails. I hear a lot more wrens than I see. If you see small birds high in the trees, they are probably pine siskins or golden-crowned kinglets. Apparently the ruby-crowned kinglets will be lower down but the confusing thing is that their

ruby crown disappears in winter. You'll find lots of juncos foraging around on the ground. You can always tell a junco by the white tail as he flies away. The rather rare hermit thrush can also be found in the park. Other little fellows to watch for which are about robin size are the varied thrush who looks very similar to a robin and the spotted towhee that is quite vocal. Hopefully the starlings are busy eating grubs out of the lawns. The most common sparrows are the dark chocolate fox sparrow and the song sparrow that lives up to his name. Of course we get house sparrows begging for food from the cars.

I hope this gives you an idea of how rich an avian population we have in the park. If the birds aren't familiar to you, pick up a bird field guide or join us at the Victoria Natural History Society Birder's Night, which is the 4th Wednesday every month in the Law Building at UVic, Room 159 at 7:30 pm. If you want to enjoy a Bird Walk in the Park, join Tom Gillespie on Camas Day. ❖

Ours Forever

Recognition of Beacon Hill Park's beauty and the need to protect such a special environment was evident in the recent TLC (The Land Conservancy) OURS FOREVER brochure that pictures Beacon Hill, the cliffs, Juan de Fuca and Olympic Mountains on page 1. We welcome the support for the park from all the environmental organizations. ❖

Trampled Grasslands

"The herbaceous layer of Garry oak grasslands and woodlands is far more degraded and vulnerable than the trees themselves. In recent years, the populations of ... two camas species...in this celebrated aboriginal food gathering area along Dallas Road in Victoria's Beacon Hill Park, have declined markedly due to many big dogs off-leash."

Excerpt from Menziesia the Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of B.C., written by Gordon Brent Ingram .

Announcements

Annual General Meeting

AGM - The Annual General Meeting will be held at the South Community Police Station at 165 Cook Street, on Sunday May 26th, 2002 from 2 to 4 in the afternoon. Please lend your support by attending. An amendment to the bylaws will be: "No elected official of the City of Victoria nor employee of the City of Victoria shall sit on the Board of the Friends of Beacon Hill Park." ❖

Garage Sale

Garage Sale - Saturday, May 25th, 2002 starting at 8:00 am at 25 Cook Street. The phoning committee chair, Dr. Renate Varwig, will be contacting members for a garage sale fundraiser again this year. You can drop off your donations a week before the sale at the garage of 25 Cook Street. ❖

Friends Board of Directors

Helen Oldershaw – chair
Roy Fletcher – treasurer
Cornelia Lange – secretary
Agnes Lynn – membership committee chair
Dr. Renata Varwig – phoning committee chair
Dr. T. Chris Brayshaw – botany specialist/ honorary director

Many thanks to our members who support the preservation of Beacon Hill Park with your \$5.00 annual membership fee. Please invite your friends to join. We are committed to send quarterly newsletters communicating on a variety of issues and information on the Park.

If you have a red dot on your mailing label, this means that we haven't received your annual \$5.00 membership. Your monetary contribution helps with postage and other expenses. A special "Thank you" to those who sent in donations. ❖

Websites

Website links to conservation groups:

www.conservationconnection.bc.ca

Camas Day

Camas Day - Saturday May 4th, 2002 meet us at the flagpole on top of Beacon Hill. in conjunction with the Natural History Society. Early bird walks start at 9:00 with historical and wildflower walks at 11:00 and 1:00. ❖

Correction

Dr. Cannings name was mistyped. Our apologies. Rob Cannings, PhD, Curator of Entomology, Royal BC Museum was speaking on the Natural History of Dragon Flies.

Round Table on Beacon Hill Park

The Round Table Document is to be submitted to Committee of the Whole for the City of Victoria on February 21 at 9:00am. The document is to be presented to the City Council February 28 at 7:00pm

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Website www.friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca

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ered and so, a part of Emily still remains in the park that she loved.

Beacon Hill Park houses a more tangible tribute to Emily Carr. After Emily's death in 1945, her sister, Alice, had a bridge erected in the park in Emily's memory. Find the pebble bridge spanning the stream between Goodacre and Fountain Lake, and remember our great artist and her love of "that wildness".

Recently, a painting titled, "Beacon Hill Park" fetched the highest price from all her paintings. Many of her paintings are scenes from along the shore of Beacon Hill Park. Our hope is that the park will survive time and retain the inspiration of the land with all its natural beauty and the sea that touched Emily Carr's life. ❖