

VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAIN RAMBLERS

P.O. Box 691, Nanaimo, British Columbia



THOSE OLD ALPINE TREES WOULD BE
HAPPIER IF YOU LEFT YOUR AXE AT HOME!

REMEMBER!! TAKE "CARE" - MEANING
CAUTION AND RESPECT
FOR ENVIRONMENT

"TIMBERLINE TALES".....
oooooooooooo

....October 1973

Ignorant Hikers Spoil Camp Site

Around 4,500 feet where the marked Rogers Ridge trail ends is a little plateau with many small lakes and ponds and grassy meadows. Beside one of the lakes was a campsite, where we found the following items: three or four large plastic sheets, tin cans, frying pan, soup and other packages all over the place, booze bottle, ropes, two fireplaces 30 feet apart, piles of branches used for bough beds, piles of branches thrown into the lake, and on the hill adjacent to camp huge chunks of bark peeled off evergreen trees, some all the way around the trunk. (It was not a trail blaze).

We know that anybody with the slightest understanding or love for the outdoors would not do things like this, but there are an ever-increasing number of people going into the alpine areas for recreation and some just don't know any better. For this reason I would like to point out the seriousness of the above listed damages, especially in alpine areas.

Garbage: It accumulates and it is ugly, so please carry your own garbage out, including tin cans. If you had the energy to carry it up full, surely you can take it down empty.

Plastic sheets: These do not rot so will be there for generations. The next guy will have his own, snow and wind will tear it to pieces if left exposed, or it will turn brittle and will be unusable, so please don't leave it behind.

Fireplaces: If there is one already don't start another

one. Because of the short growing season in alpine elevations a fireplace does not grow over for many years. Some will take generations.

Bough beds: These and shelters made of branches are one of the greatest causes of damage done by "woodsmen." Remember at alpine elevations the growing season is very short. You may cut 50 years of growth for one night's sleep and it makes an ugly mess.

Throwing things into alpine lakes (including branches): These lakes are under snow and ice most of the year. Garbage will be well preserved by the cold water for many years.

Peeling off bark: We could not reason this one out. Those trees will die.

This is a long letter, but I had to list these things because we see the same type of damage in all alpine areas that have a trail going to them and it is done by people who don't realize how fragile alpine areas are and how slow nature is to repair our damage.

Those who must practise their "woodsmen's" or survival skills with the aid of an axe (an axe is seldom available in survival situations) please don't do it at 4,500 feet elevation. Do it at sea level where the trees grow faster and the trees will be cut down in any case.

By the way, the wild lupins are out and worth seeing on Mt. Lupin and Rogers Ridge.

PAL HORVATH,
Campbell River.

With "Timberline Tales" now a quarterly publication, we are seeking information to print. If you and your friends made some interesting trips recently, let's hear about them. Maps should be included.

If you are a leader of a Rambler trip, please see a "good" write-up with names is submitted promptly.

If you have any complaints or facts of interest, write and we'll publish your letter.

I understand Western Mines may start dumping tailings into the Thelwood Creek valley. We are looking for more factual information. If you have any, write immediately. I'm concerned, as you should be, that if this rumour is correct we may have an eyesore like you never seen before. Have you ever been to Sudbury?


Bob Tustin,
President

.....a letter written by Pal Horvath which was published by Victoria's Daily Colonist.....(Pal is our District Rep for Campbell River)

HORNE LAKE CAVING TRIP

July 29th

Sunday morning at 9:00 A.M., 120 (Yes 120!) Ramblers, C.D.M.C. Members, and countless others assembled at the junction of the Island Highway and the road to Horne Lake for the drive to Horne Lake Caves Provincial Park. (Best wishes to the one eye-witness to our dusty cavalcade on his back-packing expedition along the road!)

Early in 1973 as ideas were developing for the Rambler schedule, the Vancouver Island Caving Club was approached, and later consented to giving us a guided tour of the caves in this area. Many of us were later surprised to learn that the Provincial Government had allowed the Caving Club a small grant for the purpose of giving public tours on weekends. Thus, this "unique" opportunity the Ramblers were to experience is available to the public each Friday, Saturday and Sunday of the summer!

In anticipation of a large turnout the Caving Club beefed up its number of volunteers for the day, and our group was met by nearly a dozen enthusiastic, but somewhat overwhelmed spelunkers. Guides took small groups of 5-6 people at a time through "Main" Cave and "River Bend" Cave, each tour requiring about 1 1/2 hour.

Many had previously had a self-guided tour of "Main" Cave, and were anxious to view "River Bend" - normally closed to public access by a locked steel door. However, due to the delay in going through "River Bend" caused by such a large turnout, many were pleasantly surprised to revisit "Main" with the help of a guide. One glance at the destruction caused in this cave by uncontrolled public access certainly makes a tour of "River Bend" all the more worthwhile.

Two small groups were given the complete 4 hour tour over the 1000 ft. of "River Bend". The remainder of us were easily deterred from such heroics when it was learned that after 300 ft. the cave narrows to a "siphon", forcing a crawl through very icy water. However, a well-guided visit even this far passes many beautiful formations, and proves most satisfying.

After the caving tours many members of our group remained in the Horne Lake area to enjoy picnics, swimming and canoeing.

Lynn Noye

SAN JUAN CANOE TRIP

Aug. 4th & 5th

A 9:00 A.M. rendezvous at North Cowichan Municipal Hall provided a turnout of 4 members (Derek and Louise Sharp, Lynn and Verdonna Noye) proving that as canoeists Ramblers are great hikers. An optimistic wait for others proved fruitless and we departed for B.C.F.P. Fairy Lake Campground via the Harris Creek Logging Road from Mesachie Lake.

We left our vehicles at the boat ramp on the lake and the usual public campsite sounds of barking dogs, transistor radios, and playing children. A few minutes paddling across Fairy Lake leads canoes directly in to the slow moving, emerald green waters of the San Juan.

We were pleasantly surprised to find the river level much higher than on a visit the previous year. We decided to travel up the river and after about a mile we made camp on one of the many sandy beaches.

The weather was typical of the West Coast - cool and overcast with cloud and heavy mist, thus the afternoon was spent enjoying a warm beach fire, with short breaks to clear a canoe passage through a small log jam.

Con'd.....

SAN JUAN CANOE TRIP con'd

The weather improved Sunday as we canoed about 4 miles down river to San Juan harbor. The high water level made for leisurely travel, and eliminated much lining we felt would be required. A heavy mist greeted us as we passed the Indian Reserve at the river mouth, and certainly influenced our decision to turn around in the vicinity of the mouth of the Gordon River.

As the incoming tide and westerly wind aided the start of our return trip to camp, the abundance of bird life and the beauty of the river colours made us most reluctant to leave what is surely the best canoeing river on the Island.

Lynn Noye

MT. KLITSA

April 15th

There was a real good turnout for this day hike. People had come as far as Victoria and Campbell River. There were eighteen people including myself on the trip.

After gathering everybody together, we drove over a logging bridge that spans the Taylor River. Then we drove up a logging road as far as we could.

We left the cars at 9:30 and then proceeded up the logging road until we hit the creek that flows from the base of the 2000 foot Klitsa snow gully. Keeping to the right of this creek the party made its way through the timber.

We stopped after coming through the timber and into the Klitsa basin. Mainly because the overcast skies had turned to rain. After putting on rain gear, the group proceeded directly up the wide snow gully. The going in the gully was good because the avalanched snow in the snow gully made good steps.

We reached the top of the snow gully at 1:40. It was snowing lightly with a wind and overcast. Bob Tustin's altimeter read 4,800 feet, so I decided that was far enough, since it made no sense to continue the remaining 500 feet to the top in very poor weather conditions.

The first few hundred feet of the Klitsa snow gully is good for a standing glissade; the remaining 1800 feet for a sitting glissade.

After I gave two inexperienced climbers a demonstration in the proper way to glissade, Mike Walsh made a lightning glissade straight down that ended very quickly when he hit some ascending steps.

I was amazed at the five complete forward somersaults Mike made while still remembering to keep both hands on his ice axe and away from his body. Mike eventually made a good self arrest.

Not to be outdone, Joe Bajan had packed his skies to the top of the gully and attempted to ski down it. While coming down near the top of the gully, Joe got going too fast and made the second spectacular wipe-out of the day!

The remaining lucky people had an enjoyable 1800 foot sitting glissade to the bottom of the Klitsa snow gully. We were back to the cars around 4:55. It took us four hours up and just over two to come down. Those on the trip were: Bill Perry, Bob Tustin, Paul Rothe, Joe Bajan, Doug Barker, Jan & Warrick Whitehead, Paul Harvath, Brian & Aileen Foan, Alfred Enning, Derwick Morten, Dave Pearson, Richard Forrest, Oriana Webber, Sharon Harshaw, Mike Walsh, and Ron Facer.

Ron Facer

MOUNT COKELEY

by Ski and Snowshoe

March 4th, 1973

7:30 a.m. on the Cameron Summit Road. Drizzling. Aileen and I talked about nobody coming and we would go home. Paul Rothe arrived with a station wagon full of Victorians: Nadine Buchanan, Kelly Martens, Deryek Moreton, Pat Nicholson and Jim Huzzey. Franz Bislin from Port Alberni was right behind and Mike Walsh caught up with us at the end of the road. We drove past the parking lot to about the 2800' level where the snow stopped us.

I looked at the crust and announced a purple klister day. Nobody else was convinced and elected to walk on the snow and accomodate the changing conditions above. We got them soon enough. At the chalet, I scraped off my klister while the others waxed - Paul, Aileen and I purple, Mike gold, Franz - yellow rope on Alpine skis (a good choice of color) while Nadine, Kelly, Deryek, Pat and Jim were on snowshoes. Before we were out of the trees, Paul and Aileen had re-waxed yellow and red. Not me though. I'm proud enough not to admit to mistakes no matter how far downhill I slip.

The first sput after the chalet is Pass 50 and we skied (or walked) to the end of this road (3400'). By now the weather had improved to cloudy with patches of blue and even some sunshine. From the end of Pass 50 the plan is to go more or less south avoiding the steep fall into the creek on your left and find a suitable place to climb up through the bluffs onto the crown of the spur on your right. This is a most interesting exercise on cross country skis especially when you get the heel of your uphill ski trapped under a windfall under two feet of snow. The snowshoes handled this section much better.

The top of the spur is good going though and soon after noon we stopped for lunch in a sheltered spot. Intermittent snow was by now the prevailing system (4200' more or less). The spur runs out into the alpine meadows on the west ridge of Cokely. By the time we had sidled around to the notch before the final climb, the wind was blowing, the snow was falling and visibility was very limited. A most unpleasant situation in my estimation. The girls had wisely stopped in the shelter of the trees.

While the others made their ego trip to the summit (5302'), I decided that a leader's place was with the weaker members of the party and turned around. Above the tree line the snow was slow-slow; perfect

for a controlled descent. Through the trees was an interesting experience for us on our country boards but Franz might have been skiing some packed milk-run so effortless was his style.

On the way down, we met Bob Tustin tramping around in the snow by himself. My last recollection of the trip was Franz thundering by me on the road about the time I had decided that given the slope and the condition of the snow, I should take off my skis. Deryek who had been first on the summit arrived at the cars only shortly after Franz. Everybody else straggled in within half an hour or so to end a surprisingly good day amidst a heavy weather system.

Brian Foan

GO WHERE THE QUIET IS

Cross Country Skiing



SATURDAY
NIGHT

SUNDAY
MORNING



VERN WRITES
FOR THE
ALBERNI TIMES

OBSERVATIONS

Vern Giesbrecht

I was sitting by the water hole halfway down a mountain-side in Strathcona Provincial Park Sunday afternoon, sipping grapefruit Tang from a canteen, when I sensed rapid movement on the trail.

"There goes Mike," one of the other recumbent hikers exclaimed and I realized that a fleet member of our party must have flashed around the corner.

I half expected to hear a sonic boom, he was moving so fast.

A few seconds later, we heard loud footsteps and saw another hustling hiker, sweating and puffing.



"Where's Mike?" he gasped.

We pointed down the winding trail toward Buttle Lake and after adjusting his pack on his shoulders the second runner fled down the hill in pursuit.

Hours later, after us laggards reached the bottom, we learned that Mike had raced from Marble Meadows, at the 5,000-foot level, to Buttle Lake, elevation 800, in the astonishing time of 53 minutes, while Bob took one hour and one minute to complete the journey.

Truly impressive statistics but as one of the slower members of the group noted, "they didn't see half as much as we did."



The soft beauty of ferns and moss and countless varieties of flowers - at their peak this time of year - the fragrance of the forest, the antics of squirrels and butterflies....all were lost to the pair as they hurtled toward their goal.

I won't deny Bob and Mike their pride in achievement and I certainly admire their ability to race down a mountain without breaking a leg.

But for me, a more leisurely pace suffices, although I too am afflicted at times by a ridiculous competitive urge - even when relaxation is the goal.

Hurrying takes the fun out of a lot of things.

Vacationers who drive hundreds of miles in a frenzied escape from their home environment are often so worn out they can't enjoy themselves when they get to wherever they're going.



I remember spending a Sunday afternoon with an eccentric old man near Prince Rupert. Standing outside his ramshackle old house, filled with ancient furniture including a quavery-toned Victrola, the old gent gestured toward the stream of cars heading up the highway.

"Look at all those silly people going away. A few hours later they'll all come back. What's the point? I'd rather stay here."

It's nice to go places, by car, boat, plane, train or foot.

But what's the hurry? Getting there can be more than half the fun, if you give it time.

AGREED! Bob & Mike

MT. TODD

Feb. 4th, 1973

Narrator: Angie Rossiter

It was a gorgeous morning with a promise of a brilliant day when 23 eager hikers met at Mason's Store at Shawnigan Lake.

We all stopped in for a very welcome 2nd cup of coffee before proceeding on to Mt. Todd. Soon we were off in a convoy of 7 cars. However, when we hit the unplowed road farther up the valley a couple were abandoned and a further doubling up took place. It was pretty slippery going and I for one was glad I was a passenger for a change instead of the driver.

Our leader decided to tackle Todd from the Eastern approach in order to hike the long ridge rather than the steep Southern side.

The morning was fantastic: brilliant sunshine reflecting off of crystalized snow. The air was crisp and clear with the temperature hovering about 20°, ideal hiking weather. So we took off over the logged off area which I must admit is much prettier in the winter than summer.

We soon hit the timberline and proceeded upward with snow getting deeper all the time. We followed a logging road for a short distance then turned sharply to the left and began a very steep climb up the hillside. Under normal conditions it would have been fine but the snow conditions were most difficult for our poor leader as he was floundering and sinking to his hips as the snow would not support our weight. However, other stalwarts took turns in the lead to give him a break as it was hard work breaking trail.

Once more we reached the timberline and ran into new snow as the bushes were still covered in lovely white fluff.

At 1:00 P.M. we broke into a clearing with an unobstructed view of the summit which was at least 1 1/2 hours away. Mainly because we would have had to descend 200 feet before climbing about another 400 feet elevation. At this point we decided we needed lunch badly, so we all bedded down in the snow. It was great for the ones that had extra sweaters etc. to sit on but rather cool for others.

However, it was decided that if we tried to reach the summit we probably wouldn't make it out before dark or if we did it would be one mad scramble. So I think everyone was relieved when Ray suggested turning back at this point.

Coming down was much faster than our trip up. In fact it took us one hour and forty minutes return trip.

So another delightful outing was topped off with another excellent cup of coffee at Mason's. Many thanks to Ray and Don for a most enjoyable day.

Those attending this outing were:

Ray Paine - Leader, Don & Sylvia Apps, Barbara Cowell, Angie Rossiter, Jack Ware, Doug Offerhaus, Rex, Greta, Lyn & Tim Hendrie, Ron & Denise Watt, Donna Killeen, Pat Nicholson, Kerry Haukaas, Deryck Moreton, Jimmie McTavish, Jim Huzzey, Brian Johnson, Tom Gibson, Peter Brockway & Paul Rothe.

X-C SKI TRIP - NORTHWEST BAY LOGGING ROADS

February 11th, 1973

Leader: Bryan Lee

Six of us were there, equipped with all our gear.
The mist was playing tricks with us, but soon began to clear.
With purple wax we worked, our fingers crossed, indeed,
And successfully at ten, we left at moderate speed.
Like small ants pushing uphill, on tiny toothpick boards,
We spread out fairly far apart, swatting flies that came in hoards.
There was evidence of previous life, along this lonely road,
Ski-doo's and snowshoes blazed a track, and even foot-prints showed.
The snow, itself, was crusty, and rough upon the skin
And believe me, we all felt it, as we often fell right in.
The day was one of laughs and fun, although the mist appeared,
Rowbotham Lake, we never saw - that mist, it never cleared!
Descending time was four-ish and we'd grinned at what we'd done,
But now the best was saved till last - that rewarding downhill run!

Joan Hutt

Those attending: Tom der Groot (on snowshoes)
Mike Walsh
Bryan Lee
Bob Tustin
Paul Rothe
Joan Hutt



did you know.....Mount Filberg was named after the Manager of Comox Logging Company. The name was suggested by Mr. N. C. Stewart (Surveyor - who surveyed most of Strathcona Park in the 1930's.)
Mount Cobb was named after the Manager of Elk River Timber Company in memory of many favours shown to the topo survey in 1935-36 -- suggested by N. C. Stewart.

MT. MAXWELL
(1931')

March 4th, 1973

Leader: Bob Spearing

We all met at Fulford Harbour at 9:30 A.M., some of the group coming via the Victoria ferry and some the Vesuvius ferry. We drove to Burgoyne Bay where the car passengers were let out near the trail beginning, the drivers going on to park the cars where we would be coming out.

We started out at 10:45 A.M., going through private farm land at first, then onto the trail which is a steady uphill grade all the way. The weather was changeable all morning but clear when we reached the top at 1:00 P.M. We had lunch there, giving us a chance to admire the view. We could see across to the east coast of Vancouver Island and make out different places like Maple Bay and Shawnigan Lake and we looked down into Vesuvius Bay and the farmland of Saltspring Island. After exploring a bit we headed down, starting on the same trail we had come up on, then branching off halfway down. This trail took us to a view of another aspect of Saltspring. We were fortunate to see on our way, a variety of wild-life which added to the interest. The trail came out onto an old road which led down to the cars. We arrived back at 3:30 P.M.

Present on the hike were, members: Barbara Cowell, Bob & Janice Spearing, Jan Whitehead, and guests: Paul Squires, Vern Giesbrecht, Sharon Reilly, Marjory Christmas, Ralph & Ruth Morgan & Glen.

MT. SICKER (LITTLE)

Feb. 25th, 1973

As February 25th, 1973 was barely one hour old I was awakened by a downpour which lasted till six thirty. With the sky clearing and the sun emerging so did sixteen Ramblers and guests, to my surprise from Campbell River & Victoria.

From North Cowichan Municipal Hall we drove two miles north and parked our cars by the waterfall on the highway.

This was a conditioning hike that would not have an access problem if there was too much snow. The snow was non-existent but the conditions were varied: brambles, tea brush, salal, bushwacking and scrambling; something for everyone.

The summit was reached about eleven thirty, and Jack Ware provided a little history of the Mt. Sicker Mines and Townsite from "Water Over the Wheel".

Lunch was about noon after Bob & Janice had a snow ball fight with the only snow encountered. An approaching cloud of darkness and stuff signalled time to descend, just about made it to the cars without getting wet by two P.M.

Those participating: Pal Horvath, Bob & Janice Spearing, Jack Ware, Doug Offerhaus, Angie Rossiter, Barbara Cowell, Eve Howden, Lois Hubert, Warick & Jan Whitehead, Jim & Sharon Rielly, Marjorie Christmas, Leila Long, Carl Shutz.

Hank Wilkinson

MT. MORIARTY X-C Ski and Snowshoe Trip

February 17th & 18th

Leader: Joe Bajan

Our plans were to go to the mountain and build snow caves and igloos at about 4,500 feet on the south ridge of Moriarty, then to climb the summit the next day. Things didn't happen quite that way.

Mike Walsh and Bob Tustin came by to pick me up precisely when they said they would - only 35 minutes late (they're improving). We met Warwick Whitehead and Tom Gibson at the meeting place where we all piled into Mike's comfortable Toyota 4-wheel drive. Five people and five packs - lots of room if you are a fly. Then Mike decided that we should play bridge builders for a while. And for a while we played around getting Mike's vehicle out of a ditch only a 4-wheel drive with Mike at the wheel could get into. Finally, we got the skis on and got going. Although it had looked like rain earlier, we were surprised to see blue sky and warm sunshine appear as we started. The fine weather made us lazy and we continued only to a lunch spot that turned out to be "home" for the weekend. Warwick and Tom helped me build a ski jump. Ever tried ski jumping on X-C skis? I did all types of jumps - including flips and even the Ostrich method. I couldn't find any sand to bury my head in so I used snow. Our eager President, Bob Tustin, even got a picture. Maybe he will enter it into the most humorous picture contest at the fall meeting.

Warwick and Tom decided to build a snow cave. Mike and I decided to build a small 2 man igloo. It turned out to be 12 feet tall! Bob even did his daily callisthenics inside the igloo with room to spare.

Although it took Mike and I four hours to build our igloo, Bob built a fantastic shelter in 4 minutes - he put up his tent. I wonder if anyone else has ever built such a big igloo on Vancouver Island.

Bob slept in the next morning (as usual) which was an excuse everybody used for not attempting the summit. So we skied around camp for a few hours before starting down. Later, we met Mac and Bess Page, John and Doreen Cowlin coming up for a day hike.

On the way down we had a contest to see who could fall down the most. I got 2 1/2 points, Bob got 7 1/2 points and Mike got so good at the game that he decided to forfeit the game and walk down. If you are wondering how we got 1/2 a point, it was for a controlled fall. All in all, it was a great fun weekend!

Joe Bajan

FLOWER RIDGE AND MT. SEPTIMUS July 7th & 8th

Leader: Warrick Whitehead

A good schedule write up and the mentioning of Della Falls brought great response the weeks before this trip, giving me a problem with arranging rides. The week of the trip bad weather forecasts and outlook solved the transport problems very quickly as known numbers dwindled.

On turning up at Ralph River Campsite with its 73 campsites a problem confronted me, how do you know which are campers and which are

FLOWER RIDGE & MT. SEPTIMUS con'd

hikers? An ice axe propping open a car door gave the clue; the occupants told us of a tentative arrangement of 8:00 A.M. at the gate had been made for a start in the morning.

By 8:30 A.M. a group of 25 were at the trail start and we set off at 9:00 o'clock. The group consisted of all age groups and families. After 2 1/2 hours we reached the place we could get water, approximately half way up the ridge along the very good trail, here two more hikers came along telling of two others just behind, they had slept in!

The weather was reasonable, low cloud but no rain. At 1:00 o'clock we stopped for lunch just short of the first view point of Buttle Lake. Another two late sleepers caught us up here, so numbers were now 31.

At the very small A frame we were onto snow and lots of it. As many of the group did not have suitable footwear, and were not prepared to sleep on snow 14 stayed there as the area had enough spots clear from snow to be able to pick one and spend a comfortable night. The group, now 17, went on; three more went back soon after and two more before the high point on the ridge. A little way along the ridge a group of four decided to camp, leaving now six to go on to the proposed first night's campsite.

The snow 3-4 feet deep was soft and wet on top making the going very hard. We went on till we got to the second set of lakes, these were still almost completely frozen over and did not make us look forward to that swim promised!

In the morning, early, on looking out of the tent, rain and low cloud made turning over and going back to sleep easy. Odd bright spots in the cloud cover got us under way by 10:00 o'clock. Continuing along Flower Ridge for over an hour with rain falling and still no view, four turned back to the tents while one kept on with me. We hiked on to what we believed to be the high point at the end of Flower Ridge; from there with the weather much improved we could see the land bridge to Rosseau Mountain and Cream Lake, still frozen over. I don't see this as a two day hike to Della Falls except for the very fittest, maybe!

The main group hiked out and left before the six of us arrived back at the cars, the numbers had risen another one to 32. Guess who? I was disappointed to have to clean up campsites left by hikers from our groups on the ridge, also the lighting of two fires in alpine just a few feet apart.

Present were: Lynn, Verdonna and Sandra Noye, Al and Jessie Greenhalgh, Lynn Paterson, Graham Ramsay, Derek and Louise Sharp & Bob Tustin.

Guests: Hanno Ehrenberg, Bob, Barb, Alison, Karen & Lesley Graves, Oriana Webber, Sharon Harshaw, Jim, Doris, Jean and Janet Jackson, Dick Belcher, Susan Leahy, Anne Leahy, Glen Sacht, Neil Goldsmith, Lora Fenn, Al Arnason, John Hanson and Jan & Warrick Whitehead.

Note

...the next issue of Timberline Tales will be out just before the fall meeting. Some trip write-ups that have already been received will be published in the next issue....

The East Face of Colonel Foster

Mt. Colonel Foster is a big, jagged, complex massif, and the east face may well be the largest wall on Vancouver Island. Fred Douglas, Paul Starr and I packed into "Landslide Lake" at its base on the Saturday of Labour Day weekend with the notion of getting some of it behind us that afternoon. The beast proved to be as big as had been rumored (about 3200 feet) but under the glasses a lot of it looked so downright feasible that we allowed natural slackness to dominate, and didn't start till Sunday dawn.

The weather was perfect. Our objective was the main buttress leading to the highest summit, but there was some speculation as to where to start. To a major extent this was determined by where we were able to cross the moat — substantially to the left of our buttress. A few moderate leads up and right along cracks and ledges here introduced us to the local metavolcanic rock. Fairly nice climbing, and firm, but protection was damn scarce. Anon we entered the gully which separated us from our buttress. In spring, this would likely be a snap; at this time, however, it was a set of discontinuous ice sections. Climbing a waterfall under one of these called for the only aid pin on the route. Paul took a nasty lead out of the gut, and by noon we were on a snow ledge; not very high in altitude or spirits.

Two leads of nice climbing on the ridge crest followed, then it was left to avoid an overhang. After this there was a long stretch of class 4 up a face to an abrupt wall, where a sidewalk put us back on the crest. Not for long. Next we were forced off to the right and it began to look like a blind alley, but at the end there was a nice chimney back onto the ridge crest, and the late afternoon sun. Two hundred feet higher we bivouacked — only 500 feet from the top and feeling pretty good.

Four leads, just hard enough to work the cold out of our joints in the morning, put us on top at 10 a.m. Very good, now how do you get off this thing? Well, it was first climbed by a cat called Mike Walsh — solo yet, with no rope — so it can't be that bad. My, it does look a little scratchy down there though! Three hours and several rappels later we were three peaks to the north, and beginning to think that our East Ridge might be the easiest way down this thing. Shattered ridges dropped off in all directions for one helluvadistance. The particular gully we had expected to escape by plunged away below us like a vertical bowling alley. Incidentally, it was the wrong gully. Reluctantly we dropped back into the last gorge we had crossed, and began to rappel and climb down this to the west. It went better than we had feared — no hanging rappel stations — but by the time we got out and around the massif's north end it was late enough to ensure that we would be a day late getting out. Climbing back under the impressive northern tower was a good point to reflect that our route was moderate as walls go but Colonel Foster was a bastard as mountains go. As for Mike Walsh — well, it is nice to see that a fine spirit of insanity has survived somewhere amid the march of climbing technology.

Dick Culbert

LABOUR DAY 1972



NOTES: JULY 1968

MAIN PEAK COL. FOSTER
MIKE WALSH - SOLO

JULY ~~1972~~
1971

TRAVERSE OF ALL PEAKS OF
COL. FOSTER (EXCEPT NORTH PEAK)
FROM NORTH TO SOUTH
MIKE WALSH & BILL PERRY

AUGUST 1973

TRAVERSE OF ALL PEAKS OF
COL. FOSTER, INCLUDING NORTH PEAK,
FROM SOUTH TO NORTH
MIKE WALSH & JOE BAJAN

EXPOSURE PROTECTION – USE OF METALLIZED SHEETS AND PLASTIC BAGS (B.M.C. CIRCULAR 73/02)

In recent years thin metallized plastic sheets have appeared on the market under a variety of names, offering protection to the human body against heat loss in bad weather. The sales literature sometimes makes far-reaching claims about their properties, such as "conserves the body temperature up to 85-90 percent", or "has immense value as a life preserver".

The sheets, often only 0.0005 inch thick, usually consist of a plastic film of polyethylene terephthalate, eg "Melinex" or "Mylar" coated on one side with a film of metal, usually aluminum. A dye is often added to the plastic film, so that the sheet is like a silvered mirror on one side and has a coloured sheen on the other. The material has a high tensile strength and remains flexible at low temperatures, but it has a low tear resistance and easily rips when punctured.

Heat loss from the clothed human body occurs by conduction, convection, evaporation and radiation. In cold stormy weather the conductive/convective losses predominate, radiation losses are small, and normally additional insulating garments and an outer wind/rain proof are

worn to reduce the conductive/convective losses.

In an emergency in cold winter storm conditions in the British mountains the most important considerations for conserving body heat are:

1. to keep out the wind and reduce convective losses; and
2. to keep out the rain and snow and prevent serious deterioration in the insulating value of clothing.

Single sheets of thin metallized plastic film wrapped around the body can be of only very limited value under such conditions, since they let the wind, rain and snow in through gaps and in any case have a low tear resistance. The value of their reflective surface, on which far-reaching claims are based, is minimal, because the radiation losses are a small proportion of the total heat loss in these conditions. Their reflective properties would be of more value as a sunshade in preventing overheating of the body in calm conditions of hot sunshine.

The thin metallized plastic films would be better in the form of bags—which are available—but a much cheaper

and more effective protection in winter bivouac conditions is offered by the ordinary polythene bag or tube, large enough to get inside easily. (PVC is not satisfactory since it becomes brittle and cracks at low temperatures.) Two bags or tubes, one inside the other, are better than one, since insulating air is trapped between them. The tube bottom can be closed by tucking under the boots, and the upper end substantially closed around the neck or as a hood by tying knots over the top corners. Do not breathe inside the bag otherwise condensation will occur and there is a risk of suffocation.

Polythene bags or tubes are available in many thicknesses. Many are too thin, but 0.002 inch thickness (200 gauge or medium weight) is reasonably robust for emergency use. A tube or bag about eight feet long and three feet wide is suitable, weighs about five ounces and costs about 10p per yard run.

—W. H. Ward, Chairman
British Mountaineering Council
Equipment Sub-committee

Information

OVER 50 mountaintops in British Columbia are now crowned by mysterious-looking, rocket-shaped missiles. Actually, they are miniature missiles, being only 28 ft. high, and are peaceful installations of British Columbia Hydro & Power Authority.

Each houses a battery-operated repeater station for B.C. Hydro's VHF radio-communications network. The network is used mainly for mobile radio communications by personnel performing operations and maintenance of the T&D system.

The mountaintop "radomes" were developed jointly by the provincial highways department and B.C. Hydro, and overcome many environmental problems—most involving weather—that plagued the operation and maintenance of previous repeater stations.

The radomes are weatherproof and cannot be blown over or snowed under. They are anchored to the rock at the tops of the mountains—anchor holes are drilled in the rock by means of a portable gas drill. The conical design enables wind action to keep snow from piling up around or on top of the structures.

The radio equipment is powered by air-depolarized batteries similar to, but about 50 times the size of, normal dry-cell batteries used in flashlights. They have now been in continuous use for more than four years and are expected to last up to ten years. This means the sites seldom have to be visited—which is fortunate, because most of them are inaccessible except by helicopter.

Helicopters are used to transport the assembled radomes and the three-man construction crews to the mountain sites for installation.

Radio systems engineer Jack C. Gornall of the Engineering Division's control and communications branch has supervised B.C. Hydro's interest in the development of these stations.

SOME OF THE
PEAKS THAT HAVE
TOWERS:

MT. ARROWSMITH
MT. BENSON
MT. MAITLAND
KINGS PEAK

STRATHCONA RAMBLINGS

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Since many of the Rambler outings take place in Strathcona Park, "Timberline Tales", over the next few issues, will publish facts which should be of interest.

We hope to touch on all subjects - history, geology, fauna & flora, trails and climbs. Anyone with information is invited to submit it for publication.

We are pleased that Mike Hanry (an old Rambler member) allowed us to use his thesis about "Recreational Analysis and Management of Strathcona Park" which he wrote at U.B.C. in April, 1970. Mike now works for the B.C. Parks Branch in Victoria.

What follows are highlights from Mike's thesis.

INTRODUCTION

Strathcona Park is a paradise for both the naturalist and outdoor recreationist. It is an area of outstanding alpine grandeur characterized by glaciers, extensive snowfields, and in particular, an abundance of alpine lakes and meadows. Glacier-fed streams cascade over canyon walls and converge in the deep timbered valley bottoms. The mountaineer, hiker, fisherman, and boating enthusiast will find a perfect setting for his sport and for the naturalist the park offers an interesting variety of ecological sites.

Established primarily for the preservation of the natural wilderness, Strathcona Park was to be maintained and made use of so as to leave it unimpaired for future generations. At its inception it was essentially an unspoiled wilderness where the native trees, plants, animals, and birds could be seen and studied in their natural state. It would provide opportunity for many varied outdoor recreational activities managed and regulated in such a way that the wilderness and aesthetic values would not be damaged.

Now, after a mere 59 years, only the mountains of Strathcona Park remain truly wilderness. Through the years, timber and mining companies pressured the government into granting exploitation of the park resources. The industrialist argued that these resources were essential to the province's economic well being. By government legislation, the original Strathcona Park Act was amended to permit

active removal of minerals and timber. Thus the originally protected values, whether for the use of the scientist or recreationist, were ruined. There is now a mining road along the entire western shore of Buttle Lake. Ugly banks and cut trees along this road mar the lake's beauty. Pipes have been laid into the lake where tailings are dumped. A large tract of magnificent forest in the Elk River valley was logged and timber has been traded to obtain park land in other areas of the province. The wilderness atmosphere of Buttle Lake and Elk River valley have been destroyed.

This report will present the history, landscape features, and proposed management plans for the park. The historical outline depicts the impacts of industrial activities and outlines the areas influenced. Present policies of the Parks Branch for protecting the remaining wilderness are summarized. The value of this wilderness is appraised by analyzing the inherent climate, geology, flora, fauna, and landscape. Finally a theoretical management plan for the park is presented. Present and probable future use trends are, of course, considered.

LAND USE HISTORY AND LANDSCAPE CHANGE

In 1865, a venturesome man, Mister John Buttle, probed the unexplored wilderness of central Vancouver Island. He returned to civilization with descriptions of a large lake surrounded by magnificent mountains. This lake, the largest on Vancouver Island, was later named after the surveyor.

Hikers and mountaineers who visited the area afterwards were equally impressed. To many of these adventurers the clear blue lake and glaciated peaks brought back memories of the European Alps or the rugged Canadian Rockies. All that was missing were trails, mountain huts, and people.

In the early 1900's, logging, mining, and other natural resource users were busy pushing into the remaining untouched wilderness areas of Vancouver Island. The Island's forests were at first considered inexhaustable but it soon became apparent that they were being rapidly exhausted. Coal mining, and water power demands also contributed to the wasteful exploitation of natural resources. Many Vancouver Islanders were becoming increasingly concerned with how little of the original natural landscape remained undisturbed.

At the same time throughout North America, a general conservation movement was compelling governments to save large tracts of wilderness for future generations. The United States had set aside unique areas for preservation as early as 1871 when Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming was established. In 1885 the federal government of Canada created a land reserve around the hot mineral springs at Banff Station, Alberta. Two years later, the Banff Hot Springs reserve was enlarged to an area of 260 square miles, and officially became Canada's first National Park.

STRATHCONA RAMBLINGS

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The provincial government of British Columbia soon became aware of the increasing public pressure to preserve wilderness areas. In 1909 citizens of Campbell River came to Victoria with a lengthy petition demanding the preservation of the Buttle Lake area. Thus, as a result of the prevailing public desire for established parks, 529,920 acres of wilderness land surrounding the lake was set aside in 1911 as British Columbia's first provincial park. It was officially named Strathcona in recognition of Lord Strathcona (1820-1914). In 1913 the original boundaries, fixed by legislature in 1911 were extended westward to their present location on recommendation of Mr. Reg. H. Thompson, a government employee who had previously made a survey of the area.

The Strathcona Park Act, Chapter 49 of the statutes of British Columbia, was the first of three Special Park Acts which established a basis for a provincial parks system. The original Strathcona Park Act asserted that the parks would be protected and managed for the use of the public. Mister John Buttle stated "the main purpose in setting aside Strathcona Park was the preservation of some outstanding Vancouver Island scenery including forest cover types and waterways to enable continued enjoyment of the natural out-of-doors as the rest of the island is residential, logged, mined or used for some other purpose."

For seven years the area was exclusively maintained for nature studies and outdoor recreation. During this period the park was visited only by a relatively small minority of sportsmen. Access was difficult and no facilities had been developed for the visitor. Also, it must be remembered that at this time the province was still very much in a pioneering era; the majority of the people worked and lived in or adjacent to the outdoors and only a few desired a wilderness experience.

HISTORY OF LOGGING

Now that parks were well established, the public concern for conservation dwindled. The government was now pressured by industrialists who were campaigning for multiple use of parks. These industrialists defended their position by stating that commercialization meant extra dollars for the economy.

Timber companies eyed the stately stands of Douglas fir and red cedar that covered the mountainsides along Buttle Lake. Of the 529,920 acres lying within the park, 45,900 acres were classified as productive forest land. The forest cover in this productive area was differentiated as follows:

Merchantable Timber in Strathcona Park by Kinds

Douglas fir	481,300,000 board feet
Western Hemlock	356,800,000 " "

STRATHCONA RAMBLINGS

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Red Cedar	238,700,000 board feet		
Silver Fir	116,900,000	"	"
Cypress	42,000,000	"	"
Spruce	23,800,000	"	"
White Pine	17,000,000	"	"

The ridges surrounding Buttle Lake were believed loaded with valuable minerals. The government was continually approached by mining companies wanting permission to prospect these mountains. The pressure increased and finally the government decided to allow prospecting within the park boundaries. The Strathcona Park Amendment Act of March 28, 1918 permitted licenced prospecting.

Prior to the creation of the park, timber licences had been acquired around Buttle Lake by a few timber companies; the majority of these licences were owned by the Vancouver Timber and Trading Company Limited which had acquired the timber licences from a previous owner. These companies were apprehensive about the future of their holdings. They fully realized the strong influence of the conservation movement and felt that the lumber was irrevocably locked up. The government fully appreciated the problem and felt that these companies should be reimbursed.

In 1929 the government reacquired part of the alienated timber licences and in 1940 others were exchanged for timber rights outside the park. The nineteen timber leases, numbers 3958 p to 3964 p and 3966 p to 9977 p, purchased for \$355,000 in April 1926, were the most scenically situated of the alienated leases.

Twenty-four years later Blocks 122 to 1226, located at the north end of Buttle Lake, outside the park, were exchanged for timber worth \$35,000. These areas had been purchased because of a new influx of public pressure for park access. It was also hoped that this timbered area might be used as a recreational buffer zone, an area for development of facilities which would not distract from the wilderness of the adjacent park. The area obtained on the north shore of the lake did not include the low volume stands on the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway Grant.

Despite public wishes, the remaining timber holdings were logged. The timber lease of Bloedel, Stewart, and Welch Logging Company in the headwaters of the Ash River, and those of the Elk River Timber Company on the Elk River valley were clearcut and the material was transported along roads built well within the park.

Within the last decade, the Parks Branch has exchanged three areas of timber for other portions of Vancouver Island, Rath Trevor Beach, Cape Scott, and Long Beach. These areas are to be developed

STRATHCONA RAMBLINGS

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to meet the growing recreational demands of the public.

In 1962, \$260,000 worth of timber in the Bedwell River valley was traded for Lots 91A and 1366 near Long Beach in the Clayoquot Land District and other lands selected by the Minister of Recreation and Conservation. The agreement would terminate on May 23, 1972.

More recently, in 1967, the government arranged a timber for land exchange with the Tahsis Lumber Company. Two tracts of timber, one in the Pamela Creek watershed south of Donner Lake and the other in the Burman River valley were exchanged for property at Rathtrevor Beach situated just south of Parkesville.

The Tahsis company rapidly constructed access roads and by November 1969 all utilizable timber in the Burman River holding had been logged and planted with two and three year old Douglas fir seedlings. After completely logging the Burman River timber exchange the company started operations in the eighty acre cutting rights of the Pamela Creek drainage.

On September 24, 1969, Recreation Minister Ken Kiernan announced that a cabinet order had given the Raven Lumber Company, of Campbell River, ten year logging rights to 5,260 acres of the north east corner of the park. In exchange the Raven Company would deliver the land titles for 576 acres of desirable waterfront at Cape Scott.



The next issue of "Timberline Tales" will cover mining in Strathcona Park along with facts about B.C. Hydro's project effecting Buttle Lake. If room permits, the interesting geology of the Park will also be included in the next issue.

Somebody has tried to steal the bronze plaque at the top of the Marble Meadows trail. Apparently it was too heavy to carry out, so it was left near where it was originally cemented to the rock.

Possibly holes should be drilled into rock and the bolts fixed into place with expoxy glue.



Please use established campsites on Marble Meadows, where the alpine flower meadows are fragile.

Carry home all your litter - it's fun!

