

Thank you Joan Gibb



Does anyone have a more intimate knowledge of Dominion Brook Park – its history, its plants, its features? For twenty years, Joan Gibb has been contributing to the betterment of the Park.

She has held various roles on the Executive, researched Park history, identified and labelled plants, updated plant records, set up Park archives, led Park tours, made presentations, directed Park maintenance, and led the work of volunteers.

This year marks the last season that Joan will be overseeing the field work in Dominion Brook Park. For years she has been the

first in the Park on Wednesday mornings to meet the volunteers. A devoted and loyal group works on the grounds each week. They all love the Park but have also become very fond of Joan. Her warmth and good humour set the tone as she assigns the weekly tasks. Each person willingly goes off to battle blackberries, wrestle out weeds, rake leaves – or whatever is required.

What you may not know is the amount of work Joan does behind the scenes as part of the annual season of field work.

The following list covers only some of it.

- Planning the work for the season
- Weekly communication with the District of North Saanich about Park maintenance
- Additional days in the Park watering or cleaning up a particular corner
- Consulting with arborists and plant experts
- Shopping for plants, trees and shrubs
- Assisting with special tree plantings
- Redesigning areas or beds
- Caring for nursery plants in her yard – sometimes for years

Thank you, Joan for your vision, your dedication, your leadership and for all the hours you have given to Dominion Brook Park. You have made a huge contribution to the rejuvenation of this horticultural legacy that is now forever a treasure in our community.

We Have a New Stone Wall!

On October 19 and 20 a group of ten volunteers met in the Park with a mission to build a dry stone rock wall.

The group included the entire Board of the Friends of Dominion Brook Park Society, family and friends. Most of us had no rock building experience, but we brought enthusiasm, a strong work ethic, and a desire to learn. The teachers, Kevin Wilson, Ben Edgington, and Sandy MacDonald came from *Rocks and Stone Inc.*, a local masonry firm. Good humour, patience, and a guiding hand characterised their teaching style, letting everyone learn by doing.

Kevin started the workshop with an explanation of the tools of the trade, how they are used and the basic elements of dry laid rock wall construction. Then, he set the group to work.

- Digging a trench for the foundation
- Stringing lines to guide the slope
- Sorting rocks
- Identifying key corner stones and foundation pieces
- Splitting large pieces of granite
- Selecting and shaping rocks and securing them in place

What a sense of satisfaction and awe when you hammer at a rock with a chisel until a piece shears off to reveal a flat surface that will be perfect for the face of a rock wall.

Over the course of the first day, the various piles of rock got smaller and an orderly stack of rocks took the shape of wall along the bank near the dry stone bridge. On Sunday morning chips and wedges were fit into all the small spaces and the cap stones were set along the top of the wall.

Mission accomplished!



Thank you to our Volunteers

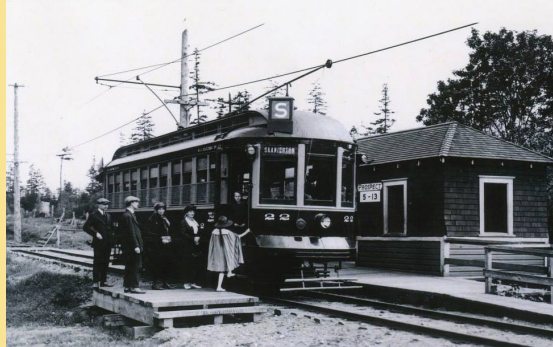
On October 9, 2019, another work season in the Park came to an end. Starting in March, our dedicated group met every Wednesday to rake, weed, haul debris or carry out whatever tasks were assigned that week. This year the Park needed lots of cleanup after the winter snow and wind damage.

Thank you for coming each week with a smile. Thank you for your hard work. Thank you for making Dominion Brook Park a special and beautiful place to visit.



A Railway Tale Part II

By Ian Cameron



Saanich Interurban line, Prospect Station

Part 1 of this saga appeared in the Summer edition of the newsletter and dealt with the Victoria and Sidney Railway.

In the 1890s, Victoria was one of the most modern cities in Canada. Electricity, the telephone, streetcars all appeared in Victoria sooner than anywhere else west of Winnipeg. By 1900 however, Vancouver had caught up primarily because it was the western terminus of the CPR. In the course of the next decade, the local streetcar company, the British Columbia Electric Railway Company, followed the lead of large cities in the United States and extended its service to nearby communities by constructing interurban lines.

In 1911 the Victoria Sidney Railway was in serious trouble. The roadbed was falling apart, the rails were worn, and wood, used to fuel the locomotives, was getting

scarce. The BC Electric Railway Company decided that it could repeat its interurban success on the lower mainland by building a line from Victoria to the end of the Saanich peninsula.

The Victoria to Deep Bay (now Deep Cove) line opened for business in 1913. It started at the end of the number 10 streetcar line at Burnside and Boleskine and followed what is now Interurban Road and the Interurban Rail Trail, West Saanich Road, Wallace Drive, Aldous Terrace, the eastern border of Dominion Brook Park, Mainwaring Road, airport runway 14/32, and Tatlow Road to Deep Cove.

The line was initially a success and virtually put the V&S out of the passenger business. Fares were cheaper, and the cars were cleaner – no smoke and cinders. The route went past the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, Brentwood Bay, and Dominion Brook Park. It ended at what is now the Deep Cove Chalet, all popular day-trip destinations, and all of which had small stations to allow passengers to get out of the elements.

The Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, which opened in 1918, had the second-largest astronomical telescope in the world at the time, with a 180 cm mirror. Visitors were welcome, and it was a

popular stop.

The Brentwood Hotel, which later became Brentwood College, was also a popular destination. Partly because the nearby electrical generating plant, which provided the Interurban with power, as well as supplying 1/3 of Victoria's electricity, took cold water out of the inlet and poured 70 C water back in, which made for very warm swimming.

Dominion Brook Park was a popular picnic spot, especially for large groups, and the Experimental Farm offered tours. Much later, the Dominion Brook Park station was moved 100 metres to the southwest and is now the picnic shelter. The Chalet was built as a place for public refreshment and as a hotel. As Deep Bay's popularity grew, six cottages were constructed, and a tennis court was built on the northern side overlooking the beach. Weekly evening excursion trains to the Chalet ran from April to October with a combined cost of train fare and an evening dance of 75 cents.

But roads were getting better, cars more common, and bus and jitney services improving. The overhead lines, supported by wooden poles, were tired and replacements expensive. And to cap it off, there was a much greater demand for electric power than there had been, and the line used a lot of electricity. And there was more competition, much tougher than the V&S.

The interurban line closed on November 1, 1924.

Twilight Visitors

Have you seen any bats in the Park?

The pond and abundance of trees suitable for roosting make Dominion Brook Park a good place for bats to live. Yet, as far as we know, none have been seen there this year.

Bats are an integral part of our ecosystems, controlling forest, agriculture, and urban pests (eating half their weight in insects per night). However, half the species of bats in BC are currently considered species at risk. Things are expected to get much worse as a rapidly spreading bat fungal disease called white-nose syndrome is expected to reach Vancouver Island soon. It does not affect people, but it has near 100% mortality for some species, including the local little brown bats. White-nose syndrome has

resulted in a 90% drop in their populations within five years after the disease has reached a site.

The BC Community Bat Program is monitoring the situation and promoting the conservation of bats and their habitat. If any bats are spotted at Dominion Brook Park, they will assess the Park and recommend improvements that could be made for the bats, such as installing bat houses. For this reason, please notify us at contactus@dominionbrookpark.ca if you see any bats at the Park. If you see bats flying in the winter (a symptom of the disease), or find a dead bat at the Park or anywhere else, please contact the BC Community Bat Program at 1 855 922-2287 or info@bcbats.ca

And don't touch bats with your bare hands! Rabid bats have been found on the Peninsula.

Featured plant - *Pittosporum garnettii*

As the leaves fall to ground in October, the evergreen trees and shrubs can truly show their value in providing year round colour and interest. A good example is the *Pittosporum garnettii*, a medium sized evergreen shrub with grey green leaves edged in cream. In late spring the small, bell shaped, dark purple flowers attract honeybees. It is a relatively

easy shrub to grow in a sunny or partially shaded area that is well drained and provides some protection from cold winds.

Our specimen is located in the sunken garden and can be best seen when walking along the north border of the Park, between the fence and the sunken garden.



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