

The Knockan Hill Park Newsletter



All members, other friends and neighbours are invited to the Friends of Knockan Hill Park Society's **Annual General Meeting on Monday, February 7th 2011 at 7:00 p.m.** The location is different this year: we will be at the **Strawberry Vale Community Hall**, right across the street from the St. Columba Church Hall. The church has been closed and their hall is no longer available for rentals. **Ann Nightingale**, past president of the Victoria Natural History Society will give a presentation on the annual Victoria Christmas Bird Count.

Stranton Lodge – A Heritage Site Within the Park

Stranton Lodge is situated at 1248 Burnside Road West, adjacent to the border between Saanich and View Royal. The cottage was designed in the Arts and Crafts style by Hubert Savage and was built for Tom Hall, then principal of George Jay School, and his wife Maude. It sits on a rocky bluff on the south side of Knockan Hill, commanding a view of Portage Inlet and the Olympic mountains above the Straits of Juan de Fuca.

In their forest surroundings, the Halls created an Arts and Crafts period garden with over a dozen pools in three cascading series, carefully crafted to take advantage of natural rock formations and slopes. Arthur Lahmer, a well-respected local nurseryman and gardener, was employed to do the landscaping. Some of the work he did there was faithfully recorded in his diaries and his daughter Betty Witwicki recently used them to good advantage in her self published book about her father's landscaping activities. Tom Hall, a widely admired educator became Inspector of Schools for Lower Vancouver Island. He passed away in 1965 and his widow, Maude Hall remained at Stranton Lodge

until 1973. She sold the four hectare property to Saanich to add to the public land on Knockan Hill because she wanted to save it from future development. At Maude's death at the age of 103 in 1985, the cottage, which had been rented, was vacated. In 1990, Saanich Council made a decision to demolish the house and its unique garden to accommodate a parking lot for visitors to the park.

Members of the newly formed Friends of Knockan Hill Park Society and local heritage groups joined forces and lobbied successfully against this decision. Stranton Lodge was designated as the first Saanich Heritage Site in 1992 and is still administered by the Saanich Heritage Foundation. The cottage was restored and then rented to provide a sustainable source of revenue for the ongoing maintenance of the house and garden. Since that time members of the Friends of Knockan Hill Park Society and other neighbours have continued to make significant voluntary contributions to the maintenance and restoration of both cottage and garden.

Albums of photographs of Stranton Lodge were donated to the Friends of Knockan Hill by Norah Stephenson, Maude Hall's niece. These have since been transferred to the care of the Saanich Archives and are featured on the municipality's website. Any interested persons can view the photographs at the Archives and get copies made for a nominal fee. A bear rug which adorned the living room floor, and which came from Prince George, and not from the local woods has been donated to the Saanich Historical Artifacts Society.

The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team is holding its 8th Annual Research Colloquium on **Friday February 11th**, from 9:00 to 4:00 at the Pacific Forestry Centre at 506 Burnside Road West. **Call 250-383-5449 to register.** There will be a series of presentations on current research pertinent to Garry Oak ecosystems and opportunities for discussion and networking. The event is free and you'll be able to buy lunch at the cafeteria.

FRIENDS OF KNOCKAN HILL PARK SOCIETY

2011 Membership Form

Family Fee - \$5.00

Name _____ **Tel.** _____

Address _____ **Postal Code** _____

E-mail _____

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Pay at the door of the AGM, or please mail this completed form, with fee, to: Jean Screech, Membership/Treasurer, FKHPS, 1256 Burnside Road West, Victoria, BC, V8Z 1N8