



LEAVES Newsletter



CRITICAL TIME FOR RIVERVIEW APPROACHING

Sue Habegger

The political scene around the future of the Riverview Lands has been ominously quiet lately. This is not always a good thing!

There has been a great deal of media coverage about the problem of homelessness and the plight of the mentally ill. The BC Government has instituted a new "people's court" whereby individuals who commit crimes as a result of addiction or mental illness can be sentenced to residential treatment BUT the new 150 bed facility to accommodate these clients is in Burnaby. There have been rumours of new beds opening at Riverview, but so far nothing definite has been announced. At all-candidate meetings leading up to the recent municipal elections, several people suggested that Riverview would be an ideal place for a shelter or treatment facility to help deal with the growing problem of homelessness in the Tri-Cities but again, no definite proposals are forthcoming.

Regular readers of this newsletter will know that the Riverview Lands are now on both the municipal and the provincial heritage registry and we anticipate that they will soon be on the national heritage registry. While this

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is an important statement about the high value the public places on the property, the heritage designation itself does not give any legal guarantee that would prevent housing development there. We have enjoyed solid support from our municipal representatives over the past few years but they are not the landowners. The site is the property of the Provincial Government who have the authority to demolish the buildings, destroy the trees, and do whatever they want with this prime 244 acre site. The only thing preventing this is public opinion. This is how our democracy works!

We are facing a provincial election in May 2009. There is speculation that if Riverview preservation does not emerge as a major election issue and if the current government is returned to power, they will move quickly to develop the lands early in their mandate - (knowing that the electorate has a short memory). The downturn in real estate values is working in our favor – Minister Coleman's proposal for 10,000 market housing units does not seem like such a great idea as many developers struggle to find buyers and capital in the new economic reality. The final decision to route skytrain through Port Moody also relieved pressure to develop the site for market housing. Meanwhile, however, the vacant heritage buildings at Riverview continue to deteriorate and the budget for maintenance shrinks.

Your society is working hard to keep the Riverview issue in the spotlight. We have purchased new audio visual equipment and we are prepared to make the case for preservation wherever we can! We need to move outside of the Tri-Cities area and let the citizens of BC know how important this site is to us and to future generations.

We are asking members to help us out – particularly those of you who live outside the Tri-Cities. Can you suggest a group to whom we could present? Would you like to arrange a special tour of the property for your colleagues, friends, or social group? Can you write one more letter to your MLA and your Premier reminding them that this is our shared legacy and asking them to keep the lands in public ownership and dedicated to the needs of the mentally ill and other appropriate uses? The next 5 months could be a turning point for the Riverview Lands. We can't let up!



TAXUS: THE YEW TREE

Mary Brown



Irish Yew aurea

Taxus brevifolia is native to British Columbia. It got its name from the short leaves. It may grow as a shrub, or up to 25 m. in height. The bark is reddish. It was found to be one of the best Yews for taxol

Taxus Baccata 'fastigiata' is Irish Yew, an upright variety, all descended from a tree brought in from the wild in Ireland in the eighteenth century.

Other species are found in Sumatra and El Salvador.

Yews have aroused a lot of interest, because of their age and legends. Several books refer to them, including:

'Tales of the Trees' by Val Adolph, one of our founding members

"Yew and NonYew" by John Bartholomew. Fun made of gardening snobbery.

"Meeting with Remarkable Trees" by Thomas Pakenham



English yew

This is one of the longest living trees, some having been known to live for 4000 years in Britain. Many myths and legends have grown up around them, Yew trees were sacred to Celts, Romans and Greeks, and in due course were grown in church yards, which may have taken over an old druid site, already planted with yew.

Yew wood is hard, and was often used for bows and arrows, also for musical instruments. Through overuse native yews became almost extinct. During the twentieth century a component of yew, known as Taxol was used to treat cancer, and a campaign was mounted in England for people to refrain from hedge clipping, until the time that a collection could occur in their area, for medicinal use. Later a synthetic form was developed, so the yews are again thriving.

Taxus Baccata or English Yew is evergreen, with dark green needles, and red berries, (which are very toxic). As it ages the heartwood is lost, making it hard to count the age by rings. They grow across Europe to Sweden and Iran. One tree in Russia is more than 40 metres tall.



Irish Yew-aurea



Male flowers *Taxus baccata*

All Photos by Niall Williams

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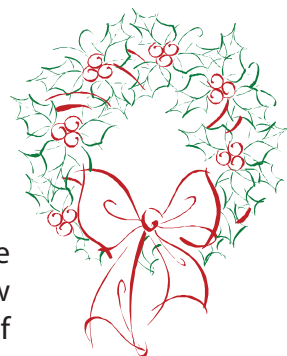
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Health & Happiness 2009



All of us on the executive, through out the years, have concentrated on the Heritage importance of the Riverview Lands, the incredible Collection of Trees, and the site of Western Canada's 1st Botanical Garden.

It is only recently that we have turned our attentions to the homeless issues of the mentally ill. To only house the mentally ill with little or no support will not work. We have 244 acres with many heritage type cottages and staff ready to receive them. We need only the will. The Land has always been theirs.

Thank You to all our donors and the many Volunteers who came out to make Treefest 2008 a success. Many thanks as well to all those who came out in support. The Heritage and Tree walks went well and it was good to see so many members and families enjoying the good weather.

Health and Happiness in 2009

Norma Gillespie

