

The Elm Park Jack Newsletter – The Sky is Falling Edition



A massive bough from an aging cedar tree fell on the clubhouse Friday morning

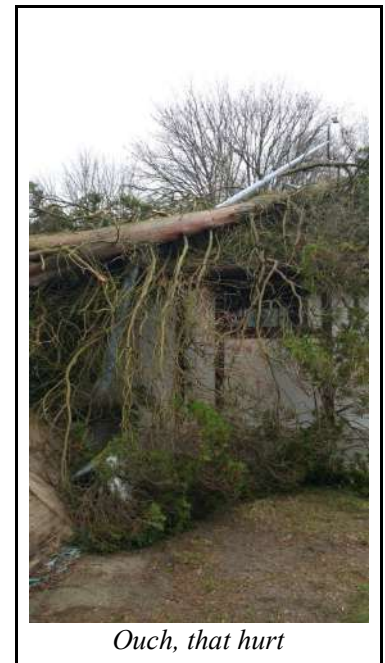
An unwelcome wind

A casual meeting to have some papers signed was abruptly interrupted when a section of a tree landed on the roof of the Kerrisdale Lawn Bowling Club Friday morning.

Five members of the club, including executive president Peter Lee, past president John Aveline, treasurer Peter Cook and board members David Goddard and Joyce Bolleman, were all inside the clubhouse for a 10 a.m. meeting, when the cedar tree on the north-east corner of the green by the workshed suddenly split apart in strong winds and a 75-foot section of the tree fell on the roof.

The damage to the 100-plus year old tree occurred at approximately 10:15 a.m. and came as a result of an early morning weather system that brought with it strong winds to the south coast, with recorded gusts up to 70 km/h.

Area neighbours from as far as a block away heard the noises caused by the tree's trunk cracking in two and finally giving way.



Ouch, that hurt



A clean break

Neighbours heard noises

One neighbour, out walking his two dogs later that afternoon, said he heard “a cracking sound ... and then a boom,” earlier that morning from his residence three houses directly south of the club off 40th avenue.

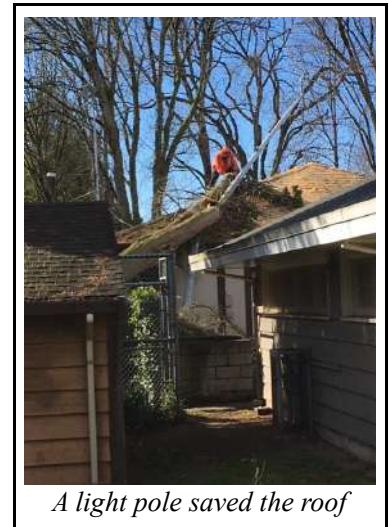
But to the members inside the clubhouse, the noise of the tree splitting apart seemed more like that of someone dragging something heavy up the ramp to the clubhouse door or an object blown around by the strong winds.

The impact of the tree bough falling on the roof was solid enough to dislodge a wooden lawn bowl from the shelving, sending it falling to the floor.

The noises prompted David G. to open the club door to take a look. He was surprised by what he saw. “I thought what it was was somebody outside stamping their feet,” he said.

Perhaps luckily, the force of the tree section that fell on the club's roof was lessened by that of the outdoor light standard that was directly in its path.

The light pole to the eastern green was completely taken out by the falling tree, but appeared to soften the impact and may have spared the roof serious damage, said one park worker on site at the time of the clean up.



A light pole saved the roof

Damage appears minimal

An official look into any potential damage to the clubhouse roof has yet to be made, but a visual check by those at the meeting to the interior of the women's locker room area turned up no visible evidence of cracks or damage sustained from the force of the tree falling on that corner of the roof, said David G.

The club's insurance company has also been notified, added Peter L.



A long crane was called in

Peter L. was also told that the base of the damaged cedar tree would be completely removed, perhaps as early as this Monday.

Quick response by parks crew

Shortly after the executive board contacted the Vancouver Parks Board about the fallen tree, it took less than half an hour for the first workers to respond and react to the apparant damage.

By 11 a.m., a crew with support from a truck with a long crane attached was already onsite to begin the day-long removal of the colossal tree branch from the roof of the clubhouse.

Currently, the entire club grounds are cordoned off and stand behind yellow tape with the wood debris sawed from the fallen portion of the tree piled up behind the Elm Park's ball diamond screen fencing, completely blocking the walking path and access to the bowling club's back door.



The Kerrisdale Lawn Bowling Club is behind yellow tape for the time being

An auspicious day in history

It was exactly 165 years ago to the day that the Covent Garden opera house in London, England was destroyed in a fire on March 5.

It would not be the last incendiary event to plague the halls at Covent Garden either.

A century later, the Paul Hamlyn floral hall adjacent to the opera house also caught fire in 1956 and sat derelict for some 40 years before it was finally redeveloped.

One can only hope that the oldest lawn bowling clubhouse in the Lower Mainland will not suffer a similar fate and will have sustained what appears to be only superficial damages.



Cleaning up



Crumpled light standard still standing

A cypress in cedar clothing

It is thought that the damaged tree in question just happens to be B.C.'s official tree.

The Western red cedar was officially adopted as the province of British Columbia's tree on Feb. 18, 1988.

However, the indigenous red cedar or *Thuja plicata* is not a true cedar but rather a coniferous evergreen native to North America of the cypress family *Cupressaceae*.

The red cedars are a rapidly growing tree that, under ideal conditions, can grow as much as three feet in a year. Growing to a height of 200 feet, or 60 metres, the red cedar can live for several hundred years.

In remembrance of the early March storm that blew down the tall cedar tree, perhaps the club could talk the Park's Board into leaving a few of the large core cuttings behind as mementos.

Meeting had its moments

Despite the untimely interruption caused by the falling tree, the Kerrisdale club executive were able to finish their work, signing off on a successful \$9,000 grant application put forward by first-year treasurer Peter C.

The money is earmarked for a hot water tank and furnace, five new sprinkler heads, with the remaining moneys to be put towards promoting the club.

The board members were in the process of finishing up the initialling of the appropriate forms, when the heavy branch slammed onto the clubhouse roof with a “soft thud”.



Lots of firewood



Little damage?

It was all foretold

Curiously, less than half an hour before the damaging wind storm brought the tree down upon them, one of the board members was heard telling the others about the inkling she had about what was about to take place.

“It's a coincidence, but Joyce was commenting on whether that tree would hold up in the windstorm, about 25 minutes before it actually happened,” said Peter L.



One can only wonder how stable the west-side cedars are?