



O'Hara '90

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Le Relais - A Positive New Aspect of the O'Hara Experience

All of the warmth, joy, fellowship and sense of well being traditionally associated with a country inn permeates Le Relais at Lake O'Hara.

Designed by a life member of the Trails Club, architect Dale Windle, Le Relais is very inviting, functional and reflective of the character found in many of the older buildings throughout Yoho Park. Le Relais itself represents an important tangible example of the excellent spirit of co-operation which has existed at O'Hara for over forty years between the Canadian Parks Service and the Trails Club.

Situated in a convenient yet unobtrusive location, Le Relais showcases outstanding craftsmanship in the log work of local contractor Bob Blackburn and his crew of Dean Spence and Avinga Atkinson. Contributions by others were extensive. Yoho Parks personnel assisted in both the siting and excavations. Large amounts of volunteer effort to finish the building and landscape the site were cheerfully provided by numerous Trails Club members, including members of the 1989 Lake O'Hara Lodge staff. Funds to construct Le Relais were provided by the Trails Club and exceptional project management by Tim Wake made it all happen.

Le Relais was opened officially on September 3, 1989, and is the physical headquarters of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club. As such, during the summer months Le Relais is staffed and a variety of Trails Club items such as pins, crests, maps and books are available along with light snacks and beverages. The most important items of all are the warm



welcome and the helpful advice which are always available.

During the winter months Le Relais will be open on an honour system basis. It will not be staffed, but as long as it is used responsibly, it will be left open from January 20 to April 10 to provide a spot for skiers to warm up and eat their bag lunch. The first winter of opening Le Relais on this basis was a great success.

We invite your comments on Le Relais' operations, the trails themselves or any other aspect of your visit. Trails Club members are wholly committed to enhancing your O'Hara experience.

Please address your comments or suggestions to:

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Bear Study Update

An on-going study of the comings and goings and dietary preferences of grizzly bears in Yoho and adjoining Kootenay National Park is now into its third season.

Since the study began in 1988, nine bears have been fitted with radio collars. Three have since died and the whereabouts of a fourth is unknown. Two died from natural causes; the third, leaving the sanctuary of the park, fell prey to a hunter, who returned the collar to the park.

"Nobody expected to lose this many bears in a single year," says Kevin McLaughlin, Yoho's warden in charge of bear management. "It has certainly forced us to alter our study priorities. We were planning on doing most of the collaring during the first year; now we'll have to continue

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Superintendent's Message

Welcome to Yoho National Park and Lake O'Hara.

Let's face it — O'Hara is a unique place. That's why some of you are returning for the umpteenth time, and you first-time visitors have already had a glimpse of its specialness. There are few places on earth where one can be driven in comfort to the hearth of the alpine and yet still feel surrounded by a relatively pristine environment.

Over the years, a number of you have expressed concerns and sometimes anger at the way Parks has managed O'Hara and its visitors. This flow of comments and a growing concern on the part of Yoho's management team has created a dire need for innovative planning.

This past winter has been a busy one for Yoho park planning staff and professional planners at the Calgary regional office. We've been putting the final touches on a number of important documents which will direct us in future management of the area.

The Yoho National Park Service Plan will determine the level of service to be provided for the O'Hara area, and will also define what is considered inappropriate.

Closely associated with the service plan, the Quota Study will result in fine-tuning of how the quota, reservation systems and shuttle bus service operate.

The Trail Concept establishes construction and maintenance standards, assesses the need for future trailwork and establishes priorities.

The Area Plan pulls all of these exercises — plus traditional land use and resource management plans — together to provide a unified document to guide management of the O'Hara area. Public participation was an intrinsic part of the planning process.

By summer's end, we hope that the future for O'Hara will be a clear path and will prove to be a model for other areas that require limitations on use. Copies of the Lake O'Hara Area Plan are public documents. I encourage you, during your visit, to update yourself on this ongoing program.

Have an enjoyable visit.

Ian Church
Superintendent
Yoho National Park

Bear Study

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collaring bears to replace the ones we've lost in order to have a viable study."

While it's still too early in the study to draw any firm conclusions about seasonal movement patterns, some interesting things are emerging. The bears not only wander freely between the two parks, but are also ranging outside the study area into Banff National Park and onto adjacent provincial lands.

"This fact alone could be quite significant in terms of bear management in Yoho," said McLaughlin. "It means that Yoho isn't big enough by itself to maintain a viable grizzly population. The fact that one of our study bears was legally hunted outside the park drives home the point that many of the bears that use the park are subject to outside influences. It means we have to start looking beyond the park's boundaries and co-operate more fully with other

agencies in order to ensure the long term protection of the bears."

Better information about the bears and their habits should make it easier to protect visitors too. "The information we gain will be useful in locating and designing backcountry trails and campsites. It will also help us decide when to post warnings or close an area."

So far none of the study bears have been located right in the O'Hara area. "That doesn't mean that visitors to O'Hara should become complacent," warns McLaughlin. "We have located study bears in the surrounding upper McArthur, Misko and Tokumm Creek watersheds, and there have been signs of bears moving through the area, particularly in the McArthur Pass area and around Odaray and Schaffer Lakes. So hikers at Lake O'Hara, as in other areas of the park, should check the weekly bear reports before heading out and remain alert for fresh bear sign on the trails."

Trail Concept and Quota Study to be Reflected in Lake O'Hara Area Plan

Two important studies undertaken by the Canadian Parks Service in 1989 are now complete.

The Lake O'Hara Trail Concept study by Gardner Associates Ltd. has taken the form of a document titled Lake O'Hara Trail Guidelines. This report divides the area into six distinct landscape units and describes the characteristics of each one. It then proceeds to identify appropriate and inappropriate trail reconstruction techniques within each landscape unit. These techniques are discussed in some detail and photographs illustrate examples.

The second document, completed in February of this year, is called the Lake O'Hara Visitors Survey and was prepared by Maureen Bush and Richard Roberts of Praxis, Calgary. It outlines a profile of those who visit Lake O'Hara and presents a statistical analysis of the visitor response to the survey conducted in the summer of 1989. It also lists the specific comments and suggestions of visitors and states that, overall, respondents are very satisfied with the current management system at Lake O'Hara.

The responses also identify some areas for improvement. These include requests for better maps and signs, a later outbound bus run and more interpretive services. On the issue of the visitor quota, there is strong support for maintaining the status quo. While there is some support for increasing day use quotas slightly, any increase can also be expected to generate some opposition, according to the survey results.

The Lake O'Hara Area Plan will be completed this season in keeping with the Yoho National Park Management Plan November 1988, and taking into account the information gathered and presented in these two documents.

Copies of Lake O'Hara Trail Guidelines and the Lake O'Hara Visitor Survey are available for you to read at Le Relais. If you wish to have your own copy or if you have any comments or suggestions, please contact:

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Memories of a Mountain Girl



Lake O'Hara Staff, 1955, with Charlotte Tuerck front and centre, flanked by Major Longstaff and Dr. Link.

While glamour, glitz and glory were being snatched up by early women mountaineers with showbiz pizzazz, in the wings women of a rarer breed were quietly making their mark.

These were the working women of the mountains and among them was Charlotte Tuerck (pronounced "Turk"). At various times farmer, horse raiser, trainer, stable girl, guide, and riding instructor, Charlotte was over 65 when she became manageress of Lake O'Hara Lodge. There she became legendary for her glowing delight in the mountains, her untiring energy, and her fierce devotion to the comfort of her guests.

Charlotte was born on a farm in Austria. Her family raised horses and Charlotte was sent to the Imperial Spanish Riding School in Vienna to learn the finer points of horsemanship and horse-training. She later trained as a nurse, but her first and abiding loves were for the outdoors and working with horses.

In 1925, Charlotte, her husband and four children emigrated to Canada and began farming in Olds, Alberta. When her husband died two years later, Charlotte had her hands full running both a farm and a family, working as a nurse and, in her "spare" time, training polo ponies.

At the age of 40, lured by the

mountains, Charlotte signed on as a stable girl with Brewsters in Banff. Before long she had persuaded them to let her start guiding, which she continued to do until she was in her late 50s. On one of her favourite trips she guided two women all the way to the Columbia Icefields and back. She never tired of "the Circuit" — Lake Louise, O'Hara, McArthur, Ottertail, Emerald River, Emerald Lake, Yoho Pass, Field, and back to Lake Louise.

As manageress of Lake O'Hara Lodge, Charlotte's pride in her hospitality translated into an iron fist in dealing with her staff. Harry Ford — a young boy at the time — remembers vividly building a house of dominoes one day, only to have it toppled by Mrs. Tuerck when she needed him to bring firewood to one of the cabins.

For years Charlotte would return to O'Hara each August to see old friends and make new ones. "If she saw anybody throwing garbage on the trail or being careless, she'd just lecture them on the spot," recalls Irene Brook. She also continued to seek new challenge. At the age of 73 she realized an ambition and climbed Mount Odaray with Hans Gmoser, whom she praised as a very patient and thoughtful guide.

In her later years, Charlotte

worked at the Archives of the Canadian Rockies (now the Whyte Museum) in Banff. There she enjoyed bringing the paintings and photographs to life with her personal experiences and vivid descriptions of the scenes. "Many older people are short-sighted," she'd say, "and can't read the inscriptions on the wall."

Apart from two stays in hospital in her last years, Charlotte's health remained good. Harry Ford remembers seeing her on a ski hill in Banff. "She must have been 80 years old. She was at the top of the chairlift, helping a little eight- or nine-year old boy. She was in great shape."

When Charlotte Tuerck died in 1975, many people lost a friend. Over the years, she had introduced countless novices to these mountains. "I like to convey the beauty of the mountains to people," she once said, "and this opens up a whole new world to them. Everyone goes away more or less a friend."

In Memory of Eileen DesBrisay

In January of 1989, at the age of 97, Eileen DesBrisay died. Miss DesBrisay, of Vancouver, was a U.B.C. graduate in Agriculture. She was a strong climber and longtime member of The Alpine Club of Canada and a director of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club. Auntie Neen, as she was always called by her relatives, rode in to Lake O'Hara with Muriel and Aileen Aylard in 1936, but had been in even before that with her father.

After the 1936 visit, she and a friend were waiting by Hector Station for one of the boys from Wapta to row across the lake with their bags which had been left at Wapta Lodge. Dressed in their climbing garb and feeling quite scruffy, they were approached by a rough looking character walking the rail line. He asked if they were "hitting it to Vancouver for the winter". When they boarded the train he was nowhere in sight. Eileen remembered heading straight for the dining car and, noticing a spot on the tablecloth where she was seated, asking the waiter if he couldn't put on a fresh

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Eileen DesBrisay

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one, then bursting out laughing as she realized that someone looking as scruffy as she did had no business demanding a clean cloth.

A keen traveller, Miss DesBrisay saw much of the world but her love of Lake O'Hara and the mountains made her visits here a very important part of her life. She will be missed by all who knew her.

List of Publications Available At Le Relais

Tommy and Lawrence - \$6.00

The Ways and Trails of Lake O'Hara
by Jon Whyte

History of Lake O'Hara - \$6.00

by Lillian Gest

The Magic of Lake O'Hara - \$7.50

a trail guide by Don Beers

The Lake O'Hara Trail Map - \$2.50

by Dr. George K. K. Link

Trail Guide to Lake O'Hara - \$1.50

a trail map

Trails Bulletin

What trail work is happening at O'Hara this year?

McArthur Lake Trail Upgrading

Some short reroutes through more appropriate sites are planned, as well as revegetation of old braided trails and poorly located trail sections.

Construction methods will consist of defining the trail and crowning with a gravel tread cap, the use of rock slab inlay and waterbars.

Routine maintenance and minor repairs to all trails will be undertaken by Yoho National Park's trail crew throughout the summer.

Annual Meeting

The 1990 Annual Meeting of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club will be held at Le Relais at 8:30 p.m. on Monday, August 20.



Lake O'Hara Lodge watercolour by Ron Ellis.

A Door to the Wild

History is a bit like the enemy in a guerilla warfare operation: it sneaks up behind you when you're not looking.

Lake O'Hara Lodge is now sixty-five years old. The babes-in-arms of 1924, when it was newly built, are retiring or have retired, but the Lodge is still both youthful and venerable. Its guise is little changes. The porch has become the dining area and entranceway but the cabins of Contentment Meadow, which Jim Boyce moved to the lake shore have remained, with improved heating and plumbing; the J. E. H. MacDonald Terrace, built by Dr. Link has been twice-planted, and ground squirrels have twice-ravaged it. But time has treated the Lodge gently.

Ron Ellis of Calgary, preservationist-historian and architectural renderer, first passed by the lake and lodge in the early '60s when a friend invited him, an architecture student, to hike to Abbot Hut. For an intersessional assignment, Mr. Ellis was supposed to draw ten buildings. He wasn't sure his professor would like two forty-year old CPR buildings, but he drew them regardless.

The germ of that assignment drew Mr. Ellis back to the mountains and their unique buildings, the "doors to the wild", now fewer in number, but rich in distinction, and increasingly ripe in meaning. History crept upon him when he wasn't looking.

He has recognized nine buildings of the twenty-five or more which once provided shelter and access between Mt. Assiniboine Lodge at the south and Donald Phillips' boat house at Maligne Lake to the north. The others include Emerald Lake Lodge — the oldest of all, though now much transformed - Abbot Hut, Skoki, the Twin Falls Chalet, Num-ti-jah Lodge,

the Plain-of-Six-Glaciers Teahouse, and Lake O'Hara Lodge.

His 1989 exhibit, called **A Door to the Wild**, was shown at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, and at the Yoho National Park Information Centre, Field, B.C., the Senator Harry Hays Building, Calgary and the Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton. For it Mr. Ellis revisited each lodge and building, measured and photographed it, and prepared new plans for an archives purpose.

He has a motive larger than recognizing the buildings' aesthetics: he believes these buildings are now rare and endangered monuments of a period in the Canadian mountain past, which shall never exist again, and deserve legislative protection. (Time and the National Parks have both tried to erase the diminutive Twin Falls Chalet. Only Fran Drummond's grit and persistence preserves it.) He is correct. Parks policy will not allow more "doors to the wild" like Lake O'Hara Lodge, nor is it the type of building capital would develop these days.

Only a combination of the benevolence of the owners and lessees - not in doubt now, but circumstances can change with transfers of ownership - and national and provincial preservation legislation can assure the continuance of these remarkable buildings. The Canadian Parks Service has done just that in the case of Lake O'Hara Lodge - it was made a Heritage Building in 1988.

Jon Whyte, Curator of the Heritage Collection at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, and Mr. Ellis have collaborated on a small book which talks about these buildings, their history, uniqueness, and their part in the mosaic of the mountains. Called **A Door to the Wild** too, and published with the aid of a generous donation from the **Banff Crag and Canyon**, it is available in selected Canadian Rockies outlets.

Produced by the Lake O'Hara Trails Club volunteers in cooperation with Yoho National Park.

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