

BMN TRIP REPORT

West Harbour Chines

(Thursday, September 29, 2022)

By Mark Johnston



Descending the ridge between South Schoolhouse and Noble creeks. *June Lussier photo.*

seemed that all of our group was present, we introduced ourselves, and Ian gave a brief rundown of our proposed route.

When we were finally underway, we followed city streets to Blue Mountain Street. En route we had good views of the nearby mountains. Then, upon reaching the end of Blue Mountain, we left the asphalt and

Having explored Pinnacle Creek Ravine in Coquitlam's east Harbour Chines area earlier in the month, we turned our attention to the west Harbour Chines on the Coquitlam/Port Moody border. Once again, Ian led the hike and this time was accompanied by eight others.

More particularly, our focus was the western portion of Chineside Park, west of Gatensbury Street. The Chineside watershed consists of a number of creeks which originate as sidehill runoff on north facing slopes. We planned to visit a few of these creeks (or at least take note of their ravines), namely, Ottley, Axford, and Kyle.¹ All of the Chineside streams flow north through steep ravines until they are culverted as they reach the northern edge of the park. Ottley Creek enters its culvert on the south side of Henry Street between Douglas and Elgin streets; Axford Creek enters its culvert at the southern end of Elgin Street; and Kyle Creek enters its culvert at the southern end of Kyle Street.²

As afternoon faded into evening, we gathered at Miller Park, where, in shirtsleeve weather, parkgoers were still quite happy to be outdoors. When it

began a steep descent—sometimes aided by lengthy staircases—of the narrow ridge between South Schoolhouse and Noble creeks. Between the staircases we had to step with care as the dry, worn path provided little purchase. After several minutes, and sixty metres of lost elevation, we bottomed out at the back of Port Moody Secondary School.



Looking across the roof of Pacific Coast Terminal's potash storage facility toward Eagle Ridge. *June Lussier photo.*

trees, and the abundant sword fern displays in discrete plantings, each bursting forth like streamers from an exploding firework.

After fording Ottley Creek, we ignored a trail leading upward to Porter Street, and instead angled less steeply toward Axford Creek. We crossed Axford on a sturdy bridge, travelled a short, level section of old road, and then struck out upward once again, this time on the ridge between Axford and Kyle creeks. Somewhere along this stretch we had an unobstructed view of the western sky. Above a thin band of cloud the sky was a fiery red orange. Below the cloud, appearing to be part of the sunset's colour, was a horizontal stripe of brilliant yellow. But, as in the case of the inlet waters, this, too, proved to be an illusion. As we continued to look, the stripe “materialized” into PCT's long windrow piles of stored sulphur!

At the far end of the secondary school parking lot, near a decrepit basketball court, we had a peekaboo view of Buntzen and Eagle ridges. The slowly setting sun was throwing a shaft of light across the top of Buntzen Ridge's southern extension, Sugar Mountain, as well as across Eagle Ridge. It seemed the waters of Moody Inlet were colouring the intervening space between near and distant shores a dark blue, but this proved to be an optical illusion. As we considered the view, we realized that we were not looking at the water itself, but the expansive roof of Pacific Coast Terminal's potash storage facility! While we were contemplating the scene, we heard a flicker's distinctive *klee-yer*. We would neither see nor hear any other bird all evening.

Just east of the school's parking area, we began to ascend again, this time on the broader ridge between Noble and Ottley creeks. We regained our lost elevation but didn't pursue the steeper upper portion of the trail, which ultimately would have brought us out on MacIntosh Street. Instead, we reversed course and descended again, but part way down forked east to rejoin the trail from the school farther along. The ridgetop is dotted with mature

It was beginning to grow darker in the forest. We rose steadily, though not as steeply as before. As we began to regain the elevation we had lost most recently, we looked across Kyle Creek ravine to see the flashes of headlights as automobiles negotiated the hairpin turn on Gatensbury Street. When we finally topped out, we found ourselves on Lillian Street.

For the rest, we followed city streets back to our starting point, except that we walked behind Harbour View Elementary School and, wherever possible, used east-west pass-through trails between north-south streets. When we arrived back at our cars, a crescent moon was shining brightly above the band of cloud, while the lingering orange below signalled the end of another day. As with our hike in Pinnacle Creek Ravine, our latest excursion into the Chines proved to be a revelation. We found an organized system of trails, mature trees, and a delightful understory. Although we saw only one other hiker, it seems that, as the area becomes better known, such experiences of almost complete solitude will become increasingly less likely.

¹ Others farther east are Hachley, West Sundial, East Sundial, and Goulet.

² For the record, Hachley Creek enters its culvert at the southern end of Grant Street; West and East Sundial creeks flow together and the combined stream enters its culvert at the southern end of Moody Street; and Goulet Creek enters its culvert at the southern end of Hugh Street. The culverted streams flow beneath Moody Centre to a single collector duct which empties into a short channel on the north side of Murray Street at the entrance gate to Pacific Coast Terminals. This channel flows north fifty metres until it enters Moody Inlet.