



Friends of Fintry Provincial Park

The Octagon – April 2020

Greetings Friends:

Well, here we are midst one of the most catastrophic times our world has ever seen.....it feels as if we are living in a scary movie with no ending. While the world is spinning out of control... we are safe and the only thing we can control are our own actions by staying home, not mingling with others even if they appear to be healthy and washing your hands!

When I wrote the last Octagon my bags were packed and I was anticipating a trip to see family in the UK, but two days before I was due to fly I could see the writing on the wall and cancelled everything. So glad I did!

Like everything else around us, all Fintry meetings, activities etc., including our annual May Fair, have been put on hold but we are hopeful that we can salvage some of our summer if things get back to normal by July.

Now for some uplifting news.....huge congratulations to Okanagan Spirits Craft Distillery (OSCD) for their spectacular collection of awards in the recent trade show in Austria. Not only did “The Laird” take a Double Gold among all the other triumphs, but OSCD made the news in spite of the media’s concentration on another topic. James Cameron would have a bit more than a smile on his face now!

Still on the subject of alcohol, Dan Bruce our Curator, has sent me some info on another product from Okanagan Spirits.....Absinthe.

The “Oxford” defines “taboo” as something set apart or prohibited, so one might wonder why Okanagan Spirits chose that word (one of the few in the English language that is taken from the native language of Tonga) as the name for their Absinthe product. The name evokes some of the mystique that surrounds this particular drink which was most fashionable in France and Switzerland in the mid nineteenth century. It became almost a cult, and was blamed, without any really valid reason for a great increase in alcoholism in continental Europe at that time. England had no cause to point a finger however, as London had had its own devastating “love affair” with gin in the preceding century.

Such was the craze that developed for absinthe that the authorities finally banned its production and use at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States.

It was said that those who overindulged would have visions that often included the “Green Fairy”, a fair damsel, dressed in green, the colour of the drink when mixed with ice cold water. Beautiful, but with a decided tendency to lead astray, the Green Fairy may be represented by the Art Nouveau porcelain figure in the dining room at Fintry. . . her skirt shaped to hold the sugar cubes that some drinkers liked to pour their absinthe over.



*Wormwood is a Mediterranean herb, *Artemisia absinthium*, which is used in the production of absinthe, although the dominant flavour is that of anise. Other species of *Artemisia* are found locally, the familiar sagebrush of the dry areas of the BC interior. They are vastly different from culinary sage and it takes a skillful distiller to incorporate *Artemisia* into something palatable. I would suspect that absinthe was probably not used at Fintry, especially given the availability of the original Laird of Fintry scotch. Some well-known characters that did commune with the Green Fairy were Picasso, Verlaine, Manet, Baudelaire, Degas, Oscar Wilde, Van Gogh, Gauguin and Edgar Allen Poe, to name a few. Visit Okanagan Spirits either in Kelowna or Vernon when opportunity presents and have a taste, a sip of history indeed.*



The birds are still singing, the spring flowers are blooming and new life is emerging all around us. Try to keep your spirits up, stay healthy, stay safe and we will get through this.

Kathy Drew,
Friends of Fintry Provincial Park