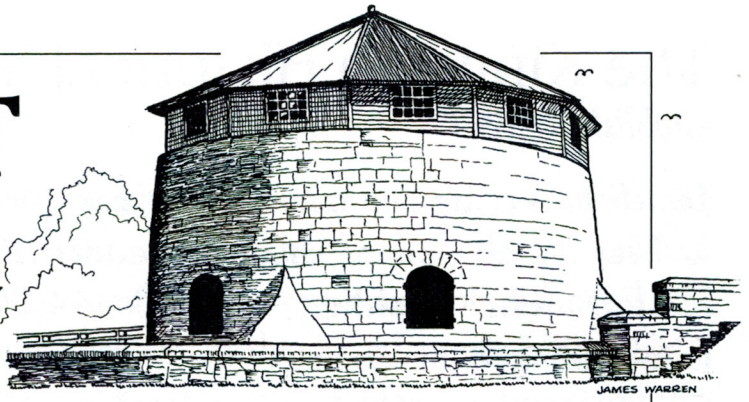


# LIMELIGHT

Newsletter of the  
Kingston Historical Society

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

After an AGM it is always time to look back and to look forward. I need to reiterate Past President Gordon Sinclair's thanks to those Council members who are not returning: Doug Petty after many years, Ross McKenzie and Eva Barnes, all of whom have helped in their various talented ways to guide the Society's fortunes.

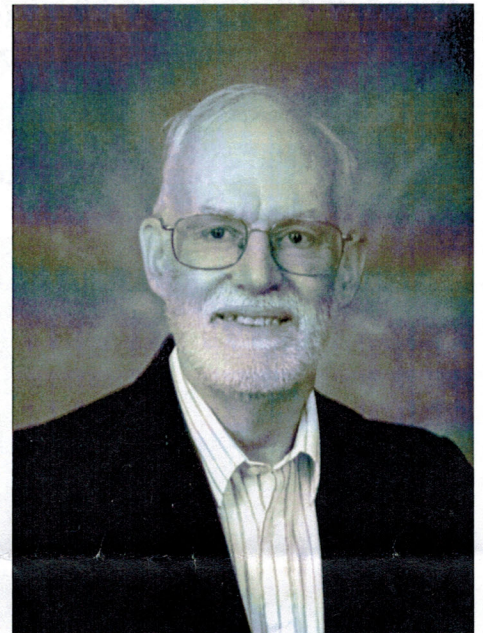
We will also miss Hazel Fotheringham and Jennifer MacKendry from their work on Historic Kingston. Bill Fitzell spoke for all of us when he noted how much improved our journal has become in recent years. I also must thank on your behalf John Whitely for his work as Treasurer, and Warren Everett for looking after the Murney Tower Museum.

After the March Council meeting we will formally announce the Committee Chairs, as there will be some changes. And, of course, the work of Gordon Sinclair cannot be overlooked, especially his efforts in arranging our first very successful conference.

I look forward to your support in the next two years by your attendance at the regular meetings with a variety of interesting topics which Alicia Boutilier and Ron Ridley have planned; in your talking about the Society to those who may not know about us or may not regularly attend our meetings; and in your thoughts about what the society might do that we have not been doing. A number of commemorations are up coming, and we need to plan well ahead if we are to

have a part in them: this is the 120th anniversary of the Society, next year sees the beginning of the 100th commemorations of the Great War; 2015 will bring the 200th anniversary of Sir John A MacDonal's birth, and in 2017 our Province will turn 150! Should we be part of these commemorations, or should we just restrict ourselves to Kingston's history?

Please let me know in whatever way is most convenient for you.



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# The Kingston Historical Society

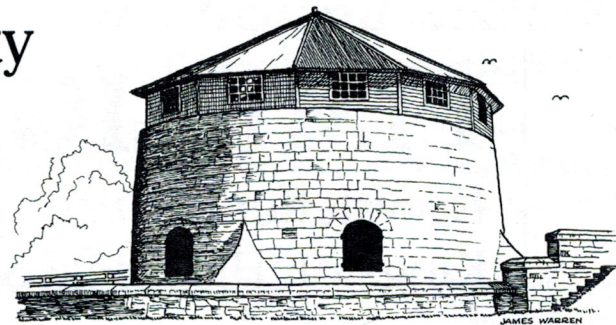
established 1893

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KHS holds monthly talks or events, usually at 7:30 pm on the third Wednesday of the month, September to May, usually in the Wilson Room of the Kingston Public Library on Johnson Street at Bagot Street. Special annual events include a dinner and talk honouring the birthday of Sir John A. Macdonald in January and a ceremony marking his death in June.

**New members are welcome!** Membership rates are \$50 individual, \$60 family, \$60 institutional or \$25 student. Memberships include *Historic Kingston*, published annually by The Kingston Historical Society.



Murney Tower by James Warren

## Kingston Historical Society

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## Executive

- Peter Gower, *President*
- Gordon Sinclair, *Past President*
- Anne Richardson, *Vice President*
- Don Richardson, *Secretary*
- Randall Levi, *Treasurer*

## Councillors

- Alicia Boutilier
- Warren Everett
- Peter Ginn
- Alan MacLachlan
- Ron Ridley
- Paul Van Nest
- John Whitely



The Kingston Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Government of Ontario

## History Related Announcements

The **Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society** will meet in the Wilson Room of Kingston Frontenac Public Library, 130 Johnson St., Saturday, March 16, 2013 at 10 a.m. Martha Whitehead, Queen's University Librarian, will speak on "The Library and Archives of the 21st Century". Visitors welcome. Further details at [www.ogs.on.ca/kingston](http://www.ogs.on.ca/kingston)

**Cataraqui Archaeological Research Foundation** 30th anniversary celebration Friday, March 22nd 2013, Renaissance Event Venue: 285 Queen Street. In commemoration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812 – 1814, a regency style dinner will be served. \$80 per person, \$72 for CARF members. To purchase tickets: visit the Centre at 611 Princess Street, or call 613.542.3483 or go to our website - <http://www.carf.info/30th-anniversary-celebration>



## THIS MONTH'S MEETING

**Wednesday, 20 March 2013 7:30 PM**

***Madeleine de Roybon D'Allone:  
Female Protagonist in the Founding of Cataraqui***

Julie B. Caton

**Wilson Room of the Kingston Frontenac Public Library  
Johnson Street, at Bagot Street**

Refreshments

All Welcome

# CURRENT TRENDS ALONG THE RIDEAU: History

I can't seem to get away from canals.



Headline.org.uk

I grew up in the Taff Valley of South Wales, a former industrial region producing iron, steel, and coal. All of it had to be transported from the hilly interior to the port of Cardiff, 25 miles (40 kms) to the south and 510 feet (165 mtrs) below. The result was that between 1790 and 1798, the Glamorganshire Canal and its 50 locks were constructed. But a new technology was in the offing. In 1804, Richard Trevithick mounted a high-pressure steam engine on wheels for Samuel Homfray of the Pen-y-Darren Ironworks in Merthyr Tydfil. Homfray made a bet of 500 guineas with one Richard Crawshay, another ironmaster and also the proprietor of the Glamorgan Canal, that his steam-leviathan could haul ten tons of iron along a newly constructed tram-road. On 21 February 1804, Trevithick's creature carried the load in five wagons – together with 70 men! – at an average speed of 2.4 mph (3.9 km.ph). This marked the advent of the new technology of steam-powered rail and, after the construction of the Taff Vale Railway in 1841, canal traffic declined. The line of the Glamorgan Canal is now marked by the beautiful heritage walk of the Taff Trail.

There are similar stories closer to my new home in North America. To the south, the Erie Canal followed close on the heels of the Glamorgan Canal in this era of improved transport. First proposed in 1807, construction started in 1817 and the canal was opened on 26 October 1825. Like its Welsh predecessor, it too overcame a fall to sea level from Albany to New York of some 565 feet (169 m) by 36 locks – but over a distance of 363 miles (584 kms)! This Hudson-Mohawk corridor-route linked the continental interior with the Atlantic, stimulated the development of the region, and contributed to the growth of the port of New York. Today, the original nineteenth century Erie and its branches such as the Black River Canal have been abandoned because of road and rail competition. While sections of the canal are part of the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, the ruins of the original locks are vivid reminders of the original system.



oabbonny.com

Can you imagine the locks at Kingston Mills, or Jones Falls, or Ottawa ending up like the abandoned locks of the Erie's Black River Canal above. Certainly, these experiences of past technologies encountering modern pragmatics are much in my mind as I reflect on current developments with our own Rideau Canal. That wonderful 202 kilometre system of 23 lock-sites and 47 locks connected the lakes and river sections to produce a waterway. Actually, only a small part of it was a "canal." More properly called the Rideau "waterway," it consisted of a series of dams and locks and man-made lakes that connects Lake Ontario at Kingston, to the Rideau River at Smith's Falls, en route to Ottawa and the Ottawa River to Montreal on the St. Lawrence. That's why old Rideau-folk say it's "down to Ottawa" and "way down to "Montreal"!"

Originally a military system, it was part of the post-1812 War strategy for the defence of British North America from the south. From 1832 to 1857 the Rideau canal was controlled by the British Ordnance, and even figured in defence plans

# to Heritage to Ruins

By Brian S Osborne

long after. From 1857-1878, it became a key element of the regional economy of Kingston's hinterland resource area and was administered by the Department of Public Works of the United Canadas. This continued after Confederation in 1867 and with priority given to transport in the new nation, from 1878-1936, it fell under the control of Railways and Canals. Later governance would fall to the Department of Transport (1937-72). Whereas elsewhere as seen above, railways and canals had been incompatible, Canada's continental transport needs required both. And this was true at the regional level too. While rail did penetrate north, the Rideau continued to carry out cargoes of mica and phosphates, iron and lead, and firewood and cheese. A growing appreciation of the beauty and escape offered by the Rideau wilderness



Brian S. Osborne

attracted recreation seekers at hotels and cottages and seasonal boaters. Accordingly this initiated a new perception and policy for the Rideau with Parks Canada (1972-2013?), the Rideau as a National "River" (2002), and as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (2007-2013?).

But why my question marks in the dates above? Simply put, many of us are concerned about Parks Canada's commitment to the maintenance, operation, and heritage of the Rideau.

Ironically, while the Glamorgan and Erie canals discussed above encountered a change in transport technology, the Rideau is experiencing a sea-change in the federal government's economic and political philosophy towards heritage. Of the threatened 4000 person

cut in public service employment, 1,600 were directed at Parks Canada. Specifically, some \$29 million (5% of Parks Canada budget) is to be cut from the maintenance and operational, technical, and scientific staff at more than 200 parks and historical sites that are integral to Canada's sense of identity and heritage. Consider them: Banff Park Museum, Alberta; the Fortress of Louisbourg, Nova Scotia; Laurier House, Ottawa; the Riel House, Winnipeg.

Closer to home, some \$5 million (c.20%) will be sliced from the combined Rideau/Trent-Severn system to be known as the Ontario Waterways Unit. Over 180 years of continuous operation of the Rideau Canal, a way of life and source of employment for its workers, and the economy of the Rideau-focussed enterprises along its route are all being threatened. Locking and moorage rates are to be increased, the length of the operational season to be shortened, and the material structure and level of human service at the locks eroded. And this at a time when all appreciate the contribution of tourism to the growing experiential component of the regional economy! There must be something else on the government's mind!



Brian S. Osborne

My other question mark was about the security of the UNESCO World Heritage designation of the Rideau Canal and Kingston Fortifications Site. Will it be the first WHS in Canada to be placed on the UNESCO Endangered List? Perhaps the subject of another Limelight feature.



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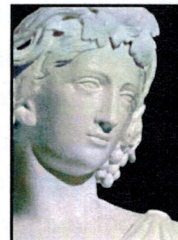
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## Mystery Photo

The attached “mystery” photograph surfaced recently within Queen's University Archives. All that is known, by his 'imprint', identified by the stylized artist's palette, found in the bottom right-hand corner of the photograph, is that this, at present, unknown group was captured for all time by local Kingston photographer H. (Henry) Henderson (many thanks to Jennifer McKendry). It would be very much appreciated if one or more sharp-eyed Society member(s) can identify the group to which these lovely ladies, and one debonair gentleman, may belong, and perhaps even, who the individuals themselves are! Please send your answers to Paul Banfield, University Archivist, Queen's University Archives, Tel: 613533-2378 or e-mail: [banfield@queensu.ca](mailto:banfield@queensu.ca).



# The Kingston Historical Society Annual General Meeting

Photos by Peter Ginn and Text by John Fielding



## Your Society's Executive and Council for 2013

from left to right starting with the back row: Graeme Watson, John Whitley, Randall Levi, Alan MacLachlan, Gordon Sinclair, Don Richardson.

Front Row: Ron Ridley, Warren Everett, Alicia Boutilier, Anne Richardson, Hazel Fotheringham, Peter Ginn, John Fielding

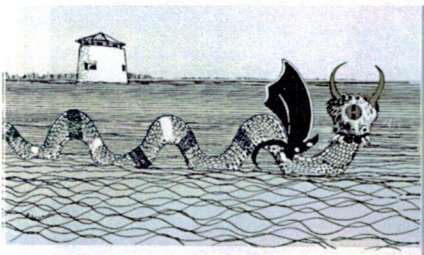
Missing from the photo is Paul Van Nest.

After the reports were studied and accepted, Auditor's Report received, thanks given to last years Executive and Council, and elections conducted for an executive and council for 2013 Society members were entertained by Past President (1994-96), writer and journalist extraordinaire J.W. (Bill) Fittsell.



Bill, as he described it, dusted off his old text on some of the myths and legends of Kingston. His only regret was that Beatrice Corbett wasn't there to help him present, as she was when he originally presented this paper to the Later Life Learning crowd. Tackling the definition of myth Bill said he liked the interpretation that Professor Emeritus Brian gave in introducing the Mythology in Everyday Life series: "Myths may be grounded in fact but take on a life of their own." Although Bill admitted all he knows after studying local characters and collecting some modern myths is that many people relish them and need them.

Dealing with the myth that you are not accepted as a Kingstonian until you have three generations buried in Cataraqui Cemetery Bill noted that only a few "old stones" check out family plots or the length of one's residency before accepting and welcoming us here. On the other hand, city fathers anoint us as citizens as soon as we are eligible to pay taxes. A show of hands proved that the majority in attendance were not even born in Kingston.



Bill explained that myths such as Fort Henry being built backwards and the secret tunnels here there and everywhere were just, you guessed it – myths. But the most amusing and intriguing myth and one of Kingston's most creative legends is told in a 1987 booklet *Amazing Tales from Eastern Ontario* by Kingston's first town crier, James F. Robinson. He claimed "Kingstie," as illustrated by Kingston artist Bob Blenderman, was spotted two years before the Loch Ness monster was discovered in 1933.

As the story goes, "An expedition was formed to hunt down the creature several summer visitors, using a fast motorboat, searched Cartwright Bay for some sign of the serpent. They were not disappointed. (Kingston's) Ogotogo" suddenly stuck its head above water. One member of the expedition raised a rifle to fire but found he had had not brought any ammunition. The creature quickly dived out of sight. The valiant hunters felt a bump on the bottom of their boat and when they saw what appeared to be blood, claimed they had killed "the terrible creature." The next morning the local newspaper reported receiving new sightings of the "dead" monster. Kingstie lived on in the minds of some." Forty-five years later, three Kingston residents confessed that the sea monster story was a hoax. They created it by attaching a dragon-like head to a barrel—buoyed by sealed, empty bottles for buoyancy. With the aid of an anchor, a rope and a pulley, the pranksters were able to manipulate the head and bring Kingstie to life. So much for a lasting Kingston myth.

Business completed, members entertained, silent auction books awarded, snacks and drinks consumed the evening was declared a success.