

Chapter 2

Entering municipal affairs

The municipal and marine heritage committees

One of the attractions of the small Ontario town of Goderich is its built heritage: that is, the large number of homes and commercial buildings that date back to the Victorian era. Many of these structures have been preserved, and at one time a special interest group called the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) existed to prevent violations against good taste where maintenance or alterations were concerned. Some of the more outspoken citizens of the town, such as Dorothy Wallace and Nicholas Hill, went to great lengths to keep heritage issues alive—even to the extent of buying at-risk properties and convincing the Town Council that they should be saved from demolition. In 2016, long after Nick Hill's untimely death, his legacy was influential enough to keep a certain designated property intact due to his previous work with LACAC.

Goderich is also noted for its connections with the maritime industry as being a 'harbour of refuge' and early boat building centre. Two committees of council had been created to further both the aims of LACAC and support the maritime component. They were the Municipal Heritage Committee (also known as Heritage Goderich) and the Goderich Marine Heritage Committee. Just over a year into my retirement I was looking for a new diversion, and noticing a request for interested persons to join Heritage Goderich, applied for a position on the committee. Following negotiations, I was accepted, and the appointment was noted by the town's clerk-administrator, Larry J. McCabe, on March 21st, 2007.

At the time I joined, Heritage Goderich was managed by co-chairs Kathy Ferguson and Ken Hughes, and the committee met in what used to be the Police Station and Parks Department building on West Street. The Goderich Marine Heritage Committee was independent and chaired by Terrence Gilhuly. In July, 2007, both co-chairs vacated their positions, and I was chosen to lead the group as the official chair of Heritage Goderich. About the same time, another special interest group was formed to help revitalize the now disused Canadian Pacific Railway Station built in 1907. Known as the Friends of the CPR Station (FoCPRS), this group was represented by Heritage Goderich, the Maitland Trail Association, the Menesetung Bridge Association, and other concerned citizens. By default I was connected with this *ad hoc* committee.

Over the course of the term of office for the Town Council, which expired on November 30th, 2010, Heritage Goderich was kept busy with many issues. In 2008, the old Police Station and Parks Department building was demolished to make way for renovations to the old Town Hall (a designated heritage building) and a modern extension containing the municipal offices. This meant temporary quarters for the committees, and over a year or so, meetings took place in different locations. In June, 2008, the OHT Heritage Conservation Conference was held in Collingwood, Ontario, and that proved to be an interesting experience.

Generally under my watch, Heritage Goderich overcame most of its challenges; with some compromises and major successes. The high-water mark was when the town mayor, Deb Shewfelt, accepted the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Community Leadership from the Hon. David C. Onley and Hon. Lincoln M. Alexander at the Provincial Parliament building in Queen's Park, Toronto, February 19th, 2010. The application for this award was instrumental through the efforts of myself and the heritage liaison councillor, Heather Lyons. Other notable events were the September 15th, 2007, unveiling of the 1907 Canadian Pacific Railway Station heritage designation and the Menesetung Bridge centennial plaques. Also, with the Goderich Marine Heritage Committee, the 1847 Goderich Lighthouse designation plaque, June 30th, 2010.

Québec culture and historic sites

Since learning about Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site at the Parks Canada Marine Discovery Centre in Hamilton, we decided to include a visit there as part of the itinerary of a ten day vacation to the province of Québec. This was also an opportunity to once again immerse ourselves into the French Canadian *ambiance* with its challenges of communication and cultural differences.

We used the Hôtel L'Oiselière in Lévis—a town located on the St. Lawrence River opposite Québec City—as the jumping off point for our activities in the area, and drove there in two days. Starting from Goderich, we headed east across country to Palmerston and then on Hwy. 9 through Orangeville, Newmarket and Markham to the back roads and the fast multi-lane Hwy. 401; stopping for the night in Cornwall. In the morning, we crossed the Ontario/Québec provincial border where the freeway changed to Route 20. We followed Routes 540 and 40 across the top of Montréal to the Louis-Hyppolite-Lafontaine bridge-tunnel and reconnected to Route 20 (Autoroute Jean-Lesage portion of the Trans-Canada Highway (TCH)) to Lévis. After checking into the very modern hotel, we drove to Old Lévis and walked along the Parcours des Anses before having dinner at Restaurant L'Escalier. The restaurant was accessed by a set of rickety wooden stairs (*l'escalier*), but afforded a great view of Québec City across the St. Lawrence River.

The next day promised to be warm with a mix of sun and cloud. First item on the itinerary was visiting the Lévis Forts National Historic Site. This was the only remaining fort of the three that the British built to protect Québec City on the opposite side of the St. Lawrence River. They feared the possible threat of a U.S. invasion in the 19th century, but one never came. The stone walls were surrounded by a deep, dry moat, and reconstructed stone buildings for the soldiers' barracks were surmounted by gun emplacements.

The remainder of the day was scheduled for a walking tour of Québec City. We drove to the car park of the Lévis/Québec City ferry, and joined the passenger queue (line-up) at the ticket booth. The two ferry boats sailed regularly from their respective docks on both sides of the St. Lawrence River, passing mid-stream. After arriving at the Lower Town (*Basse-Ville*) dock, we proceeded along the Côte de la Montagne to the Upper Town (*Haute-Ville*) district of Old Québec (*Vieux-Québec*). The Dufferin Terrace boardwalk afforded views across the river, and near the Château Frontenac's mighty walls and turrets, streets such as Rue Saint-Louis connected with the principal gates of the old walled city. Returning to the Lower Town by way of the stairs leading to the *Quartier Petit-Champlain*, we discovered a charming restaurant called Le Lapin Sauté (The Hopping Rabbit) and made a reservation for our evening meal. Afterwards we wandered



Monica and the Buildings of Lévis Forts National Historic Site, Lévis, Québec, May, 2007.



Lévis/Québec City Ferry and Skyline of Lévis from Dufferin Terrace, Québec City, Québec, May, 2007.



Rue Saint-Louis, a Principal Road in Old Québec, Québec City, Québec, May, 2007.



Monica and Barry at the Restaurant, Le Lapin Sauté, Québec City, Québec, May, 2007.



Museum of Chantier A.C. Davie, Shipbuilders in Lévis, Québec, May, 2007.



The Abandoned Yard of A.C. Davie, Shipbuilders in Lévis, Québec, May, 2007.



Quarantine Station Building, Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial Nat. Historic Site, Québec, May, 2007.



Boiler Room, Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site, Québec, May, 2007.



Disinfection Building, Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial Nat. Historic Site, Québec, May, 2007.



Hospital Bldg. (Lazaretto), Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial Nat. Historic Site, Québec, May, 2007.



Roman Catholic Church, Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial Nat. Historic Site, Québec, May, 2007.



Immigrant Cemetery, Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial Nat. Historic Site, Québec, May, 2007.

to Place Royale and admired the fantastic mural there. At the restaurant, a strolling accordionist provided Parisienne-style music to enhance the general Continental atmosphere. A bonus for me was the waitress's complimentary remarks on my attempts at conversing in French. At the end of the day, we caught the ferry back to Lévis and returned to the hotel.

Although the weather deteriorated and rain was persistent until the evening, we continued to explore the historic sites in Lévis. Not far from the ferry dock was the location of the Chantier A.C. Davie National Historic Site. The disused and dilapidated shipyard was once a bustling industry. Nearby was a workshop and also a museum with dioramas and artifacts. Bilingual guides told us the history of the company, and a model illustrated how boats were constructed on the slipways that are now defunct. A close up inspection of the shipyard revealed the infrastructure that was gradually being restored as funds allowed.

Alphonse Desjardins was a noted Québécois who lived in Lévis. His claim to fame was the development of the cooperative saving and loan associations known in Québec as *caisses populaires*. La Maison Alphonse-Desjardins has been restored to the year 1900. This is where Desjardins lived and established the first parish based *caisse populaire* that has now proliferated to become a premier financial institution in the province. The concept in English-speaking provinces is called a credit-union. Inside the house, the franco-phone guide showed us the restored rooms that included the living area and Alphonse Desjardins' office.

The rain stopped and we walked around looking for a restaurant. A likely candidate was L'intimiste, and we were lucky to sit near the wide open windows overlooking the street, and an architectural feature in Québec. Opposite was an ice cream parlour that proved to be very popular, as it was constantly busy the whole time we were in the restaurant. Being fully satisfied with our meal, we ignored buying an ice cream for dessert. However, we discovered that we had missed a treat, as the ice cream was renowned in the area.

Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site was the main destination for this year's vacation, and visiting the island was definitely the highlight of our trip. Located in the middle of the St. Lawrence River, Grosse Île was a quarantine station for the Port of Québec from 1832 to 1937. At that time, the island was the main point of entry for immigrants coming to Canada.

We left Lévis and followed Route 20 to Berthier-sur-Mer. Following a very rough ferry crossing, we arrived at the quay to be greeted by about a dozen tour guides. The first thing was to ascertain how many of the visitors wanted their tour conducted in English. (Parks Canada is mandated to providing services in both official languages). Out of a group of between 80 and 100 people, only two hands went up ... ours! However, being the only anglophones had its advantages. We had our own personal tour guide, named Pierre, who not only spoke excellent English, but was also very knowledgeable on the history of the island. He had a sense of humour as well, and made our visit memorable.

Our tour started with a visit to the Disinfection Building, which was the same building that immigrants arriving in Canada in the 1800s and early 1900s had to pass through. After being shown the huge boilers that were used to heat the vast quantities of water needed, we were taken to the shower room with two rows of showers that stretched its entire length. Every immigrant was required to have a shower, which lasted fifteen

minutes, and during that time their clothes and luggage were taken away and disinfected. As well, the immigrants were interviewed by a doctor and nurse to determine whether or not they were suffering from an infectious disease. If anyone was suspected of having something wrong with them, they were taken to the hospital, which we saw later on our tour.

After the Disinfection Building, Pierre led us along a walking trail to show us some nearby places of interest. First, we went past the hotels where the passengers stayed while waiting out their quarantine period, or while waiting for family members to recover. They stayed in the same class of accommodation as they had occupied on the ships. Considering the time period, the first class hotel was quite luxurious, as every passenger had their own room with running water. We then continued to the Celtic Cross, which was erected by a group of Irish priests in memory of all the Irish immigrants who died while living on the island. The last stop along the trail was at the cemetery where 7,500 people were buried; most of them Irish, who died in 1847 on overcrowded ships or contracted typhus after coming to Canada to escape the potato famine.

For the last portion of our tour, we got on a trolley to take us to the other end of the island where the Hospital Building (Lazaretto) was situated. *En route*, we passed through the village where the quarantine station employees used to live. Some of the buildings are now occupied during the summer by Parks Canada employees. Erected in 1847, the Hospital is the oldest building on the island, and although the exterior has been restored, the interior is just as it was. From there, the trolley took us back to the quay where we said our goodbyes to Pierre before boarding the ferry for the trip back to Berthier-sur-Mer on the mainland. Thankfully, that crossing was much smoother than the morning one had been. We returned to Lévis by way of the old road, Route 132.

Our next destination was the Montérégie region south of Montréal, and specifically the communities on the Richelieu River. After leaving Lévis, we continued on Route 132 to Sorel-Tracy, briefly stopping at Saint-Grégoire to view the reconstructed stone windmill, then on Route 133 to Saint-Ours. Here, a canal and a flight of locks bypass the rapids on the Richelieu River. Remnants of the original 1844 to 1849 locks could be seen in the Saint-Ours Canal National Historic Site, and a structure alongside the lock basin contained a small interpretation display. The river is an important waterway for migrating fish, and a modern fish ladder is incorporated with the locks. Route 133 paralleled the river and passed through popular summer resorts. We crossed the river at Chambly and continued on Route 223 to the principal area town of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu for a three night stopover.

The next day was an intensive one of cross-country driving. Breakfast, however, was an introduction into a French Canadian ritual. A nearby restaurant was popular with the locals, and when we ordered our meal we were asked which type of bread from the many varieties on display did we want toasted. This seemed to be a regional speciality, and we had difficulty comprehending until it was eventually sorted out.

The Châteauguay National Historic Site celebrates the victory by a small Canadian force over a large army of invading Americans. We visited the site in the valley of the Châteauguay River where a modern interpretation centre was located on the battlefield. During the War of 1812, an American army of 7,500 men was attempting to reach Montréal, and thus cut supply lines to Upper Canada, when they were out-

manceuvred by a corps of 460 Canadian Voligeurs. A glorious moment in Canadian history! We viewed the battle site dominated by a stone monument, and admired several murals in the interpretation centre that depicted features of the battle.

Even though it was after 3 o'clock, we continued to the Coteau-du-Lac National Historic Site where we had just enough time for a quick visit. Not much had changed from our first visit there in 1975 when we lived in Longueuil, Québec. The early canal and lock system and entire extensive defences were still there, together with the reconstructed octagonal blockhouse containing a small museum with artifacts, models and dioramas explaining the strategic importance of the canal and locks. Out of necessity and it being late, we stopped for dinner at an Italian restaurant in Mercier on our way back to Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu.

South of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu on Route 223 is Fort Lennox National Historic Site. Fort Lennox, located on the island, Île-aux-Noix, was an important strongpoint that controlled the Richelieu River traffic. The fort is accessible only by boat, and visitors have to queue (line-up) for it on the mainland. After crossing a water-filled moat that surrounded the ramparts and entering the stone gate, we were met by costumed interpreters who provided the guided tours to this exceptional site. Inside the walls was a collection of stone buildings and ordnance of the period. We went inside the barracks where reproduction soldiers' kits and rifles were on display.

The island was the site of previous fortifications, including the French Fort de l'Isle-aux-Noix (1759 to 1760) and the British Fort Isle aux Noix (1778 to 1815). The present Fort Lennox (1819 to 1828) was built to prevent the Americans from using the river to invade Canada. Once again though, an attack never materialised. British forces used Fort Lennox during the uprising of the Patriots, the Fenian Raids, and the American Civil War. The fort was eventually abandoned by the British in 1870.

Upon returning to Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, we had some time on our hands so we wandered around the back-doubles of the town. As usual, the prominent building was the Roman Catholic church, and further along we accessed a promenade that followed the river. For a resort town, we were disappointed to see many substandard houses and commercial buildings, and our search for a decent restaurant proved negative.

It was a slow, two day journey home, and to avoid extensive construction in Montréal we deviated from our original route. The weather, too, had deteriorated from humid and sunny conditions to clouds and the occasional heavy downpour. Retracing our way through Châteauguay and Coteau-du-Lac, we joined Route 20, crossed the Québec/Ontario provincial border and followed Hwy. 401 to Odessa. Continuing on Hwy. 2 to Port Hope, we overshot the hotel car park, but eventually settled down for the night at the Lantern Inn, one of the hotels in the Inns of Ontario organization.

Our exploration of Port Hope's heritage district was shorter than planned on account of some heavy showers. However, we eventually left the rain behind, and the last part of our journey to Goderich was on dry roads. By coincidence, our friends Rosemarie and Geoff Edwards had decided to go to the Park House tavern for dinner that evening. A chance meeting near the tavern provided an opportunity for us to join them and describe all about our vacation.



Saint-Ours Canal National Historic Site, Saint-Ours, Québec, June, 2007.



Châteauguay National Historic Site Monument, near Howick, Québec, June, 2007.



Coteau-du-Lac National Historic Site Blockhouse and Canal, Coteau-du-Lac, Québec, June, 2007.



Moat and Entrance Gate to Fort Lennox National Historic Site, Île-aux-Noix, Québec, June, 2007.



Stone Buildings & Ordnance, Fort Lennox National Historic Site, Île-aux-Noix, Québec, June, 2007.



Interior of Barracks, Fort Lennox National Historic Site, Île-aux-Noix, Québec, June, 2007.

A hot, busy summer in 2007

The Arts and Crafts Festival is an annual event held at the beginning of July on Courthouse Square in Goderich. The festival attracts artisans from a wide area, and they set up their tents and displays along the radiating paths in the park. Usually the weather cooperates and it's often very hot, so the shade of the trees, tents and awnings is much appreciated by both vendors and visitors.

A wide variety of goods is available, ranging from homemade articles to food from the farmers' market. This year, Jay, the son-in-law of our friends, Diane and Mike Knight, from Windsor, Ontario, was exhibiting his art for sale at the festival. Jay's art specialises in painted vignettes on bird feathers that are framed in unique designs. Jay and his wife, Lisa, set up the stand, and Diane and Mike arrived later to help. We got together for lunch at the Park House tavern and had an enjoyable reunion.

July 12th, 2007, was our 33rd wedding anniversary, and we decided to stay overnight at the Benmiller Inn & Spa. There was a special package available for accommodation, evening meal and breakfast, and we were given a room in Gledhill House, one of the inn's annex buildings that overlooked a large pond surrounded by woodland. Our four course dinner included medallions of caribou, and ended with a decadent chocolate dessert. Apparently the bottle of wine was 'on the house'—a nice touch!

Agreeable weather prevailed on the following day and we toured around the county, visiting the small town of Wingham which has a regional museum and community hiking trail. While there, we made a surprise visit to an old colleague and his wife. Then it was cross-country to the lakeside town of Kincardine and dinner at our favourite fish and chips restaurant that also served English beer.

I had heard that a Second World War USAF fighter plane was being flown out of Sky Harbour Airport. It was a Grumman Bearcat: a two seater with a huge radial engine and painted in wartime livery. The paint scheme was applied by one of the world's topnotch aircraft refurbishing facilities located at the airport. The paint shop foreman told me that the following week, a Hawker Hurricane MkIIb that was manufactured in 1943 would be totally repainted in Battle of Britain livery. After the job was done, I took a number of photos of the refurbished fighter.

At the beginning of August, Monica and I decided to have a mini-break and explore some places of historical and scenic interest within a few hours journey from home. Having eaten several times in a very nice restaurant in Kingsville, but never having looked around the small lakeside town, we chose it for our overnight stop. Located on the shores of Lake Erie, Kingsville is an old port community with a commercial harbour and agricultural hinterland similar to Goderich. Instead of grain crops, however, the local farming is mainly market gardening, including fruit orchards and vineyards. There's also an active commercial fishery, and Lake Erie perch is a well known delicacy.

We arrived mid-afternoon, and after checking into the inn where we were staying, we went for a walk. We headed for the waterfront expecting to find it all nicely landscaped, and discovered that the only development was private houses and condominiums. The area around the ferry terminal was even more disap-

pointing, so we made our way to the local winery, but we were too late for the last tour of the day. Our evening meal was also disappointing. The nice restaurant, where we had previously dined, had been converted into a pub, and the food was not what we had been looking forward to. We didn't enjoy it very much.

During a conversation with the innkeeper before we left the next morning, she happened to mention the town's restored railway station. As the official chair of Heritage Goderich, I was among the group spearheading the campaign to get the 1907 Canadian Pacific Railway Station in Goderich restored, so I was keen to see what had been done in Kingsville. There was a plaque in front of the station detailing its history and showing pictures taken before the restoration. It was hard to believe that the now beautiful building had at one time been so derelict that it was nearly demolished.

We returned home via Amherstburg, a town that had grown up around a frontier fort that had seen action in the War of 1812. The invading American army was a superior force to the British fort garrison, so the British retreated after destroying the fort to prevent it from falling into enemy hands. After the War of 1812, the British built a new fortification and called it Fort Malden, which is now a National Historic Site and can be visited. Only two of the original buildings have been restored, and of the rest, just the outlines of their foundations are visible. However, there is quite an extensive museum there, and going over that took quite a while. Except for stopping for something to eat, we drove straight home following our visit to the fort.

Continuing with our mini-break theme, at the end of August we decided to head north into the wilder parts of Ontario. The destination was the city of Orillia, nestled on the shores of Lake Couchiching. Before we reached there, however, we visited the Simcoe County Museum, which gave us a flavour of the history of the general area where Orillia was located. Apart from the artefacts and dioramas inside the museum, a number of pioneer buildings—such as a farmstead, church, one-room schoolhouse, smithy, etc.—had been moved from their original locations to a simulated 'village' outside the museum. There were many old machines stored in barns for visitors to see. I'm always fascinated with old machinery, and while viewing the collection I met a chap who was a walking encyclopædia of all the machines stored there. He showed me many of the off-site relics, and knew the products that I wrote about in my last job, He also knew many of my previous colleagues at Champion/Volvo. So it was quite a small world!

After wrenching myself away from the fellow (he was a persuasive conversationalist), because of time constraints, Monica and I continued to our hotel in Orillia. The next day we visited two local attractions, which were the Ontario Provincial Police (O.P.P.) museum, and the Leacock Museum National Historic Site, home of Stephen Leacock, the well known Canadian humorist. The police museum was housed in the force's general headquarters, and it took over two hours to digest the information. From extremely humble beginnings, the O.P.P. is now equipped with all the latest crime fighting methods available.

Stephen Leacock was actually born in England, but lived most of his life in Canada, and adopted Orillia as his 'sunshine city' that formed the basis for the mythical Mariposa in his most popular work, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. Leacock became a successful university lecturer and wrote over 60 humorous books and hundreds of magazine articles, as well as becoming a sought after speaker. He is often acclaimed as Canada's Mark Twain. He built the house on the shores of Lake Couchiching in 1928. It was his summer



Mike and Diane Knight, Monica and Barry, Arts and Crafts Festival, Goderich, Ontario, July, 2007.



Rear of Gledhill House, a Benmiller Inn & Spa Annex Building near Goderich, Ontario, July, 2007.



Hawker Hurricane MkIIb Repainted in Battle of Britain Livery, Goderich, Ontario, July, 2007.



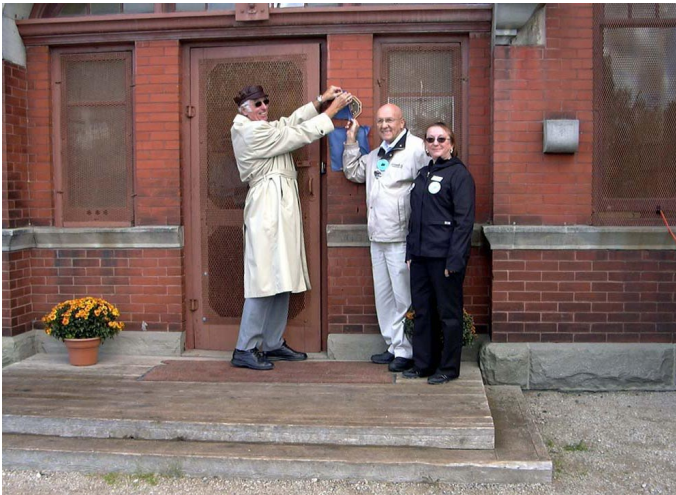
Restored Barracks at Fort Malden National Historic Site, Amherstburg, Ontario, August, 2007.



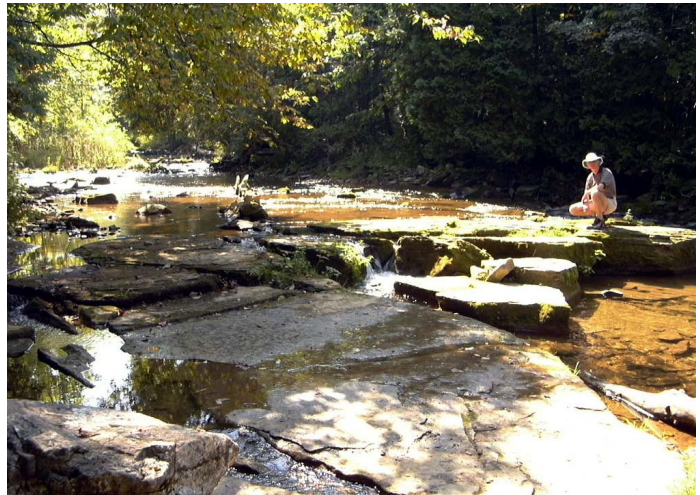
Leacock Museum National Historic Site, or Stephen Leacock's House, Orillia, Ontario, August, 2007.



Belt-driven Threshing Machine Demonstration at the Blyth Steam Show, Blyth, Ontario, September, 2007.



Barry, Mayor Shewfelt & Kathy Ferguson Unveil the CPR Plaques, Goderich, Ontario, September, 2007.



Barry Poses on Limestone Rocks and the Sydenham River near Inglis Falls, Ontario, September, 2007.



Bronze Statues in the Ireland Park Representing the Irish Famine Refugees, Toronto, ON, October, 2007.



Replica of the Avro Arrow in the Toronto Aviation Museum, Downsview, Ontario, October, 2007.



Dignitaries and Descendants Open the Restored Balls Bridge near Goderich, Ontario, October, 2007.



Neustadt Brewing Company's Brewery in Old Stone Building, Neustadt, Ontario, October, 2007.

home, and in his own words, it is large but plain. It is wood panelled throughout, and in many of the rooms the walls are lined with books. Both the house and its contents have been well preserved, and gave a very good insight into the life of Stephen Leacock.

In the evening it was fine dining time at the Ossawippi Express—a trio of 100 year old railway passenger carriages (cars) that had been converted into a restaurant, and brought to their present location on the waterfront. The food was fantastic, and the only negative thing about the whole evening was the bad weather that spoilt our view of the lake.

By the next morning, though, the rain had given way to sunshine, so we went back downtown for a look around to see what we had missed the previous evening. We also went for a walk along the waterfront promenade, and the view across the lake was really beautiful. Aside from a short thunderstorm, the weather was perfect for travelling and walking. We kept to the back roads and were rewarded with some nice scenery, and the return journey eventually took us to our favourite seafood restaurant in Kincardine for a meal of fish and chips, washed down with a pint or two of Newcastle Brown ale.

Lots of activity followed the Labour Day weekend. The huge Threshers' Reunion and Steam Show, held in the agricultural park of the village of Blyth, was as popular as ever, and we decided to go as it had been many years since we last attended the event. The essence of the show is a reunion of sorts for steam engine and antique tractor enthusiasts. On-site were several demonstrations; including steam traction engine belt-driven grain threshing machines and sawmills, stationary steam engines, and traditional country crafts such as blacksmithing and woodworking. There were many old tractors, cars, other machines and scale models on static display. Also, there was an interesting demonstration by the Ontario Provincial Police Canine Unit that showed how the trained dogs sniffed out drugs and helped apprehend fugitives by dragging suspects down by the arm. The grandstand was the place to listen to good, ol' tyme country music, and even cavort a jig or two on the makeshift dance floor. The grand parade was where all the huffing and puffing steam traction engines were driven past judges. Those entrants, who were awarded prizes, eagerly boasted their bragging rights. Ample country fare to eat as well, and we met several local acquaintances who were also visiting the show.

Heritage accomplishment

I was finding the Heritage Goderich work almost like another full-time job. It was certainly taking up more of my time than I thought it would, and it became even more demanding after July when I was co-opted as the official chair of the committee. I wasn't ready for that, but it was the same old story—there wasn't anyone else. One consolation was that it wasn't a '9 to 5 job', and I could choose when I worked; except, of course, when I had to attend meetings.

On September 15th, 2007, we celebrated the centennial of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) coming to Goderich. It was a scaled down affair from the original plans, because we were unable to secure the steam train that would've been the highlight of the occasion. It boiled down to insurance liability and we just couldn't manage the appropriate coverage. However, the rest of the celebration continued unabated and was

a successful event. We were apprehensive about the weather, because up until then it had been perfect, but the rain clouds moved in and we had to endure several short, sharp showers. These didn't dampen the spirit of the participants, and we made our way to the 100 year old CPR bridge. Following a pipe band musical greeting, the first of two ceremonies took place. It included the usual speeches by various dignitaries, among them the town mayor, who assisted in unveiling a plaque commemorating the centennial anniversary. When that ceremony ended, most people in attendance formed a procession, and led by the mayor, 'walked the line' to the 1907 CPR station where the second ceremony took place. It was very similar to the first one except that two plaques were unveiled. As the chair of Heritage Goderich, I unveiled the one designating the station as a municipal Heritage Building, while the committee vice-chair, Kathy Ferguson, unveiled the commemorative one. The mayor assisted in both of the unveilings. Although that was the end of the formal part of the festivities, there were other things going on throughout the afternoon, and a lantern procession took place after dusk. It was history in the making, but just the beginning of an uphill battle to preserve and renovate the station building similar to what I had seen in Kingsville. At least the Town of Goderich was supportive (the mayor having publicly announced this), and the Friends of the CPR Station special interest group could now lobby the town and various foundations for funding to cover the cost of immediate repairs.

Georgian Bay in late summer

On a late September day we journeyed away again for one night. However, that trip was planned around looking for a particular shop rather than visiting a place of interest. Last year, when Monica went to get new orthotics for her shoes, she discovered that the shop in Elmira, where she had been going for four years, had changed hands, and that the former owner had opened a shop in the town of Collingwood. Because going there meant a longer drive for us, Monica decided to continue going to the shop in Elmira and consult the new podiatrist. Unfortunately, she soon found out that he had a very different way of doing things, and despite going back to have some adjustments made, she couldn't get on with the orthotics he supplied. So, we thought it would be a good idea to check out the new shop, and since we wouldn't be far from one of our favourite hiking areas, we decided to make it an overnight trip.

It worked out really well, and we had two very enjoyable days. With the sun shining from a clear blue sky, as well as some of the trees already beginning to turn colour, we had a lovely drive to Collingwood. The town is situated on the shores of Georgian Bay, which is part of Lake Huron, so we had a look around the waterfront before going to find the shop. We found it without too much difficulty, but unfortunately the owner wasn't there that day. However, we had a long chat with his assistant. We then left Collingwood and followed the lakeshore road to Owen Sound where we spent the night at a large hotel. As it so happened, three busloads of German tourists were spending the night at the same hotel. When we arrived, most of them were crowded in the foyer (lobby) enjoying a pre-dinner reception, but while we were checking in they started drifting into the dining room. We also thought of having dinner there, but we were put off by the large number of guests and the main meal being a buffet. Instead, we went downtown and found a very nice restaurant called Nathaniel's, where we had an excellent meal and good service.

The following morning, we drove the short distance to Harrison Park. There, we followed the hiking trail through the adjoining Inglis Falls Conservation Area, but because of the hot, dry summer, there wasn't

very much water flowing in the Sydenham River or over Inglis Falls that day. As there had been a crispness in the air when we began our hike, and spending most of the morning in the cool of the woods, we hadn't realised how hot and humid it had become. It was 83 deg.F (28 deg.C) when we got back to the park! We decided that called for eating outside, so we bought take-out from the restaurant and had a picnic. As it was still very warm when we arrived home, we also had our evening meal outside. That time, though, we sat on the patio of the Park House tavern, from where we watched the sun sink slowly below the lake. It was a great ending to our mini-break.

General topics

The live theatre season this year, which ended in October, was a mixture of musicals and comedies. *Legends* featured a fast-paced, toe-tapping omnibus of popular 1950s and 1960s Rock 'n' Roll artists such as Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, and groups like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The Beach Boys. The colourful sets, costumes and lighting added to the atmosphere of those days, and the choreography was most energetic. Other musicals were *Crazy for You* and *Miss Saigon*. Comedies, too, ranged from the poignant to the hilarious, and included the British farce *Cash on Delivery*.

My old secondary schoolmates organised a reunion of former Barnsbury School for Boys pupils (students) and other acquaintances who lived in our Islington, London, neighbourhood. The event was held at the Two Brewers pub in Roman Way, not far from where I used to live. It was a pity I couldn't attend, so I had to rely on my friend's e-mail description and photographs to appreciate the atmosphere of the reunion. Apparently it was well attended, and many tales were exchanged about people's lives since leaving school.

Earlier in the year we had heard that my father was in a lot of pain again with his knees. It would seem that the relief he got following the arthroscopic surgery was short-lived. When he last wrote, he had been to see the specialist the day before, only to be told that he would be put on a referral waiting list for the first of two knee replacement operations. In October he had the first operation. However, the second operation was way in the future, but after two years of waiting he had finally reached the top of the list.

After the operation, my stepmother, Pat, wrote a few days after my father got back home from the hospital. At that time, he was still in a lot of pain and very weak. A second letter, this one written by my father, arrived and in it he said that the follow-up treatment was very painful and that he was practically immobile. He also mentioned that Pat's internal health problem had become worse, and that she was waiting to go into hospital for an operation. She had been putting it off until after my father had had his knees replaced, but it sounded as if she couldn't put it off any longer.

He then made the comment that since I was thousands of miles away, I was unable to help. My father had distanced himself from me about ten years ago, and the only contact he has wanted has been through letters. Anyhow, I replied that it takes only hours to fly over if they needed me, but he declined my offer to help them; saying they couldn't cope with a visitor on top of everything else. He went on to say that both of them were made of tough stuff, and he was sure better days were ahead. The last we heard from them that year was a note on their Christmas card in which Pat said they were winning the battle.

Healthwise both of us were very well, and my blood work showed good results (PSA rating was down from last year). However, my doctor prescribed additional medication just to help keep my enlarged prostate gland in check.

Toronto autumn trip

The impetus for a trip to Toronto came when we heard on the radio about the new Irish Memorial, which was completed and dedicated this past summer. As a follow-up to our visit to Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site in Québec at the end of May, we particularly wanted to see the collection of bronze statues depicting the early Irish immigrants to Canada. The statues are located on Toronto's waterfront, not far from where hundreds of Irish immigrants landed when they came to Canada to escape the potato famine in the 19th century.

Due to lack of signage, Ireland Park where the Irish Memorial stood, was difficult to find, but eventually we found it. We walked around the actual memorial, which consisted of several life-sized figures against a backdrop of black stone obelisks representing Ireland's granite cliffs. Apparently, there is a similar memorial in Dublin near where the immigrants departed. As we viewed the statues, it started to rain and the light began to fade. However, the miserable weather made it easier to imagine the hardships that the immigrants had been through, and their relief at having survived the long voyage.

We wanted to visit the Toronto Aviation Museum in Downsview—a government owned industrial estate and former site of the de Havilland Aircraft Company. The museum is housed in the original 1929 building adjacent to the Downsview Airport runway used by de Havilland. The building is full of history in its own right, since it was where the famous de Havilland Tiger Moth, Chipmunk and Beaver aircraft were built. Of the many exhibits displayed in the museum, perhaps the most interesting was a replica of the Avro Arrow interceptor jet. The aircraft was never put into production despite the millions of dollars spent on developing the airframe and powerful jet engines. I sat in a CT33 simulator pretending to be a jet pilot, and nearby was a Martin-Baker ejection seat. We also watched a video presentation about selecting and training new recruits for the RCAF *Snowbirds* aerobatic display team, which is similar to the RAF's *Red Arrows*.

Knowing my father's involvement with the development of the Martin-Baker ejection seat, I explained the story to John Harper, one of the museum's volunteer tour guides. John was most intrigued, and later we engaged in an e-mail exchange. John thanked me for sending him the information and pictures of my father in action with the ejection seat tests. He found them most interesting and forwarded the information to his Education Department staff and tour guides. So my father's legacy was shared with this historic facility.

Autumn events at home

Near the hamlet of Benmiller is a natural picturesque area known by the locals as Little Lakes. These are a series of ponds in a wilderness setting, and during the autumn the maple trees provide a radiant display of red, gold and yellow leaves. Wildlife in the ponds, such as turtles, is abundant,

and many species of birds roost in the unspoilt woodland. The ponds are also part of the Maitland River watershed, and when roads were being constructed in this part of Huron County during the 19th century, bridges were used to cross the river. In 1885, The Hamilton Bridge Company assembled a steel truss bridge near Little Lakes. Because the neighbouring land was owned by the Ball family, the bridge became known as Ball's Bridge, and served well for over 100 years. However, the load bearing capabilities began to deteriorate, and eventually the bridge was closed in favour of a new reinforced concrete structure.

Huron County historians recognised that Ball's Bridge was unique and perhaps the sole remaining example of this type of steel truss bridge in Ontario. A special interest group set out to raise funds and restore the bridge so that it would become a tourist attraction, as well as a functioning pedestrian bridge over the Maitland River. After much effort, Ball's Bridge was brought up to safety standards, and on October 13th, 2007, a special dedication ceremony took place to reopen the bridge. As the chair of Heritage Goderich, I represented the committee, and watched as government dignitaries and descendants of the Ball family cut a ribbon. The assembled crowd then followed two pipers and crossed the bridge as a tribute. The original 1885 cast iron plaque that commemorated the bridge's inauguration was refurbished and displayed.

At the end of the month, we headed for the town of Hanover and a hiking trail that was new to us. Before arriving at the trail, we stopped in the village of Neustadt and had lunch at a restaurant called Noah's Inn. Apart from being the birthplace of John Diefenbaker—a prime minister of Canada—the village is noted for its microbrewery, and one of the products made there was a favourite of mine. The brewery is housed in an old stone building, and beer is sold on the premises. The owner is a Yorkshireman, who is quite a character, and he gave us a tour of the brewery. We continued to Hanover, but found the hiking trail uninteresting.

Snow arrives early

In November, heritage activity went into overdrive with meetings and all sorts of administrative duties, plus a mountain of e-mails to answer. Every day something cropped up, such as an out-of-town workshop seminar which had to be co-ordinated with the rest of the committee. However, I was unable to go to the seminar because of a raging snowstorm, and the police had closed the highways. The blizzard was part of unseasonable weather beginning in late October when we had the first hard frosts. Following a later storm, sunshine enticed us out along the untouched Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART). In places we could see tracks of wild animals such as deer and snowshoe hare, and the fresh air was most invigorating.

Two celebrations were in order as we recognised my 34th year of residency in Canada, and later my 62nd birthday, when we treated ourselves to an overnight package at the Benmiller Inn & Spa. We have got to know the innkeeper and his staff quite well, and they all go out of their way to make us feel special whenever we visit there. It was another wonderful evening with fabulous food and good service.

I thought that there would soon be a respite to the heritage activity, but I was wrong. If anything the tempo increased. The latest episode involved the procedure to finalise two important heritage permit applications. This was my first experience with such red tape and it was fairly intensive. Fortunately, my committee came to the rescue, and between ourselves we expedited the applications up to Town Council approval

stage. It was also time to set the annual committee budget; a real big deal at Town Council level, since I had to justify all expenses as well as balance the figures. We have a treasurer who helps, but as volunteers sometimes it was hard to juggle time for meetings, etc., and I knew that Town Council expected a zero increase in expenditures, and perhaps a little trimming in certain areas.

Despite heritage issues keeping me on my toes, I did receive an honorarium cheque for \$200 (£120) from the town for my efforts on the committee during the year. However, heritage activity for 2008 was to become busier, as an initiative called Doors Open, which showcased several properties, meant lots of co-ordinating and subcommittee organising.

We got our Christmas festivities underway early, but spent Christmas Day quietly by ourselves, and then on Boxing Day continued the long standing tradition of going to friends for a get-together with them and their family. As usual, New Year's Eve was the highlight of the Festive Season. However, we had a change of venue, and instead of going to Hessenland Country Inn, we went to the Benmiller Inn & Spa.

While it didn't come as too much of a surprise after Hessenland's poor attendance last year, we were disappointed that the proprietors didn't intend to hold a gala event this year. Having had one every year since the inn opened over 20 years ago, it was a difficult decision for them to make. The deciding factor, however, was when the DJ, who had supplied the music for half of those years, announced that he was retiring.

It didn't take long to realise that the Benmiller Inn & Spa is much nicer in every way for a gala occasion. It is in a more scenic location, and the accommodation is far superior. Although the dinner at Hessenland was always excellent, it was a set meal with no choices, whereas at Benmiller we had a choice for every one of the six courses. The fabulous dinner, which was a very leisurely affair, took over two hours to eat. By then, it was 10.30 p.m. and time for some dancing, the music for which being supplied by a DJ. As midnight approached, half bottles of champagne were brought round to every table. It was a very festive evening which we thoroughly enjoyed.

Friends visit Canada, and start of year 2008

Our good Coventry friends, Roger and Sue Moore, came over to visit their son and his family for three weeks just after Christmas. Their daughter, Lindsey, also came with them. We always hope to see them whenever they are here, but this was the first time they were over in the winter, which made arranging a get-together more difficult because it was dependent on the weather, and Roger wasn't used to winter driving in Canada. Anyhow, while they had a taste of some real winter weather during their first week, we had an unseasonably mild spell the following week. We managed to get together, and as it had worked well the last time they were over in September, 2006, we repeated what we did then, and that was to meet for lunch at Crabby Joe's family restaurant in Woodstock, a town roughly halfway between our respective communities. Even though we are in regular contact by e-mail, we still seemed to have a lot of catching up to do, so we really appreciated the restaurant staff letting us sit and chat well after we had finished our meal. We were there four hours! It was great seeing them all again.



Monica and Barry Spending Quality Time at Home for Christmas, Goderich, Ontario, December, 2007.



Mill Run and the Benmiller Inn & Spa Woollen Mill Building near Goderich, Ontario, January, 2008.



Roger and Sue Moore Experience their First Winter in Canada, Waterdown, Ontario, January, 2008.



Sue, Lindsey, Monica, Roger and Barry at Crabby Joe's Restaurant, Woodstock, Ontario, January, 2008.



Monica on the Sifto Loop Trail After a Fresh Fall of Snow, Goderich, Ontario, February, 2008.



Monica Poses on a Bridge Crossing a Creek in the Maitland Woods, Goderich, Ontario, February, 2008.

This year, I knew there would be many challenges where heritage was concerned. In fact, a thorny issue had already manifested itself. Brought on by what was, initially, the best of intentions, the fallout didn't do the cause much good, and I received a lot of flak. A crucial decision to be made later in the process could make or break the situation.

In early January, I received an e-mail from my very old friend, Mike Stewart, with some unexpected and sad news. For some time now, Mike has been trying to track down our other 'inseparable' mate, Philip 'Phil' Davies. I had lost touch with Phil about 20 years ago, but he was still on my radar screen and definitely not forgotten. Mike's initial efforts to locate Phil weren't successful, but just before Christmas he found and spoke to Phil's older brother, Michael, who informed that Phil had passed away about 18 months before. Unfortunately, Phil's demise seemed to have been accelerated by alcohol abuse. Phil would have been 60 years old. Reading between the lines of Mike's e-mail, it would appear that Phil's gay partner had somewhat deserted him, and that may have brought on bouts of depression and maybe suicidal tendencies. Regardless, it was heartbreaking news, given that Phil was one of my oldest acquaintances (going back to the early 1950s), and I always remembered him for his outlandish personality and bubbly sense of humour.

Snowfall accumulation at the beginning of the year had been average, and what had fallen didn't last very long. However, by mid-January it got to be 2 in. (5 cm) deep, and we felt we had to do something before it thawed again. The forecast had said that we would be having some sunny periods, but when it got to midday and the sun still hadn't put in an appearance, we decided to go for a hike anyway. Then, as it was only a slight detour to get to the trail, we decided to have lunch at the Park House tavern. We always enjoyed going out for lunch and then hiking afterwards, and this time was no exception.

We discussed where we might go on vacation this year, and came up with two possibilities. One was returning to Ottawa in the spring, and on the way back stopping in Port Hope for a few days. The other possible trip was much more ambitious. There are several historic sites that we would really like to visit along the Labrador Straits in Newfoundland and Labrador. The next step would be to consult a travel agent.

My father sent us a letter, and he sounded much more positive than he did a while back. All things considered, he and Pat had had a nice Christmas, and his replacement knee was healing well. He hoped to have the surgery to replace his other one in March. Pat could also be having her operation that month, but that still had to be confirmed. Being totally housebound, they depended on Pat's friend to do their shopping, but my father was hopeful that when the weather improved in the spring he would be able to start driving again.

Theatre and the Mariners' Service

Monica's birthday rolled around, and once again we treated ourselves to the Benmiller Inn & Spa 'Valentine's Package.' It was very similar to last year's one, and included overnight accommodation and dinner. Compliments of the innkeeper, there was a chilled bottle of sparkling wine and a plate of chocolate dipped strawberries waiting for us in our room. We couldn't resist eating some of the strawberries, but saved the wine for later. Dinner was a leisurely four course meal chosen from a special menu for Valentine's Day. Again we had the table in the minstrel gallery.

We went to the village of St. Jacobs, which is about a two hour drive from Goderich, to see a production of *The Mousetrap* at the theatre there. It was a rare sunny day, and to see the countryside under a blanket of snow was a beautiful sight. Even though the play had been performing for a long time, neither of us had seen it before, and like all good whodunits it kept us guessing right to the end as to who the murderer was. We had narrowed it down to either of two guests, but it turned out that neither of them was the murderer. So much for our detective skills!

Late in February, I was to represent Town Council at a gathering known as the Mariners' Service. Every year, the Mariners' Committee organizes a special church service to observe and remember the many sailors and other mariners associated with the Port of Goderich over the decades. More importantly, the service honours those who were lost in storms and shipwrecks, and in particular to the huge loss of life (244 mariners from 19 doomed vessels) during the Great Storm of 1913. This was the perfect storm, and popularly known as the 'White Hurricane.' The storm ravaged the Great Lakes region for three days and decimated the commercial fleet, including the biggest freighter, *SS James Carruthers*, that had been launched only six months earlier. My job was to bring greetings from the Town of Goderich in a formal address to the audience—a speech normally performed by the mayor. However, neither he nor any other designate would be available at the time, so he asked me, as chair of Heritage Goderich, to do the honours.

During the Mariners' Service, a video production of *The Great Storm of 1913* was shown, and having not seen it before we found very interesting. Following the video, the service got underway during which the local male voice choir sang two numbers and I gave my speech. Also, all the names of the ships lost in the storm were read out, and a ship's bell was rung after each one. That was very impressive. During the second half of the service, the guest minister gave an address, and the choir sang two more numbers.

In March, there was lots of activity in municipal politics and all things of a heritage nature. After a short respite, the special interest group trying to resurrect the century old CPR railway station reactivated the project. Later in the month, we went on another theatre outing to St. Jacobs and watched the live stage show of *Swing!*—a musical revue of song and dance acts inspired by the golden age of the big band sound. This was a repeat performance that had been on the circuit for about 23 years, and we had seen it before a few years ago. It was a high-powered, toe-tapping show with lots of spectacle, lighting effects, costumes and a highly polished, professional cast. There were numbers featuring the big band on its own, solo acts and The Mantini Sisters, a well known trio of female singers reminiscent of The Beverley Sisters.

Also in March, my stepmother was to undergo a colostomy operation. My father started to suffer with arthritis in his hands, but some relief came about as the Social Services were sending home help to do house cleaning and shopping chores. Like many old folk, my parents wanted to remain totally independent and without any interference from the Welfare Department. Dad would prefer to soldier on doing the chores, but his physical condition just wouldn't allow it, and he reluctantly had to call in the Social Services people.

We eventually formulated a basic plan for our September vacation taking us to the wilds of Labrador. We intended to break our return journey in St. John's, Newfoundland, and revisit some of the attractions in and around the city. If the weather was bad, we could go to museums and other places of cultural interest.

Ottawa and Port Hope in the spring

We left on April 26th, 2008, for an eight day trip to Ottawa and Port Hope. Although it's possible to drive to Ottawa in about ten hours, we preferred to travel at a more leisurely pace. From Goderich we headed across country to Palmerston and then on Hwy. 9 through Orangeville and Newmarket to the back roads taking us a short journey through 'cottage country' to Port Perry. There we joined Hwy. 7A and continued on Hwy. 115 to Peterborough and an overnight stop. The second day was spent following Hwy. 7 (TCH Southern Route) and continuing through the typical rocky Canadian Shield scenery of pine forests and lakes to Perth. The last leg connected us with the fast multi-lane Hwy. 417 that eventually took us to the maze of downtown Ottawa streets and the Holiday Inn where we were booked into a room on the 14th floor overlooking the major landmarks. We found it to be in an ideal location as we could walk to most of the places we wanted to visit. Lots of museums, restaurants and local culture influenced in part by the large French Canadian population in the area.

Unfortunately, the weather changed dramatically overnight, and it poured with rain most of the next day. However, since visiting the Canadian War Museum was on our list of things to do, the prospect of a wet day didn't bother us. That quickly changed, though, when we discovered that during the off-season, the majority of the museums in the city were closed on Mondays. We were astounded that, except for certain holidays, the national museums in the Nation's Capital were not open every day. The only place of interest to us that was open was the Royal Canadian Mint, so we went there. It was Canada's only mint until it could no longer produce sufficient coins for the country's needs, and a second mint was built: this one in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In August, 1980, we visited the Winnipeg facility, which is where all circulation coins are struck. The mint in Ottawa now produces only collectors' coins and currency commemorating special events, as well as some medals. Our guide showed us the minting process from the raw metal (silver and gold) ingots through pressing, striking, inspecting and packaging; also the metallurgical and design aspects of the final products. After this visit, we went to the Parliament Buildings only to discover that the House of Commons public gallery was also closed to visitors. Not a particularly good day, and this extended to the evening meal at an Irish pub that didn't come up to par.

Although the next day was cold—the temperature reached only 41 deg.F (5 deg.C)—it was nice and sunny and would have been a good day to explore the nearby scenic Gatineau Hills. However, we spent it at the Canadian War Museum. The museum was huge, and we hadn't seen everything when we went there in June, 2005, soon after it had opened. Even so, touring the missed galleries, which concentrated on the post-Second World War years; including the Korean conflict and all global peacekeeping operations, took up a large part of the day. Now, after two visits, we feel we have pretty well seen everything.

During our stay, we explored the old section of Ottawa called ByWard. Within the ByWard Market District, we discovered The Courtyard, a gourmet restaurant where we could spoil ourselves. Although there were few other guests to help give the place some atmosphere, we had a most pleasant waiter, who introduced us to a new Australian wine that complemented the main *entrée* of barbecued elk steak. Farm raised exotic game, such as elk, bison, ostrich, emu and boar are becoming popular dishes. However, the 'gamey' flavour is not in evidence—certainly nothing like true venison.



The Fish Market Restaurant in the ByWard Market District, Ottawa, Ontario, April, 2008.



The Main Market Building in the ByWard Market District, Ottawa, Ontario, April, 2008.



Market Building and Market Stalls, ByWard Market District, Ottawa, Ontario, April, 2008.



View of the Downtown Skyline from our Hotel Room, Ottawa, Ontario, April, 2008.



Walton Street, the Downtown Heritage Main Street, Port Hope, Ontario, May, 2008.



One of the many Heritage Properties in Port Hope, Ontario, May, 2008.



Inglis Falls in Full Spring Flow near Owen Sound, Grey County, Ontario, May, 2008.



Canadian Forces Crack Aerobatic Team 'Snowbirds' at Sky Harbour Airport, Goderich, ON, June, 2008.



Diane Knight, Monica, Mike Knight and Barry at the Park House Tavern, Goderich, Ontario, July, 2008.



Our 34th Wedding Anniversary. Monica Poses in the Grounds of Benmiller Inn & Spa, Ontario, July, 2008.



Cairn and Memorial to Black Fugitives Using the Underground Railroad, Owen Sound, ON, July, 2008.



Special Exhibit of 'Lego' Models in the Grey County Museum near Owen Sound, Ontario, July, 2008.

We left Ottawa the next morning, and as we made our way to Port Hope, we drove through heavy snow showers. Thankfully, the snow melted on contact with the ground. As planned, we stopped in Trenton, a military community and home to a large Canadian Forces Base (CFB). The huge airport supports the rapid response rescue service, and is a major logistics hub for military operations. On the CFB is the Royal Canadian Air Force Museum. When we visited the museum in 2001, a group of dedicated volunteers were in the process of painstakingly restoring the only remaining Second World War Halifax bomber. The aircraft had been retrieved from the bottom of a lake in Norway. While visiting the Toronto Aviation Museum last year, we were told that the restoration of the aircraft, and the new hangar in which it was going to be displayed, had been completed. However, as soon as we arrived, we realised that we had been misinformed. Although the aircraft was almost fully restored, it was shrouded in plastic for protection while the hangar was being built around it. The whole area was out of bounds to visitors for safety reasons. Disappointed, we continued our journey to Port Hope.

Despite no letup in the miserable weather, we managed to explore the downtown Heritage District without getting too wet. The town had done a marvellous job restoring its old buildings, so I did some research and picture taking for reference purposes and to advise my own committee of the heritage activities in this community. We also walked down to the waterfront and along the lakeshore, and were surprised to find it more of an industrial area than one geared to recreation. On one day we ventured out to hike in the Northumberland Forest, but found the trails lacklustre in flora and fauna—too early for the wild spring flowers in the mainly coniferous woods. After a three night stay, the holiday ended with another very wet day for our journey home.

Summer hiking and heritage issues

Although my heritage activities kept me busy, Monica and I had several really enjoyable days out after we had returned from our trip. We hiked on two of our favourite out-of-town trails to see the spring blooming wildflowers before they were over for this year. We managed to time it right, since in both places the woods were carpeted with many kinds of flowers. A bonus on one of the hikes was to see Inglis Falls in full flow. It was spectacular, with more water cascading over the rocks than we had seen at any previous visit.

Another outing was to the theatre in Drayton, Ontario, to see *The Ballad of Stompin' Tom*. It told the life story of one of Canada's legendary musicians, and featured many of his best known songs. Having seen the real Stompin' Tom Connors live in concert on two occasions, the resemblance between him and the actor portraying him was quite remarkable. We thoroughly enjoyed the show.

Life went on the same with daily challenges for Heritage Goderich. The committee was at loggerheads with Town Council over a number of issues and there was no easy fix. One significant problem festering over the previous year was the fate of the century old CPR railway station. It had been a long, slow slog to try and convince the municipal administration that the town owned property should be given some TLC to prevent it from falling apart. There had been some measure of success, as the town's Parks Department had taken over part of the building, and as a safety precaution, a weak part of the structure was repaired. How-

ever, a mere drop in the bucket where the complete building was concerned, and more drastic work had to happen before the designated municipal Heritage Building could be declared structurally safe.

The 2008 Heritage Conservation Conference, sponsored by Community Heritage Ontario, the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, and the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals, was held in Collingwood, Ontario, May 30th to June 1st, 2008. The theme was *Landmarks not Landfill*, and featured several keynote speakers who specialized in heritage preservation and environment sustainability. An organized tour of six historic homes was available to conference participants. Later, I represented Heritage Goderich at the official opening of the renovated Craigeleith Heritage Depot near Thornbury. This project spoke volumes for volunteer participation in saving an old railway station and turning it into a museum and local information bureau. Possible ideas for the Goderich century old CPR railway station.

I also had occasion to act in my official capacity as chair of Heritage Goderich in a plaque unveiling ceremony. The Huron County Museum was recognizing the efforts of its first curator, Herbert Neill, and these achievements were recorded on a bronze plaque attached to the museum wall. The town mayor and other officials were present, and I made a little speech in homage to Mr. Neill. Heritage activity also extended to a meeting with professor Robert Shipley, PhD, from the University of Waterloo. Where heritage matters were concerned he was well up in the university hierarchy, and was looking for volunteers to help him in a particular survey. The heritage committee had been involved with this programme before I came on board, and now the grunt work was about to start.

Family news and summer events unfold

Linda, my first cousin, wrote in March, and said the year 2007 was a rotten one for most of the remaining family living in England. Avril, her younger sister, was diagnosed with lung cancer in January, but because she had cried wolf so many times before, nobody believed her. She wouldn't let any of the family go with her when she had her chemotherapy sessions (from June to September), and they still weren't sure if it was true or not until she lost her hair. She was very positive about it all the way through, which amazed everyone considering what she was normally like. In October, she went downhill very quickly, and although she went to her mother's place for lunch on Christmas Eve, it was obvious she wouldn't last long.

Linda said she went to visit Avril on January 2nd, but the police were at her flat because the home nurse had found Avril dead. Sadly, it seemed she had been dead for about three days. Obviously, there was a lot of personal effects to sort out, which was very difficult when the family was also grieving, and Aunt Win was hit really hard by it. Avril's ashes were interred on April 28th, 2008—it would have been her 60th birthday.

I received a letter from my father, who wrote saying that my stepmother's intestinal operation had been rescheduled. She went into hospital for her surgery and stayed about five days afterwards. My father didn't say whether he had had his second knee operation, so I was still in the dark with his situation. The Social Services worker was keeping house for them, and they seemed to cope with this upheaval. He was 85 years old on April 29th, 2008.

June 24th promised to be a nice day weatherwise, which was a good thing since the town was visited by the *Snowbirds* air force aerobatic team—the Canadian equivalent to the RAF *Red Arrows*. The RCAF aircraft arrived at Goderich Sky Harbour Airport in readiness for the actual show scheduled for the following day. The show commemorated the 30th Anniversary of the local Air Cadet squadron's founding.

Despite threatening weather—a reversal of the previous day—the aerobatic display thrilled a crowd of many thousands that lined every vantage point along the beachfront and cliff top. Although we have seen the show many times (and also the RAF *Red Arrows* in the UK), it never ceased to amaze us how the pilots were able to perform such intricate manoeuvres.

Canada Day, our national holiday, was celebrated on July 1st. During the previous evening, a mammoth fireworks show took place over the harbour and lake. The traditional Canada Day parade around downtown was somewhat muted this year (reason unknown), but the colourful floats and marching pipe bands that did participate were nice to see and hear under the summer sun.

The following weekend was recognised in the USA as part of their Independence Day (4th of July) festivities. So we had more than the usual number of US visitors here in town. At the same time, the annual Arts and Crafts Festival event was held on Courthouse Square. Artisans' tents and booths were set up for four days. The same as last year, Jay, the son-in-law of our friends, Diane and Mike Knight, from Windsor, Ontario, was exhibiting his art for sale at the festival, so we all got together and had lunch on the patio of the Park House tavern. It was an opportunity to catch up on family news.

Contemplating a summer vacation, we became really excited arranging a trip to the Labrador Straits, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), in early September. With several historic sites in the area, it was somewhere that we have wanted to visit, but we always thought that getting there would be too much of a hassle, so we never pursued the idea. That is, until this year when we decided to ask our travel agent to check into how many flights we would have to take from Toronto, Ontario, to Blanc-Sablon on the Quebec/Labrador border. Well, it turned out to be only two, but by a very different route to what we had expected. We thought it would be via Halifax, NS, and Deer Lake, NL, but instead we would be going via St. John's, NL, which sounded a very roundabout route to us. However, we considered it much better, because it gave us the opportunity on our way back to spend a few days in St. John's, which is a city that we really love visiting.

Later, however, when arranging the trip through the travel agent, we experienced one glitch. Provincial Airlines (PAL) rescheduled their flights between St. John's and Blanc-Sablon, which meant we lost our connection and could no longer complete our journey from Toronto in one day. We would have to stay overnight in St. John's and take the next day's flight to Blanc-Sablon, QC, via St. Anthony, NL. Then, so as to still have the same number of days in Labrador, we also had to change our return flights to St. John's. Our original plan was to spend three nights there on our way back, but that also had to be revised and now we would be spending only two. The travel agent tried to change our flights between Toronto and St. John's, but because we booked during a seat sale it would have cost us \$400 to do so. Not surprisingly, we didn't pursue the idea!

Similar to my efforts keeping abreast with my senior school chums, Monica's old grammar school (Barr's Hill in Coventry) was in touch with her; including e-mails in response to a letter that she had sent to The Coventry Telegraph newspaper dealing with the school's upcoming centenary in October. Although she was unable to attend a class ex-pupils' reunion, she communicated with a number of her schoolmates via the Internet and regular post.

The principal organiser of the reunion created a very good booklet full of the girls' profiles (including Monica's) and we received a copy. There were many 'then and now' photos to reflect on, and by all accounts the party was a considerable success. I was somewhat green with envy with all the feedback Monica received, and she was so pleased to reconnect with some of her old schoolmates. In later years, we met Fay Wathen, a visiting former Barr's Hill girl, and Monica maintained a regular correspondence with Christine Jope, another ex-pupil.

Celebrating our 34th wedding anniversary turned out to be almost a weekend affair. We started by going out for a pancake breakfast on the actual day—a fundraiser for a local charity group—and even though it was hot and humid, we went for a short hike afterwards, then we drove to the Benmiller Inn & Spa. With it being summertime, we again booked a room in Gledhill House, the annex building a short walk away from the main inn. It so happened that we were given the room next door to the one we were in last year. Like that one, this year's room overlooked the pond, and we again enjoyed sitting out on the balcony.

As in the past, the inn's staff went out of their way to make the occasion very special for us. One of the little extras offered is a bed turndown service, and when the young lady came to our room, not only did she have her usual basket of goodies with her, but she was also clutching an ice bucket in which a half bottle of sparkling wine—compliments of the innkeeper—was nicely chilling, and two champagne flutes. We decided to have the wine as an *apéritif* before walking over to the main inn for dinner. Arriving there, we discovered that there had been a miscommunication between the front desk and the dining room. When we booked our overnight package, the front desk staff put us down for dinner at 7:00, whereas the dining room had our reservation as 7:30. So, since our table wasn't ready for us, the dining room manager offered us a cocktail. Having already had the bottle of sparkling wine between us, we hesitated knowing that we would be having wine with our dinner and not wanting to overdo it. However, he brought two more glasses of sparkling wine. Then, as if we hadn't already been treated royally enough, when he showed us to our table, he asked if he could select the wine, compliments of the house, once we had chosen our *entrées*. With both of us opting for the crab stuffed orange roughey, he brought us a bottle of *sauvignon blanc* from a boutique winery in New Zealand. It was an excellent wine and, we thought, an expensive one—well out of our price range. Needless to say, we thoroughly enjoyed it, as we did the fabulous food.

Since our anniversary fell on a weekend this year, we decided to upgrade from the breakfast to the Sunday brunch. It was such a pleasant morning that we sat out on our balcony, after which we went for another short hike. By then, it was time to eat brunch with its vast array of tempting foods. We had a lovely, leisurely meal, but as so often tends to happen when it is a buffet, we ate too much. However, that had its positive side, and we didn't want much else to eat for the rest of the day,

We were away another night the following week when we went to Collingwood and Owen Sound. In late September of last year, we had journeyed to the foot specialist's shop in Collingwood, only to find the owner absent. This time, Monica had made an appointment with the podiatrist, whom she had first seen in 2002. She also saw him in 2004 and would have done so in 2006, but he had moved. Hence the reason for us going to Collingwood. It was so good having the specialist again taking care of Monica's foot problem that the long journey was well worthwhile.

Although we could drive to Collingwood and back in a day, we decided to make it an overnight trip. Preferring to stay in Owen Sound, we made our way there after leaving Collingwood. Top of our list of things to do whenever we are in Owen Sound is to hike from Harrison Park to Inglis Falls, but that day it was far too hot and humid for such a long and strenuous hike. Luckily, we had other things on our list; one of them going to the park to look for two features we hadn't seen before—Weavers Creek Falls and the Black History Cairn. We found both of them, and part of the Black History Cairn incorporated various quilt patterns in a tiled floor. Apparently, quilts were used as a means of warning or giving directions to slaves fleeing from the American South to Canada on the so called Underground Railroad. Another thing on the list was visiting the Grey County Museum where a temporary exhibit on Ancient Egypt was being displayed. It consisted of several dioramas and murals all created in 'Lego', a construction toy containing coloured plastic blocks and other shapes. Some of the exhibits used over 150,000 'Lego' pieces, and had taken more than 200 hours to build. They were amazing. Dinner in the evening was at Ted's Range Road Diner near Meaford, where in an old Nissen (Quonset) hut we dined on the more unusual menu items of exotic fare.

August was something of a lacklustre month, but I did have an interesting adventure. As part of a heritage initiative, it was decided to acquire a special artifact from a neighbouring museum, and in a sense bring it back home to Goderich. The item in question was the headstone of one of the earliest pioneers of Goderich when the area was being settled back in the beginning of the 19th century. This individual—his name was Valentine Fisher—was buried after his death, but the headstone was removed from the gravesite because the engraved description was found in error, and a new marker was to have been made with the correct information. For reasons unknown this never happened. In recent times, the original headstone was uncovered from the basement of a building undergoing renovation. Stranger still, all this activity happened not in Goderich, where Valentine Fisher was known to have owned and operated a hotel in town, but in the neighbouring Huron County community of Wingham, which is at least 25 miles (40 km) away. Consequently the headstone found its way into the regional museum in Wingham as an artifact.

The quest now was to repatriate the headstone to Goderich, and eventually displayed in a place of honour where the original town's cemetery used to be—now a public park. Having gained permission to acquire the headstone from the Wingham museum, the task was to physically collect the fragile object and transport it to a temporary storage place in readiness for its rededication. Fortunately, the Goderich Parks Department supervisor was sympathetic to the cause and allowed me to use a pickup truck and two of his personnel to drive to Wingham, collect the headstone and return with it to the storage place. Suitably equipped with the means to transport the marker, we drove to the museum and located the headstone. After humping the stone down 16 steps and negotiating other sundry obstacles, we returned to Goderich and found a good storage area in the local mausoleum where it will rest until required for its new home.

A vacation in Labrador—the Big Land

The time came for us to pick up the airline tickets for our early September vacation to the Labrador Straits, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). New regulations had been introduced since the last time we had flown, including a list of what you could and couldn't pack in carry-on luggage. Any containers with a capacity of 90mL/90g or less had to fit into a 1 litre clear, re-sealable plastic bag. This new ruling sent us scurrying around the shops looking for small sizes of everything we usually take with us. We eventually found most of them, but it was a hassle!

The holiday went according to plan. We really had only one bad day weatherwise, and that didn't spoil our sightseeing. The direct flight from Toronto, Ontario, to St. John's, NL, was a definite bonus. Although we had to change our original itinerary, because the connecting flight times of a different airline we were using to fly to Labrador were altered, it didn't cause too much of a disruption.

After arriving in St. John's, we went to a nearby hotel for the one night stay before we were to continue to Labrador the following day. The remainder of the day was spent downtown familiarising ourselves with the city, and enjoying a lunch of traditional *fish and brewis* and local beer. The evening was spent on George Street, which is a road completely lined with pubs from one end to the other, and sat out on the patio listening to live entertainment, supping our suds and dining on cod's tongues (a local delicacy).

The real adventure started the next day when we returned to the airport and checked in for the Provincial Airlines (PAL) regional flights to Labrador. We knew that things were going to be downscaled somewhat, but weren't prepared for the diminutive size of the aircraft used on this route. It was a twin-turboprop Metroliner that had seen better days. The ground staff informed us that the plane was not equipped with a toilet, and that there would be no flight attendant on board. No snack, either, it seemed—just a bottle of spring water. On board, the 17 seats were nonadjustable, and despite flying over water the plane was not equipped with passenger life vests (very disconcerting). The cockpit was in full view (no anti-terror devices), so we could see both the pilot and copilot work at the controls. Most of the other passengers were returning locals, so they'd been through it all before. During takeoff the machine heaved and strained into the air, and the sound of the turboprops was significantly louder than the pure jets of larger airliners. We gained altitude and settled back for the one hour flight to the outport of St. Anthony, NL. As the weather was calm, we didn't experience any turbulence, and that was a good thing. Approaching St. Anthony was kind of hair-raising as the pilot swung the plane into a severe banking manoeuvre and negotiated a steep dive towards the airstrip. We could see all this through the front windscreen. A bumpy landing on the Metroliner's spindly undercarriage indicated that we were on *terra firma* and the plane taxied to the terminal building.

After disgorging some passengers and embarking others, it was time to refuel and once again take off. The next leg of the journey—to our destination of the fishing village of Blanc-Sablon, QC—took a shade more than 20 minutes, and we descended in similar fashion as before to the single landing strip and rudimentary terminal building. After retrieving our luggage, it was time to collect the rental car, which was a later model Pontiac product. We then set off along the Labrador Coastal Drive to the small community of Mary's Harbour, NL—a distance of 108 miles (174 km): 54 miles (87 km) of this on a gravel road surface.

Blanc-Sablon, located in the province of Québec, is not far from the Labrador border. This part of the coastline was settled predominantly by French fishermen and so the place names are of French origin. Therefore, as we progressed to Mary's Harbour, we drove through the small villages of L'Anse-au-Clair, L'Anse-Amour, Forteau and L'Anse-au-Loup. Labrador is known by the native First Nations people as the Big Land, and this description is apt. The sun broke through the cloud layer, and the remoteness of the rugged terrain—a vast, panoramic wilderness—unfolded as we made our way along the twisting, turning and undulating Labrador Coastal Drive (Hwy. 510). At each turn, the scenery changed from craggy headlands towering above us, giving way every now and then to wide open spaces strewn with rocks and small boulders, between which stunted fir trees and shrubs struggled for existence. All the while, the sea (the Strait of Belle Isle) was rarely out of sight. The cloudless sky meant a perfect view all around, from the foreboding interior on the left, to the distant shapes of the island of Newfoundland's Long Range Mountains on the horizon to our right. Then, at the settlement of Red Bay, we hit the gravel.

This is not the place to have a flat tyre or run out of petrol. There is only one community between Red Bay and Mary's Harbour, and the road is infrequently travelled. Like it or not, this is the only overland route to our destination, but, of course, it was part of the adventure. The gravel surface was easy to drive on, and because of the light traffic there were few potholes or 'washboard effect' problems. The road is maintained by regular grading, and we did see two earthmovers *en route*. The day was dry, and a great plume of dust followed us as we maintained a steady 50 mph (80 km/h) progressing northwards. When the few vehicles from the opposite direction approached, it was obligatory to slow down and prevent stones flying to minimise the risk of a shattered windscreen. Again, the scenery changed rapidly and we lost sight of the sea, as the road veered inland to what the locals called the Barrens—a vast expanse of boggy terrain dotted with numerous small ponds, and also strewn with rocks covered with moss and low growing plants. Way in the distance we could see a range of mountains. In places it was like a moonscape, or reminiscent of Death Valley minus the cacti and bleached cattle bones. Once in a while we came across an abandoned *kommatik*, which is a large toboggan that's purpose-designed to carry a load of logs. During the winter, local residents drive their snowmobiles to the forests and cut down trees for home heating fuel. The felled trees are then cut into manageable lengths and the logs loaded on the *kommatik*, which is then towed behind the snowmobile.

After enduring this ride, we eventually drove into the hamlet of Lodge Bay. Near the lonely general store and filling station, the road crossed a creek that emptied into an inlet (we had rejoined the sea). We stopped for a breather, and walked over the bridge to take photos of the picturesque harbour. Two women then emerged out of the store and started to speak to us. They were also tourists—but with a difference. They were from Holland and had decided, on a whim, to explore parts of Newfoundland and Labrador—including this back-of-beyond road—using a basic form of mobility: their bicycles. They camped along the way when necessary, and anticipated a five-week journey as they progressed on a predetermined route that also included several ferry crossings. This blew us away, as neither woman was a spring chicken to begin with; although extremely athletic in physique. They accompanied us later, as we continued to our lodgings in Mary's Harbour and prepared for our next day's adventure, which was the highlight of the trip.

The day dawned beautifully, and it promised to be a carbon copy of the previous one. This was a good thing, as our destination was the National Historic Site of Battle Harbour, the deserted fishing settlement

accessible only by a boat that sailed for over an hour from the dock at Mary's Harbour. I am no sailor, so a flat water sea is mandatory to prevent *mal de mer*. We were joined by our Dutch companions and boarded the vessel for the voyage out to the archipelago and Battle Harbour. *En route* we were on a keen lookout for the telltale spouts of whales. However, it was late in the season and no humpbacks were around, but we were entertained by a school of dolphins that chased the boat and played alongside before departing. Battle Harbour loomed in the distance and we soon tied up at the dock.

Basically, the community was historically significant as the main port of call for the transient fishermen, where they could trade their catches with the merchants for everyday commodities. At one time, the thriving community was called the unofficial capital of Labrador, and prospered until the fish stocks became depleted and technological progress sounded the death knell of the once labour-intensive fishing industry. As time went by, the population declined. Eventually, the community was abandoned by the remaining residents, who were then moved to Mary's Harbour by the provincial government. Despite this, the Canadian federal government decided to preserve the community as a 'living museum', and daily voyages are part of the programme to educate visitors of a bygone age. Several of the buildings have been adapted for overnight accommodation, and this is a popular draw. We had an hour or so to ourselves, and having ordered boxed lunches we had a picnic. We also went for a short walk on our own. We were then taken around the site by a guide, who was a former resident of Battle Harbour and knew all about the traditional way of life experienced by the original inhabitants. We entered many of the buildings and learned about everyday life and the tricks of the trade necessary to survive in the harsh climate and lonely environment. Most structures were intact, including the Anglican church, general store, warehouses and private residences. There were also a few derelictions added to the mix. The return voyage was equally as placid, and we did see more dolphins as they broke the surface in the distance. For our evening meal, we were treated with a plate of the traditional Newfoundland fare known as Jigg's dinner—a simple meat and vegetable meal, but a staple for people with little means.

We were due to return south on the following day, but we were further amazed by the Dutch ladies, who were venturing further north, and in fact were cycling an additional 115 miles (185 km) on the gravel road to the port of Cartwright before taking a ferry back to the island of Newfoundland. This stretch of the dirt road was punctuated only by two small communities, and was expected to be even more remote and foreboding, plus the additional danger of wild bears roaming around. We left under cloudy skies, but it didn't rain, so we had a good drive back down the gravel road to Red Bay; buying petrol in Lodge Bay to prevent being stranding in the wilderness. After arriving in Red Bay, the weather started to deteriorate, but we knew we were going to be indoors at the National Historic Site museum administered by Parks Canada.

Red Bay was one of the earliest European settlements in North America. Founded by Basque whalers, it grew into a very important community and prospered for many years. The Basques invented the art of whaling. Everything we know about the techniques of catching and processing these mammals can be attributed to the pioneering efforts of the Basques. In the 16th century, whale oil was much sought after and commanded a high price, so whaling was a very lucrative business. At that time, the whale population in the Strait of Belle Isle was significant. The inventive Basques capitalised on the situation and dominated the whaling industry, especially from their main port of Red Bay. Archaeological activity has uncovered several



Monica Poses by the Provincial Border Sign near L'Anse-au-Clair, NL, September, 2008.



The Pinware River Looking South from Hwy. 510 towards the Strait of Belle Isle, NL, September, 2008.



The Gravel Surface Section of Hwy. 510 between Red Bay and Lodge Bay, NL, September, 2008.



A Kommatik Abandoned by the Side of Hwy. 510 and Ready for Next Winter, NL, September, 2008.



Approaching the National Historic Site Outport of Battle Harbour, NL, September, 2008.



Inside the Interpretive Museum at Battle Harbour National Historic Site, NL, September, 2008.



Basque Whaling Chalupa Artifact at Red Bay Nat. Historic Site Museum, NL, September, 2008.



Seascape of the Strait of Belle Isle Seen from the End of the Battery Trail, NL, September, 2008.



Point Amour Lighthouse Provincial Historic Site, 129 Steps to the Top, NL, September, 2008.



Wild Partridgeberries Growing in Profusion on the HMS Raleigh Trail, NL, September, 2008.



Monica Poses by One of the Rocky Outcrops of the Jersey Rooms Trail, NL, September, 2008.



Archæological Dig of the 17th Century Settlement at Cupids, NL, September, 2008.

important artifacts; including a *chalupa* (the small boat used by whale hunters); a galleon used to transport the whale oil, and the remains of the factory where the whale blubber was rendered into oil and barrelled for transportation. After visiting the museum it was time to continue to our hotel at West St. Modeste.

Even though the weather started to become showery, we still found time to explore several hiking trails and observe the flora and fauna of the area. Wild berries were everywhere, and berry picking in NL is a way of life. Such delicacies as bakeapple, partridgeberry, squashberry and blueberry are made into a myriad of treats—notably jams, jellies and pies. The hike to the end of the fairly long Battery Trail at Red Cliffs was particularly exhilarating, and we were rewarded with a magnificent view over the Strait of Belle Isle.

The next highlight was, in fact, a light—or lighthouse, to be more exact. The Labrador Strait of Belle Isle coastline has claimed many shipwrecks. During the 1850s, four lighthouses were built to help guide the ever-increasing amount of shipping traffic in the Strait. Point Amour lighthouse is the tallest in Atlantic Canada and is a Provincial Historic Site. We were fortunate to visit on a fairly clear day, and ascended the 129 steps to the top of the tower. The original lightkeeper's cottage had been converted into a small museum. Nearby was the remains of the wreck of *HMS Raleigh*, a British warship that had foundered in 1922.

Our time in Labrador was nearing its end, and we stayed two more nights at a hotel in L'Anse-au-Clair. Unfortunately, the remnants of Hurricane Hannah passed through the area the following day, and heavy rain prevented us from going on a planned hike in the morning. Instead, we visited the Gateway to Labrador Visitor Centre housed in a former church, and was as much a museum as a visitor centre. It was very well done and the exhibits were excellent. We had hoped to visit another museum in the afternoon, but it was closed. The rain ended overnight, and it was nice enough the next morning for us to hike the trail we didn't do the previous day. The trail hugged the shoreline and took us to the site of a fishing enterprise, the Jersey Rooms, one of the oldest settlements in the area. Still visible at the site were stone walkways and the foundations of buildings. Following the hike, we drove to the Blanc-Sablon airport and returned to St. John's, via St. Anthony, on the same rickety old Metroliner. We then took delivery of another rental car and drove to our downtown hotel for a two night stopover. The weather had improved and we walked to The Pepper Mill restaurant for some fine dining. We were surprised to see a cruise ship in port, but it left when we were eating, which was a pity, as it would've been a nice sight leaving its berth in the evening and all lit up.

The following day was the last full day in the province and we had intended to visit Cupids, a small community 'around the bay', as the locals say. This village was founded in 1610, making it the oldest continually inhabited English community in North America. Once again, business was the prime mover in establishing this community, as the merchant venturers in Bristol were eager to make a foothold in North America to capitalise on both the fur trade and the fledgling fishing industry. An individual named John Guy was appointed by the Bristolian businessmen to settle in Newfoundland and form a bridgehead for their trading colony. The settlement proved successful, and archaeological digs have uncovered stone foundations and even a cemetery, all attesting to the prosperity of the pioneering community. We met several interesting volunteer interpreters, and even though it was out of season, the local tea shop was opened specially for us so we could have lunch (traditional home made pea soup for me—it was delicious). The tea shop was part of Cupids Haven—a B & B converted from the original Anglican church—located at the end of the road.

Because it would have made for a very long day to drive the three hour journey home after landing in Toronto, we stayed overnight at the Hilton Hotel close to the airport. Then, as arranged before we left on our trip, we detoured to Bolton on our way home the next day and visited Pat and John Dicks, friends who used to live in Goderich. As it had been two years since we last saw them, we had a lot of catching up to do; including recalling the days when John and I worked together at Champion Road Machinery Ltd. (as it was then called) for about ten years.

Doors Open and doors close

Shortly after returning from our vacation, Monica and I reunited with Roger and Sue Moore from Coventry, who were visiting their son and his family here. Even though it had been only eight months since we last saw them, it was a great get-together with lots of laughs over a leisurely lunch in Woodstock. Their daughter, Lindsey, was also with them and it was nice to see her again. There was much jubilation all around, as their son, Stephen, and his wife had just added Niall, a second son, to their family.

Heritage matters didn't go away in my absence, and it took much work juggling committee agendas and ramping up to the Doors Open festival that demanded a great deal of subcommittee volunteer effort. Lots of activity, plus attending Town Council and other municipal meetings; including the regular Town Hall session (featuring a television/press photo-opportunity), a special meeting concerning the new civic complex, monthly Heritage Goderich committee gathering, and other sundry conversations with the mayor and chief administrative officer.

Entering its seventh year in 2008, Doors Open is becoming an annual event to encourage people to understand more about local heritage. The philosophy behind the event is opening the doors to sites normally accessible either at restricted times or private properties closed to the general public. Last year, the properties were located in the neighbouring municipality of North Huron and consisted of such places as the Wingham Masonic Temple and the prison cells in the basement of the municipal building.

This year, the programme was more ambitious and encompassed the entire County of Huron. Also, it had a twist. More or less, all the establishments that were being opened had some association with the supernatural. Hence the theme—*Doors Open, Haunted Huron*. Such an undertaking needed a large supply of volunteer labour for manning the various sites. Monica and I decided to help out by being the Doors Open custodians at the oldest building in town (built *circa* 1839), which was the Park House tavern. So, we met and greeted all the visitors, and educated them as to the history of the site; then escorted them around the real historic part of the tavern. Although we believe the tavern wasn't haunted, at the end of the day, we imbibed in a few 'spirits', courtesy of the landlord and tavern owner.

On Tuesday, September 30th, 2008, news hit many of the town's citizens enough to drive them to drink. In addition to the anxiety created by the current downturn in the global economy, Goderich had a big economic worry of its own. Volvo CE announced that it was closing down the Goderich plant and moving production to the US and Brazil: effectively throwing over 500 employees out of work. Production would cease on June 30th, 2009, with the remaining operations being phased out over the fol-

lowing 15 months before the windows were finally boarded up. The announcement came completely out of the blue and left the whole town in a state of shock. When I joined the company in 1976, Champion Road Machinery Ltd., as it was then known, was a family owned business. In 1988, the family sold the company to a firm of investors called Sequoia Associates Inc., and they, in turn, sold it to Volvo Construction Equipment (Volvo CE) nine years later. Initially, all the employees thought that being a part of Volvo CE was going to be beneficial, but it wasn't long before they started thinking otherwise when they saw how big international corporations operated. The bottom line was the all important thing, and if it meant closing a plant to achieve a bigger profit, then so be it. Volvo CE closing the Goderich plant was always a possibility, but everyone hoped that it would never happen.

With Volvo Motor Graders Ltd. being the town's largest employer, and with very little else in the surrounding area, the future didn't look very rosy for the laid off workers, many of whom had lived in Goderich all their lives, and Champion/Volvo being their only employer. Fortunately, my pension wouldn't be affected, but there was some speculation about my remaining health benefit entitlement (which normally finished in November, 2010). As time went by, the union negotiated the best severance package for its members, but nonunion types were not quite as lucky: just the minimum amount as prescribed by law.

Thanksgiving, theatre and a family visit

Our autumn weather was unbelievable for mid-October. The Thanksgiving public holiday had sunny skies over the three days, and attracted many people to the town's beaches. The colours were also at their peak, so it was definitely a weekend for outdoor activities. We went for a hike every day and estimated that during the long weekend we walked over 15 miles (25 km). We chose a different trail each time—two were within the town, one was between Goderich and Benmiller, and the fourth was 31 miles (50 km) away, so we had a lovely drive through the countryside that day. Monica also cooked a traditional Thanksgiving dinner of baked ham with pumpkin pie for dessert. It was a great weekend!

We had our last theatre outing for this year and went to the St. Jacobs Country Playhouse to see the British farce, *One for the Pot*. We always enjoy a good farce, and still remember the Whitehall Theatre ones with Brian Rix, which used to be on TV back in the 1960s. Our seats for the 2009 season were already booked—going to eleven productions at three different theatres.

The following weekend was an unusual one for us. During both days, I attending the first half of a Heritage Workshop organised by the University of Waterloo. The workshop, which was given by professor Robert Shipley, PhD, from the university, was held in our local museum and attracted people from a wide area. Monica went to a tea party celebrating a friend's 90th birthday. Beulah and her late husband were our neighbours in the apartment building where we lived for our first 11 years in Goderich. Like ourselves, Beulah moved away from that building to another, bigger apartment, and that is where the party was held. However, she had caterers do all the work, and they did an excellent job, continuously coming around with tea, coffee and plates of tempting treats. It was a lovely afternoon, and Monica visited with a lot of people she hadn't seen for ages. The second half of the workshop was held the following weekend, and Monica started sewing a dress for New Year's Eve, to be celebrated once again at the Benmiller Inn & Spa.

In late October, we met my cousin and his wife for lunch. Don, who had prostate cancer two years ago, and Claire live in London, Ontario, and we manage to get together with them two or three times a year. They travel quite a bit, are heavily involved in volunteer work, their grandchildren's activities, and are keen golfers, all of which take up a lot of their time in the summer. Anyhow, when we do see them, we always have a lovely reunion. This time our rendezvous was at The Little Inn, an old hotel in the village of Bayfield just south of Goderich.

A new car to finish the year

November 1st—we had a great hike along the Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART), which was resplendent in its autumn colours. We must have walked about 6.2 miles (10 km) and met few other people. The conditions were vastly different to the previous week when the area around us was hit with a freak snowstorm. The blizzard caused a great deal of damage mainly due to heavy, wet snow landing on trees with lots of leaves—the weight of the snow snapping boughs and overhead power cables.

Heritage matters subsided a little, due to a drop in event activities and some absenteeism from committee members. I continued researching a few miscellaneous projects—for example, a local architect wanted to know about the history of one of the earliest commercial buildings in town. Also, I had a discussion with a conservation architect, who was working on a new design for one of the local bank's historic façades. Then I had to prepare for Town Council meetings dealing with next year's budget. There was some other activity concerning restoration of buildings in the Heritage Conservation District, and the upshot was approval from the committee for two projects. There was more good news for the restoration of the century old CPR railway station, as Town Council agreed to free up money for some badly needed repairs.

My father wrote to me and said his second knee surgery remained on hold until his blood pressure had stabilised. At 85, he really wasn't happy with his lot, but the attitude of the National Health Service and Social Services wasn't helping his cause either.

As my current vehicle was three years old and had 18,600 miles (29,933 km) on the clock, I part exchanged it for a new model. We ordered exactly the same vehicle and thought about having a different colour, but after looking at what was available decided to stay with silver. So on December 4th, 2008, I took delivery of a new 2009 model Pontiac G5 SE coupé—the upgraded version of the Pursuit. However, because of bad weather conditions, we didn't go far afield—just one long journey and a couple of local trips.

Christmas Day for us was quiet but very enjoyable, but Boxing Day was far from quiet. There were more visitors at Shirley and Norris' than there had been the previous few years. So, with 13 of us in the room, it wasn't surprising that it got a little noisy at times. As we walked to Shirley and Norris' that evening, we observed how high the snowbanks were around town. Little did we think that by the following Sunday morning, most of that snow would have thawed. We noticed as we walked home that it was warmer than earlier in the day. The temperature continued to rise overnight and reached 52 deg.F (11 deg.C) by Saturday afternoon. We also had steady rain all that day, and the combination of the above freezing temperatures and rain created a rapid thaw which, in turn, resulted in extensive flooding in some areas.



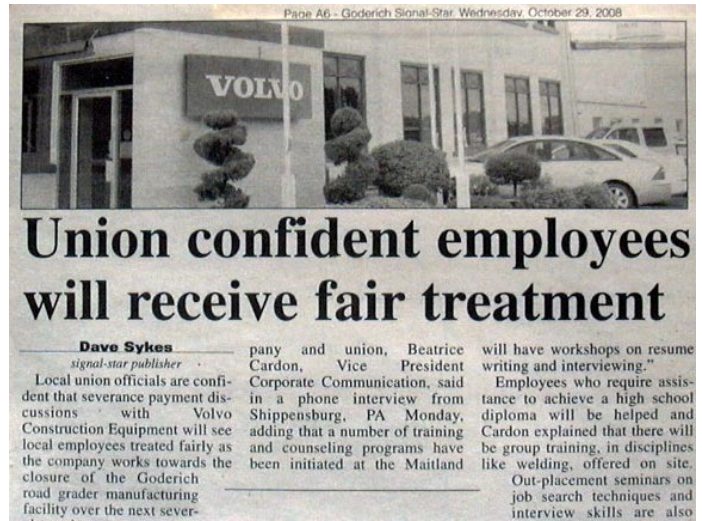
Barry, Sue, Monica and Roger at Crabby Joe's Restaurant, Woodstock, Ontario, September, 2008.



Doors Open Advertising Poster Encouraging Visitors to the Heritage Sites, Goderich, September, 2008.



Front Page of the Goderich Signal-Star Newspaper Announcing Volvo Closing its Doors, October, 2008.



Page from the Goderich Signal-Star Newspaper with Details of Volvo/Union Agreement, October, 2008.



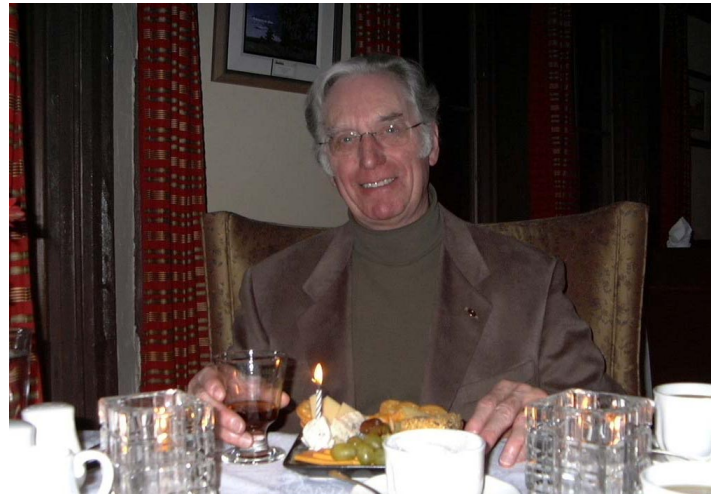
View of Huron County Farmland from the GART near Sharp's Creek, Ontario, October, 2008.



Don, Claire, Barry and Monica at The Little Inn, Bayfield, Ontario, October, 2008.



Victorian Home in Wellington Street after a Major Snowstorm, Goderich, Ontario, November, 2008.



Barry Celebrating his 63rd Birthday at Benmiller Inn, Goderich, Ontario, November, 2008.



2009 Model Pontiac SE G5 Coupé. This Model G5 was Powered by a 2.2 Litre Inline 4-Cylinder Variable Valve Timing with Sequential Fuel-injected Engine Coupled to a Manual Five-speed Overdrive Transaxle and Front Wheel Drive. The Colour was Described as Quicksilver Metallic, and Standard Features Included Air Conditioning, Cruise Control, 4-Wheel Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and CD Player. The Instrumentation Panel Had Basic Gauges. Photograph Taken Outside our Cambria Road Apartment, Goderich, Ontario, in December, 2008.

Although we weren't affected by that, we didn't escape the next weather event—a major windstorm. It started Saturday evening and continued most of Sunday, December 28th. We were disturbed by a power failure at 6:45 a.m. Since our apartment is all electric, and not knowing how long we would be without power, we managed to make a regular breakfast, and even heated some soup for lunch in the fondue pot. Fortunately, we were able to get news updates on our battery powered radio, but the news wasn't good. There was a major break in the main power feeder line coming into Goderich, and it was going to take a long time to repair it—maybe not until 10 o'clock that night! Although we have had long power failures in the past, most of them have been overnight and didn't seem to have the same impact as this one. Anyhow, things could have been a lot worse. Our well insulated apartment retained its heat fairly well. But if it had become too cold, we could have gone to the emergency shelter organised by the town.

As it was, we had a long standing invitation from our friends, Robin and Barb Hewitt, for a visit with them and another friend, Paul Dare, that evening. Since they had a natural gas fireplace in their lounge and a propane barbecue to cook on if necessary, the get-together went ahead as planned. We had a great time. When the power was still off at 7 o'clock, Robin lit the barbecue and cooked some steaks, as well as baked potatoes and vegetables to go with them. We had a lovely, leisurely meal by candlelight, and were still sitting around the table chatting when the power was restored at 9:40 p.m. We continued chatting for a little while longer, then left to walk home, very happy to have the streetlights lighting our way. As well, we had a nice warm and welcoming apartment when we arrived.

It was snowing and blowing as we drove to the Benmiller Inn & Spa on New Year's Eve, but we arrived there without mishap. We had gone early because of the weather, so when there was a lull in the squalls, we went for a walk around the hamlet of Benmiller. We didn't stay out very long, though, because it started to snow heavily again. We returned to the inn and relaxed until it was time to get ready for the New Year's festivities.

The same as last year, it was a gala occasion. The dining room was beautifully decorated, and everyone was in a celebratory mood. Dinner was a six course meal, with a choice for each one of the six except the sorbet. For the main *entrée*, there was a choice of duck, sea bass or steak, and since we liked all three, it was a difficult decision. In the end, we chose the sea bass because it doesn't appear on a menu very often, unlike the other two. It was delicious as was the entire meal. Different from last year was the music. Instead of being entertained by a DJ, a very talented, young local musician played and sang all evening. He played three different instruments—an electronic keyboard, guitar and harmonica—and his music was great for just listening to or for dancing.

As midnight approached, glasses of champagne were brought round to every table. Everyone gathered on the dance floor to toast in the new year; then dozens of balloons were released and floated down from the ceiling. It was a wonderful evening.

New Year's Day was enjoyable too. After a light breakfast, we went for another short walk around the hamlet to get an appetite for brunch (a speciality of the inn). It was a much better day weatherwise, and the drive home was easy.

A disastrous start to 2009

We had beautiful days at the very beginning of January, so Monica and I took to the trails and had a marvellous tromp through the snow. Lots of fresh air and exercise in the countryside. After breakfast at a local restaurant, we walked through town to the harbour and trailhead, then across the bridge spanning the Maitland River and along the trail to the old railway sidings before returning. As we progressed, we both looked up to see a pair of bald eagles flying majestically above the valley. There was quite a commotion from the duck population in the river below, but we didn't see either of the eagles swoop for their dinner. Other birds in the nearby trees were twittering as the alarm went up, and we did see (and hear) a red bellied woodpecker that seemed to be completely unconcerned about the predators in the area. Several other people and their dogs were out taking advantage of the sunshine, and we had a number of visits with acquaintances *en route*.

However, this idyllic start to the new year was shattered on January 22nd, when Monica and I were involved in a very serious highway accident. Although we escaped relatively unharmed, the consequences could've been fatal.

As we were on our way home from Exeter after having lunch there, the front wheel of our new car became caught in a rut where the paved road and the gravel shoulder met. Despite my attempts to regain control, the car careened along the shoulder, through two snowbanks, became partially airborne, and rolled over before finally coming to rest on its side in a deep, snow filled ditch. Even though we were on our sides inside the car, we were still securely strapped in our seats. The seat belts did their job and saved us from serious injury or even worse. Also, as the windows remained intact and the airbags hadn't deployed, we were spared from being injured by flying glass or inflated airbags.

Anyhow, we hardly had time to catch our breath before two faces appeared at the windscreen. Two truckers had stopped and rushed to our assistance. With the car landing on the driver's side, the only way out was on the opposite side, and getting the door open was quite a challenge. However, with Monica pushing upwards from the inside and one of the men heaving from the outside, they got it open. The two men then helped Monica clamber out, and while one of them helped her up the steep incline out of the ditch, the other man helped me get out. While all that was going on, a dozen or more vehicles had also stopped and their drivers offered assistance. The owner of the nearby farmhouse witnessed the accident and dialled the emergency 9-1-1 number for the police and ambulance before coming outside to help. He later went back to get his pickup truck and drove it to the end of the driveway so that Monica could sit in it.

The accident happened about 6 miles (8 km) out of town, and it wasn't long before we saw flashing lights as a police car (cruiser) was the first to arrive; followed shortly afterwards by an ambulance. Because both of us felt fine, the ambulance wasn't really needed. However, Monica agreed to go to the hospital for a check over. I stayed with the police and waited for the tow truck. It took about 45 minutes to pull the car out of the ditch and onto the truck's flatbed. As to be expected after what it had gone through, our new car didn't look new any more. It was a sorry sight. Then it was off to a body shop in Goderich where we deposited the forlorn vehicle into a holding yard.

The next little while was spent at the insurance brokers' office, and notifying the car dealer where the vehicle was purchased in case we needed to order a replacement. Because we're known by most of the people in these businesses there weren't any procedural problems, and such things as the insurance claim and a rental car were dealt with immediately.

The prognosis of the car's fate remained unknown at that moment, as I was still waiting to hear from the insurance assessor whether it was repairable or whether it was a write-off. Of course, the situation was made more irritating given the fact that the car was only six weeks old, and with about 200 miles (322 km) on the clock.

Still, it could've been worse, and, fortunately, we were spared of 'knocking at the Pearly Gates' thanks to the efficiency of the seat belts and the impact resistant occupant 'safety cage' built into the car's design. It showed that the automotive engineering and all the crash testing paid dividends. Hats off to the designers for all their research and development.

Life goes on

Heritage matters simmered both in the foreground and the background. The recording secretary resigned, putting the committee into a hiring mode. A few interesting research projects were on the go, as well as the grunt work that nobody wanted to do. February—*Heritage Month*—inspired the committee to gear up for special presentations and other activities during *Heritage Week*, like visiting selected property owners, who had made a special effort to spruce up their old house/business, and presenting them with appreciation certificates. Before all this, we had to attend the Town Council budget meetings, and an important Official Plan meeting that was mired in a legal situation concerning heritage property.

Monica's 70th birthday, even though it was a milestone birthday, was celebrated at the Benmiller Inn & Spa just like other years. At one time, we did think about going further afield and for longer than overnight, but decided to wait until the weather improved and then go off somewhere. Not only that, we were usually welcomed like Royalty at Benmiller, and it would be so disappointing—particularly as it was a special occasion—to go somewhere else and be treated indifferently. So, we booked the Valentine's package, and even before we got there, the innkeeper, upgraded us from a regular room to a suite in the Woollen Mill—the main building with the dining room and lounge. Plus, a small bottle of sparkling wine and strawberries/chocolate dip were presented to us at registration.

With Valentine's Day falling on a Saturday this year, the inn was almost fully booked which, in turn, made the dining room very busy. However, we weren't in the slightest bit rushed and had a lovely, leisurely meal. We had the special Valentine's Day dinner, which was a five course affair with a choice of two or three items for every course. Our *entrée* was a shared châteaubriand. We had to smile when given steak knives, as the meat was so tender it could have been cut with a fork!! The other four courses were also fabulous. Following dinner, we sat in the lounge for a while and listened to the same talented, young local musician who played on New Year's Eve. It was another memorable evening. The next morning, a continental breakfast was delivered to our room. Before we left, we indulged in the inn's famous midday brunch.

We made a couple of short hikes on the nearby trails. On one stretch, we met two countryfolk who were out for a walk, followed by their three barn cats. After a long conversation, they asked us if we would like to see their cabin and aviary. We followed them along an unmarked trail through the pine woods to a clearing that was ringed with a series of ponds. Nearby was their rustic cabin (no electricity) and some pens/barns that contained several peacocks and peahens, geese, guinea fowl, Peking ducks, and somewhere a pair of swans. The cabin's panelled interior was cosy with a wood burning stove in one corner and a loft type bedroom accessed by a real old cast iron spiral staircase. It had all the appearances of something out of the cartoon strip, *Li'l Abner*, and the couple were genuine homespun people.

My father's situation remained the same—still waiting for his right knee replacement. He seemed to have had a prostate problem, too, but he hasn't told me everything. My stepmother's colostomy operation wasn't the success they had hoped for, and she was due for more surgery in April. They just soldiered on with the help of Social Services and good neighbours.

Accident aftermath

Reflecting on the car accident, it was just sheer bad luck encountering the damaged Tarmac, and with the velocity of the car, there was no time to fully react. Monica did suffer a pinched nerve in her shoulder near the base of her neck, but treatment from the chiropractor reduced and finally eliminated the pain. I had no latent ill effects at all.

True to form, nothing went straight forward with the car insurance claim. I did receive the policy update and request for a premium adjustment to cover a new vehicle. As a write-off, the entire cost of a replacement car would be refunded. We finally heard from our insurance company, and as usual when dealing with any of these companies, we had to haggle. They gladly accept your money year after year, but when you have an accident and make a claim, they don't want to pay out.

Initially, the insurance company declared our car repairable. They maintained that it had suffered only soft damage, which could be easily fixed with a few new panels and some body work, but I dug my heels in saying that the car had experienced a severe frontal impact and roll-over collision, and that any number of defects could arise after the repair (the mechanicals, steering, suspension, electronics, etc., were all affected by the incident). Also, the resale value was now next to nothing, because under a new law all prior accident details had to be revealed and recorded before a resale could occur. Plus all factory warranty claims could be voided—not a good scene.

Anyhow, after some negotiating by our insurance broker, we got the news that the insurance company had agreed to write off the wrecked car. However, we still had to agree on a settlement figure, especially as we paid an additional premium to cover full replacement value for the first two years of ownership. The upshot was a written-off settlement that turned out as being as fair as could be expected. In the meantime, the local car dealer's salesman, who had also been part of the conversation, was successful in acquiring, with only a slight penalty (mainly paying sales tax), a replacement vehicle with the same specifications as the written-off one.



Mike Pottle Digging out the Wrecked Pontiac G5 in the Ditch at Taylor's Corners, ON, January, 2009.



Some of the Damage Sustained by the Pontiac G5, Bluewater Body Shop, Goderich, ON, January, 2009.



Monica Resting on the Bruce Trail Portion of the Inglis Falls C.A., Owen Sound, ON, May, 2009.



Front Page of the Goderich Signal-Star Newspaper Announcing Volvo End of an Era, June/July, 2009.



The Last Production Volvo Motor Grader Built in Goderich, Ontario, June, 2009.



The Last Goderich Production Volvo Motor Grader, Canada Day Parade, Goderich, Ontario, July, 2009.

The insurance company sent a cheque to cover the replacement cost of a new vehicle. As planned, we took delivery of our new car on February 22nd, 2009, but the only outing in it so far was our weekly grocery shopping trip. We were hoping for a nice day so that we could go further afield, but with more snow in the forecast the grocery store was as far as we went.

A nondescript early spring

Word on the street was that my old employer would be ceasing production on June 30th, and gradually 500 jobs would eventually go. I had already been approached by employees to prepare their résumés as they didn't want to miss any opportunities in the labour market. Since retiring, I had been drawing on my company pension for over three years, and for the time being the funds seemed secure enough to help supplement my OAP income.

Heritage activity continued unabated with meetings and projects. Three new members joined the team, so it was up to me to delegate some chores to them as they settled down. One older member resigned, so the net gain was two bodies. *Heritage Week* was observed during *Heritage Month* and it provided the reason for presenting special appreciation certificates to owners of old houses/businesses around town that had been renovated in a sympathetic heritage manner.

On March 18th, I decided to upgrade my personal computer arrangement and bought another Apple product. This was an Apple MacBook laptop model (S/N W8906RV31AQ) with wireless (WiFi) Internet reception capabilities. It used the new Apple MacOS X operating system, and cost \$1582.00. The software versions at the time were new to me, and took some effort to understand them. I also experimented with WiFi at the local public library. My Internet Service Provider allowed me to access 10 hours of broadband a month at home for free. However, the library WiFi connection increased my free time beyond 10 hours.

Earth Hour was observed in several hundred cities and towns across Canada. Goderich was one of them, and in our local newspaper, we read that our favourite restaurant here in town was turning off all its lights—except in the kitchen and on the stairs—and having dining by candlelight for the entire evening. We thought it sounded a really lovely idea so we made a reservation, which was just as well since the restaurant was very busy. However, we weren't rushed and still had a nice, leisurely meal. It was a wonderful evening, and the restaurant, being a designated municipal Heritage Building, lent itself to dining by candlelight. In fact, we so enjoyed it that we told the owner he should do it more often.

Not having any lights didn't have the same appeal on April 3rd, when just before 7:30 p.m., we were suddenly plunged into darkness. We didn't know what caused the power failure, but it had become extremely windy, so it was possible that a major power feeder line was down somewhere. Anyhow, as we sat in our candlelit living room, we had to smile to think that we had paid for the privilege of doing the same thing at the Earth Hour event the previous Saturday. Fortunately, the power was restored after about an hour.

Although we missed the annual Belmore Maple Syrup Festival last year, 2009 was the 42nd anniversary of the popular event, and so we drove to the venue where we indulged in eating all-you-can-eat pancakes,

accompanied by sausages and coffee/tea. Of course, we ordered seconds; then listened to the Country & Western band as well as danced around a bit to the music. As the day turned out to be sunny and a pleasant 50 deg.F (10 deg.C), we left the festival, headed to the nature trails and hiked off some of the excess lunch before we continued home for a well deserved rest.

In mid-April we made an overnight journey to the Elora Mill, one of hotels in the Inns of Ontario organization, but the trip was disappointing, mainly because we didn't find the *Drayton Festival Variety Show*—which was the reason for the trip—very entertaining. We had expected that the actors taking part would be mostly ones who had played leading roles in past productions, and not ones whose names we hardly recognised. As it was, nearly all of them were singers, and to make matters worse, a lot of the songs were obscure numbers that we had never heard before. To cap it all, the show was almost three hours long.

It was a beautiful day for the drive to Elora. However, our journey home the following day was a bit nerve-racking. We awoke to find everywhere white, and the snow still coming down. At that point, the temperature was hovering around freezing and the snow was wet, but it was supposed to get colder and the storm intensify as the day went on, so we decided to head straight home. The countryside was like a winter wonderland, but with a two hour journey ahead of us, we weren't in an appreciative mood. Although we came across a lot of places where the snow had drifted across the road and had turned icy, on the whole the roads weren't too bad, and we arrived home without mishap. As forecasted, the snow didn't let up all day, and when we went out to eat that evening, we trudged through 3 or 4 inches (8 to 10 cm) of the white stuff.

As far as the Elora Mill was concerned, it was a nice enough place, but since 1999 when we last stayed there, more attention to detail was needed. Although it couldn't be helped—we had to eat early so as to get to the theatre—we were the only two in a large dining room, which didn't make for a very enjoyable dining experience. It was a pity because the food was really very good.

Not long after visiting the Elora Mill, we stayed for two nights at another hotel in the Inns of Ontario organization. This was the Millcroft Inn located in the village of Alton near Orangeville, Caledon Township, Peel Region. Starting in 1998, we were frequent visitors to the inn, but we were last there in 2004. The inn had an annex called The Crofts where individual suites were equipped with a wood-burning fireplace. After a spell of springlike weather just before our trip, it turned very cold again and was really miserable while we were away. In fact, it was so cold and windy the second day that, after lunch at a lovely restaurant near Orangeville, we decided against going for a hike in favour of returning to the inn and relaxing in front of a roaring log fire. We even stopped on our way back to buy some pâté, pumpernickel bread and a bottle of wine, so that we wouldn't have to venture out in the cold again that evening.

The inn's dining room, known as the Pod, is a glass enclosed platform cantilevered out of the main stone building over the rushing mill race below. At dusk, the subdued lighting makes for a very romantic atmosphere and we always enjoy a gourmet meal there. The next morning, we ate breakfast in the Pod where there was a generous selection of beverages, cereals, fruit, cheese and pastries to choose from. Anyhow, while some parts of our trip were less than ideal, it wasn't a complete write-off, and we felt better for the change of scenery.

Heritage and hiking

Heritage activities quietened down, but miscellaneous research work continued. We engaged a new recording secretary, who started to gradually learn the ropes, and the new members were settling in with various assignments. A couple of major initiatives had to be approved by various levels of government, but all this constituted a work in progress and took time. One enterprising businessman in town was in the process of developing an empty heritage building in the downtown core, and worked with Heritage Goderich to ensure that all changes were authentically reproduced. This meant me delving in our archives for old pictures, etc., as the building was constructed in 1906.

We always try to get out as much as possible in late spring when the various wild flowers start to bloom. As well as hiking locally on the Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART), we went on two out-of-town hiking trips. The first was to the nearby town of Exeter to hike a trail there that is one of our favourites, and we timed it just right to see all kinds of wild flowers. The most spectacular were the carpets of trilliums, but there were also lots of marsh marigolds, trout lilies, violets and bloodroot, plus a few others that we couldn't identify. We were even lucky enough to see one of Exeter's famous white (albino) squirrels.

Two weeks later, we returned to Exeter and had a great get-together with my cousin, Don, and his wife, Claire, at our usual fine dining restaurant rendezvous. We hadn't seen them since last October, so we had a lot of catching up to do. Both of them are heavily involved in volunteer work, and they also went on a golfing trip to North Carolina during the winter. Anyhow, it was great seeing them again, and we stayed at the restaurant for over three hours; not at all being rushed by the waitstaff. The meal was quite the treat, with memorable salmon, chicken and linguini dishes, plus a palatable white wine.

Our second out-of-town hiking trip was to Owen Sound. Since the Inglis Falls Conservation Area is north of Goderich, we knew that the wild flowers there would be later blooming, and once again our timing was good. However, because the trail there goes through a very different type of terrain from that in Exeter, we saw fewer varieties of flowers, but there was still an abundance of trilliums, and we also came across a lot of jack-in-the-pulpits. At one point, the trail ascended the Niagara Escarpment. Once on the top of the escarpment, though, it was a fairly easy hike to the end of the trail at Inglis Falls. This was the third year that we had gone to Owen Sound in the spring, and on this occasion the cataract was at maximum flow due to the spring runoff of melted snow and recent rainwater. After a short rest, we retraced our steps back to the car. All in all, we hiked just over 4 miles (7 km) that day, so we felt pretty pleased with ourselves.

Theatre outings, travel plans, and the end of an era

In mid-May, we had our first theatre outing for this season and went to see the musical revue, *Country Legends*. It was conceived and written as a salute to the pioneers of country music such as Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Patsy Cline, Dolly Parton and many others. Although we aren't big fans of country music, we thoroughly enjoyed the show. It was fast paced and included all the hit songs of the big names in country music, as well as lots of dance routines. The show had the audience almost rocking in their seats, and at the end the cast was given a well deserved standing ovation.

As time went by, the weather hardly turned out to be ‘flaming June.’ Apart from a few days of above average temperatures in May, it had been mainly wet, windy and cool. Since we were going to a stage show in early June, some elevated temperatures were hoped for, as the theatre’s location lent itself to mingling with the crowds in an outside grassed quadrangle and sipping fruit juices during intermission.

The show was Lionel Bart’s *Oliver!*, the musical adaptation of Charles Dickens’ novel, *Oliver Twist*. I remember seeing the London, England, stage production, and was greatly impressed. It was a superb show, and the young lad, who played the part of Oliver, acted very well. All the other boys were good too, and none of them showed any signs of nervousness. They all appeared to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. Our next theatre production was to see the comedy, *The Odd Couple*.

The second outing of June was when we were invited by our friends, who own Hessenland Country Inn, to be their guests at a celebration marking three milestone events. Both Ernst and Christa had 60th birthdays this year, it was also their 40th wedding anniversary, and, lastly, it was the 25th anniversary of the opening of Hessenland Country Inn. The festivities started with a cocktail hour, then we all moved into the banquet hall where we sat down to a delicious three course dinner. Following dinner, there were speeches from Frank (Ernst and Christa’s son), Christa and some members of their family who had flown over from Germany. It was difficult to give an accurate figure of the number of guests, but there must have been between 100 and 150. We renewed acquaintances with a lot of people we had met at Hessenland Country Inn over the years, and sat at a table with a couple whom we got to know very well. Our paths hadn’t crossed for quite a while, so it was really nice seeing them again. It was a wonderful evening.

Even though we hadn’t done much hiking, we began researching and drafting an itinerary for a trip to Nova Scotia, which we expected to make in September. We planned on flying to Halifax, NS, and renting a car to explore the South Shore and Annapolis Valley areas of the province.

After a slight delay, the flights and all the hotels, plus the rental car were booked. The itinerary included many historic sites and museums, and since we would be travelling through the Acadian region, there would be ample opportunities to experience the culture of that ethnic group. Many of the hotels *en route* were converted historic properties, and we eagerly looked forward to the trip because the last time we were in the area was 20 years ago.

Thursday, June 25th, 2009, was a bittersweet date, as the last production Volvo motor grader passed final inspection and rolled off the assembly line. The press was on hand to record the event, and all the employees gathered in front of the machine for a poignant photograph. There were sombre faces as the workers mingled among themselves to say goodbye to each other; many of them colleagues of up to 40 years standing. A last hurrah and sign of defiance came when, with heads held high, many from the shop floor tied their work boots together by the laces and hung them on the gates and fences as they left. One final gathering of employees was to sign their names onto the side panels of the last production machine. A farewell ceremony at the Maitland Recreational Centre was conducted by vice president and general manager, Jay Davis, who handed over the keys to the Warden of Huron County where the motor grader was to operate. After being a fixture in the community for over 100 years, it was the end of an era.

Midsummer activities

Canada Day, the national Anniversary of Confederation, was recognised and celebrated in town with the usual civic ceremony and giant parade. As a means of ‘bowing out’ gracefully, and showing appreciation to the community, the last production Volvo motor grader paraded with the other floats. On both sides were large panels with the words ‘Thank you Goderich’, and the machine was followed by a selection of vintage Champion Road Machinery Ltd. road graders that paid homage to the last of the line of these products.

We saw the stage comedy, *The Odd Couple*, and it was a good show with lots of laughs. However, the musical, *Me and My Girl*, that we saw two weeks later was outstanding, and was for us the highlight of this season. Judging from the roars of laughter and the frequent bursts of appreciative applause, everyone else in the almost full theatre enjoyed it as much as we did. The atmosphere was phenomenal. While the entire cast was excellent, the actor who took the principal part was fantastic. Not surprisingly, the cast received a well deserved standing ovation at the end of the show, and they responded by doing a reprise of the signature song, *Lambeth Walk*, which the audience joined in singing and clapped along to.

Out-of-town shopping is not something we do very often, as we can get all the day-to-day things we need in Goderich. Occasionally, though, we have to shop at a larger centre, and so one day we drove to the nearby small city of Stratford. We had been invited to the wedding of our friends Shirley and Norris’ granddaughter, which was quite a surprise. So our trip to Stratford, home to the bride, her parents and brother, was to look for a wedding present. A bridal gift registry had been set up at one of the stores in the city, so we went straight there and found a good selection of gifts to choose from. We ended up buying a pair of crystal candleholders that were wrapped and decorated with a gorgeous bow, all as part of the service.

July 12th was our 35th wedding anniversary, and as usual we celebrated it at the Benmiller Inn & Spa. Once again our special day was made extra special by the generosity and friendliness of the staff whom we have got to know very well over the years. The innkeeper, Scott Evans, has never let our anniversary or birthdays go by without doing a ‘little something’, such as arranging for a bottle of sparkling wine to be delivered to our room, or upgrading us to a superior room as well as the wine. Well, he did much more than a ‘little something’ for our anniversary. He treated us to a complimentary room, and it wasn’t a standard room either, but a superior one in Gledhill House. It was on the side of the building overlooking the pond and had a balcony which we sat out on several times. Needless to say, after being given a complimentary room, we felt that we had already received more than enough generosity, but no. While we were looking at the dinner menu, Kevin Reid, the dining room manager came up to our table and treated us to a bottle of excellent Australian wine. It was another of those special evenings to be added to our book of memories.

We had another theatre outing in July, and went to see *Camelot*. I remember seeing the original London, England, show in the 1960s. This version was good entertainment and the sets and costumes well made. The leading male performer was a little weak in singing strength, but shouldn’t be compared with Richard Harris, who was simply the best actor in this role. Our journey home took us past Hessenland Country Inn, so we stopped in there for dinner. As it was a beautiful evening—a rarity this summer—we ate *al fresco*.