

Heritage on the Hill

The Richmond Hill Historical Society, P.O. Box 61527, 9350 Yonge St., Richmond Hill, ON L0C 0C9

www.rhhs.ca

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November / December 2011



President's Jottings

From the desk of Andrea Kulesh



November and December are very thoughtful months for many. November is a time of thoughtful reflection and December is a time of celebration.

November 11th is set aside for the specific reason to remember and reflect on those who have gone before us, those who have sacrificed their lives and those who supported them.

At our Remembrance Meeting last November, Donna Smith carried out a counting ritual to illustrate how many people died in the wars in the 20th century. It was a poignant exercise and had such an unexpected effect on everyone. One member of our Society said that our presentation was one of the most touching Remembrance ceremonies she had ever attended.

For me, November brings a twinge of regret for all the years I did not listen to my Dad's "War Stories". My entire family were touched by World War II and I grew up with the memories. Sadly, I lost my father last year and now I cannot ask him about his reflections.

There is often much suffering before "Victory" and then there are the happy stories of the sons and daughters that made it home. But some return with their minds altered forever and pretend to carry on without telling their stories.

Please, take the time, wherever you are on November 11th, at 11:00 a.m. to reflect on past wars and the present ones raging around the world, for all of the loved ones lost and for all the suffering during a time of war. Be mindful of everything that war does. Mark the time, attend a Remembrance ceremony if you can. If not, close your eyes at 11:00 a.m. on November 11th and give thanks that we live in peace in Canada.

We shall never forget.

And then we move on to December, the month that brings good feelings of warmth and joy and we delight in joining in happy and cheerful festivities. December is actually another month of remembrance when we think of times

past, when families came together to enjoy each other's company. We remember those who are no longer with us and celebrate the new family members, who will be included in the future gatherings. This is a time of remembering old traditions introducing new traditions and teaching these to the younger generations so that they will be passed on. It is a time of good cheer, sharing and positive feelings. As we all feel the warmth of human kindness, let us mark the occasion with good food, family get-togethers, parades, lighting ceremonies, singing - and collecting food and clothes for those less fortunate. Many people will celebrate religious holidays and follow New Year customs. We sweep the Old Year out of our homes and allow the fresh air of the New Year in to bring hope and promise. And yes, we can also take the time to close our eyes and give thanks that we live in peace in this wonderful country Canada.

Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year 2012 everyone!

Upcoming Events

November Meeting

On November 21 our speaker will be Ted Barras journalist, author and broadcaster. He will be speaking about his book, "Victory at Vimy: Canada Comes of Age, April 9 -12, 1917". 2012 marks the 95th anniversary of Battle of Vimy Ridge in the Great War. Ted Barras's book takes

readers to the birth of a Nation. "Victory at Vimy" unearths new material about the Vimy experience. In this month of remembrance, Ted Barris will take us back to the first World War ever, known then as the Great War. Ted Barris says, "It's an appropriate moment, to relive and remember what those Canadians accomplished when the cause of freedom most needed a shot in the arm". Following the presentation, time will be given to reflect on the presentation and Ted Barris will take questions. Books will be on hand for sale and autographed by request.



From the cover of Victory at Vimy:

Wishing You Well

A number of our members have not been well recently.

Alice Dewsbury, one of our original members, has been in hospital. We understand that she is now back at Del Manor and we hope she is recovering nicely.

Fred Hearn, one of our more recent members, has recently had a knee replacement and we trust that all is well.

And lastly, we want Kevin Dark, one of our stalwart members, to know that we are still thinking of him as he works through his current challenges.

Membership Fees

The RHHS annual membership fee has been raised to \$15.00 per year for single person and \$25.00 for a couple. This begins as of October and anyone who renews his/her membership from now until December will be covered until the end of December of 2012. By increasing the membership fees, we will be able to pay the rental on Wallace Hall. This is our main expense, with insurance as a very close second. The Executive Committee will be planning the budget for 2012 with the increase of fees in place. With everyone's help we can maintain programming and keep our mission alive. The Executive Committee thanks our members in advance for their understanding.

Welcome, New Members!

We have had some new members in the last few months: Louise and Paul Gregoire and Jennifer Pyke. We are sure that you will find our Society friendly and interesting and look forward to seeing you at our future meetings.

Christmas Party

This year our Christmas Party will be on December 12 at 6:30pm. Our caterers again this year will be Triple "G" and the price will be \$20.00. Tickets will be sold at the November meeting. Please note that tickets must be purchased ahead of time; they will not be available at the door.

Our entertainers will again be Chuck and Sally McClelland who were such fun last year. Penny Parmenter gives us a short background for them:

Chuck and Sally McClelland are a wonderful couple who have been attending our Richmond Hill United Church for many years. They sing in our church choir and add to the strength in many ways.

Chuck runs our Coffee House nights, held at our church about twice a year. On these nights, Chuck has been able to gather many talented people to perform. One of Chuck's hobbies, besides helping to keep our church in good running order, is canoeing with his buddies way up north on the French River, among others.

Sally is Chuck's Woman Behind The Man and also steps forward herself to reveal her talents. Be sure to say Hi! when they join us again for our Christmas Get Together!

Toque, Eh?

With the winter almost upon us, I thought you might be interested in the origin of our distinctive Canadian headwear. The following is from Katherine Barber's book, [Six Words You Never Knew Had Something To Do With Pigs](#) (Oxford University Press Canada, 2006).

'Toque', when used to mean what the British hilariously (to us, anyway) call a 'bobble hat', is a Canadianism and it has a Canadian history. English Canadians borrowed from Canadian French the word *tuque*, which got confused with another French word designating a kind of headgear, the

toque. That tall white hat worn by chefs is a 'toque' [...] but it wouldn't be much good at keeping your ears warm! [...]

Our 'toque' ultimately derives from a very old pre-Roman word, *tukka*, designating a hill or gourd, which remained alive in some French dialects and was brought over to North America, where it became 'tuque' (as in the name of the town La Tuque in Quebec). It is doubtless because of the similarity of shape that the Canadian knitted cap was given this name.



Did You Know?



Traditionally, mincemeat actually contained meat. The name came from fact that the meat was shredded or minced. This dish developed in Europe during the middle ages. Soldiers returning from the Crusades brought with them from the Middle East new spices and new cooking methods that used sweet and savoury ingredients together in one recipe.

Originally, a mincemeat pie had more meat than fruit and was served as a main course. Mincemeat can be stored for a long time because the sugar, spices, dried fruit (and alcohol!) help to preserve the meat. This was very important in earlier times when there was no refrigeration and mincemeat made a pleasant change from salted, dried or smoked meat. It was said the use of cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves represented the three gifts of the Magi to the Christ Child.

Gradually over time, spices and dried fruits became less expensive and more available. More and more were put into the mincemeat. At the same time, less and less meat was put in until the only indication that there had been any meat was the suet that still remains in modern recipes.

Here is a sixteen century recipe for a "Real Mince Pie":

For Pyes of Mutton or Beefe: Shread your meat and Suet together fine, season it with cloves, mace, Pepper, and some Saffron, great Raisins, Corance and prunes, and so put it into your Pyes. (A.W.: *A Book of Cookrye Very necessary for all such as delight therein*, 1591)

A modern version of this recipe gives a few more instructions:

1 1/2 lb lean mutton or beef
4 oz. suet
1/2 tsp. ground spices
1 tsp. ground mace
1/2 tsp. black pepper
a pinch of saffron
2 oz. raisins
2 oz currents
2 oz. stoned prunes, chopped

For the pastry:

1 lb. flour
2 tsp. salt
4 oz lard
1/4 pt water
4 tbsp. milk

For the glaze:

1 tbsp. each butter, sugar and rosewater melted together

Mince the meat, and mix in the suet, spices, pepper, saffron and dries fruit.

To make the pastry, sift the flour and salt together into a large mixing bowl and make a well in the centre. Heat the lard, water and milk until boiling and pour into the well. Quickly beat the mixture together with a spoon to form a soft dough, and knead until smooth on a lightly floured board.

Cut off a quarter of the pastry, and keep covered until required to make the lid. Mould the larger piece of pastry to form the base and sides of the pie within an 8 inch diameter, 2 inch deep loose-bottomed tin.

Pack the meat into the pie and dampen the edges of the pie wall. Roll out the remaining pastry to make a lid and firmly press in place. Trim the edges, using the surplus pastry for decoration, and cut a hole in the centre of the lid. Bake in the centre of the oven at 425°F

for 15 min, then reduce the temperature to 350° F for a further 1 1/4 hours. Remove the sides of the tin, brush with the glaze, and return to the oven for a further 15 min. Serve cold.

(Original recipe and modern version from Maggie Black et al, *A Taste of History: 10,000 Years of Food in Britain*, 1993, English Heritage, page.161)

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Sid Hunt Remembered

Jim Monkman

Sid Hunt was born in Toronto on June 29, 1922 to Josephine and Sidney Sr. They moved to Benson Ave., Richmond Hill, in 1925. Sid went to Richmond Hill Public School (now know as the McConaghy Centre) and then to Richmond Hill High School.

He joined the Army, the Toronto Scottish Regiment, and went overseas. He was only 17 at the time - he "exagerated" his age.

He never left England. He met and married Joyce Weller. They has two children, Deirdre and Ian. Both were born in Hastings, England.

When he came home from overseas, he built a house on Hunt Ave. where he raised his family.

He was a motor mechanic and worked at Baker's & Little's in Richvale. Then he worked for himself. Later, he and Norm Cook went into business at Hunt & Cook Motors. This was located at Hunt Ave. at Yonge St. And after that he went to work for Luma Systems, a division of Tridel.

He was very active in the community. He belonged to the Power Squadron, was involved in Scouting on the Group Committee. He was a mason and also belonged to the Legion.

Bert always looked up to him as big brother and friend. They enjoyed the same interests: fishing, hunting and family.

Sid had a good and happy life.



Sid Hunt, 1945

Christmas Kissing Balls



www.bemisfarmsnursery.com/christmas_2007.htm

Recently pomanders, or kissing balls, have become very trendy at weddings. They are used as decorations or carried by flower girls, or even the bride herself, in place of flower bouquets. They are a modern development of the Victorian kissing balls.

These decorations became popular at Christmas time. This tradition evolved from the very early custom of bringing evergreen boughs inside during winter to symbolize eternal life and the hoped-for return of the sun in the springtime. The Victorian kissing balls became very elaborate. An apple or potato was used as the base and sprigs of evergreens, holly, bay leaves, herbs, winter berries, everlasting flowers and ribbons were added to make a hanging sphere. They must have been very fragrant.

Often sprigs of mistletoe were hung from the bottom of the kissing ball.

Mistletoe has a very long history. It was highly prized by the Druids in Wales for its magical properties of warding off evil and bringing health, happiness and fertility. This is probably the origin of the custom of kissing under the mistletoe. Victorian morals were very strict and public demonstrations of affection were not encouraged, but a couple could steal a kiss under the kissing ball. After the kiss, a berry had to be removed from the mistletoe. Once all the berries were removed, no more kissing was allowed. As you can imagine, these kissing balls were very popular hung from the ceiling at a Christmas dance. In modern times the other greenery has disappeared, but the mistletoe is still a firm favourite.

Oh, Christmas Tree

Until it was introduced from Germany by Prince Albert, the Christmas tree was virtually unknown in Britain, though the tradition of bringing evergreens indoors at this season goes back to ancient pagan festivals.

One possible origin for the custom of decorating trees for Yule relates to legends that certain trees burst into bloom on Christmas Day. One was the miraculous Glastonbury thorn, believed to have sprung from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea who, on his mission to Britain, planted it in the ground on Christmas Eve. Such flowering trees were especially revered in Germany. In 1430 one writer recorded that: 'Not far from Nuremburg there stood a wonderful tree. Every year, in the coldest season, on the night of Christ's birth this tree put forth blossoms and apples as thick as a man's thumb. This in the midst of deep snow and in the teeth of cold winds.'

Trees were cut and used in plays performed at Christmas, telling the whole Christian story from Adam and Eve to the Resurrection. In this context the Christmas tree represented both the Tree of Knowledge and Christ's Cross.

Lights on the [modern] Christmas tree illuminate the dark days of winter as well as the advent of the 'Light of the world.' Legend has it that it was Martin Luther who first decorated a tree with candles.

(Ruth Binney, Nature's Ways: Lore, Legend, Fact and Fiction, 2006, David and Charles Limited, page176)

Heritage Centre Teas

As we start to "gear up" towards the Holiday Rush, wouldn't it be nice to take time out for a small indulgence? Consider treating yourself to a Signature Dessert Tea at the Heritage Centre.

Spice Tea - \$7.00 per person

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

Sittings at 1:00p.m. and 2:30p.m.

Enjoy a specially prepared spice cake and our signature mulled cider.

Victorian Christmas Tea - \$10.00 per person

Saturday, December 10, 2011

Sittings at 12:30p.m., 2:00p.m. and 3:30p.m.

You will be served a delicious holiday trifle and our exclusively blended teas. You will also be invited to the craft room to create a lovely ornament from this eclectic period.

Telephone for reservations at 905-780-3802.



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Christmas Evergreens

The holly, ivy and mistletoe are the quintessential Christmas evergreens, and all must be handled correctly to avoid ill fortune. They must certainly be removed by 6 January, which is Twelfth Night or the feast of the Epiphany.

For their Christmas celebrations, early Christians adapted the traditions of the bawdy Roman midwinter festival of Saturnalia, and brought on evergreens to decorate their homes and churches. Christmas Eve is the most propitious day for cutting greenery; if you use it before this date quarrels are sure to ensue.

Mistletoe, revered by the Druids and used on their altars, was originally hung up at Christmas to confer divine protection from fire, injury and all other ills and to drive away evil spirits. It was even hung in cowsheds to ensure the continued health of the livestock. It is, however, never seen inside a church.

(Ruth Binney, Nature's Ways: Lore, Legend, Fact and Fiction, 2006, David and Charles Limited, page177)



Richmond Hill and WWI



In Richmond Hill as in communities throughout the country, women's rise to a more prominent role in public affairs accelerated as a result of the First World War. As young men enlisted in the armed forces and older men devoted increasing amounts of time to patriotic causes, women of all ages moved into the workforce, the volunteer agencies, and the broader public arena.

Within days of the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, the Women's Institute became a focus for community war work. On August 12, the Richmond Hill branch purchased a bolt of cloth to be rolled into bandages to help equip a Women's Hospital Ship. In December, it sent five boxes of clothing and groceries to needy soldiers' wives in Toronto. In June 1915 and again in January 1916, it sent 108 jars of jam and jelly to Canadian Army hospitals. It collected money for relief efforts in Belgium and Greece, China, and Armenia.

Village council followed the women's lead by spearheading a public drive to raise money for the British Red Cross Society. Council also authorized the use of the municipal park for recruiting and drilling purposes, and imposed a war tax on skating fees at the rink. It

recommended that local churches "employ strict economy in the use of coal" and appointed Clerk A.J. Hume as Fuel Commissioner to ensure a fair distribution of coal throughout the village.¹⁴

But the war's greatest impact was, of course, the loss of young men. A total of eighty-nine Richmond Hill residents served with the Canadian armed forces during the First World War. Six of these young men were killed in action; others were so wounded physically or psychologically that they were unable to play full community roles in later years. Still others found that their glimpse of the wider world had alienated them from village life, and so they moved away from Richmond Hill to seek fame and fortune elsewhere.

In February 1918, Reeve William Pugsley raised the idea of erecting a memorial to Richmond Hill men killed in the war. Community residents debated whether a monument or a memorial hall would be most appropriate. Council authorized Pugsley and Clerk A.J. Hume to obtain prices and descriptive data for a possible monument. By March, Hume had letters and sketches from several marble dealers, and Council chose the

Thomson Monument Company of Toronto. Money would be raised by popular subscription, and a fund-raising campaign was launched at a December meeting in the Masonic Hall.¹⁵

Meanwhile, Council had invited the Board of Education to work co-operatively on the memorial question. The board had recently built a new public school on the west side of Yonge Street in the core of the village - an ideal spot for a war monument that would help impart such attributes as duty, sacrifice, and honour to youthful as well as adult minds.

This memorial arch was unveiled at the Grand Re-Union of 1923.

(Excerpt from *Early Days in Richmond Hill: A History of the Community to 1930*, by Robert M. Stamp)



War Memorial in front of M'Conaghy Seniors' Centre. Picture from www.richmondhill.ca



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