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THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

MAILING ADDRESS:
Kingston Historical Society
P.O. Box 54,
Kingston ON K7L 4V6
kingstonhs@gmail.ca

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Please forward submissions to the Editor betty.andrews@gmail.com

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President's Message

by Vincent Durant

One year ago we reported the sad news that our May meeting and June 6th ceremony celebrating the life of Sir John A. Macdonald had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Well, here we are one year on, and what a year it has been! Not only have we been able to successfully revive the monthly meetings and lectures via Zoom, but Alan MacLachlan reports that plans are well underway to create a fitting “virtual” memorial for Sir John A. to coincide with the 130th anniversary of his death in 1891. Further details will of course be sent by Paul Van Nest as the time draws nearer.



I wish to give a special thank you to the Kingston Frontenac Public Library, and in particular to Joanne Stanbridge, for arranging to upload and maintain our indexes of *Historic Kingston* and *Limelight* and its predecessor *Next* on the Digital Kingston website. Thanks of course go out also to Paul Van Nest, our resident “indexer”, and Peter Gower for their efforts in creating the indexes being shared with researchers through the KHS and Digital Kingston’s websites.

Elsewhere in this edition you will see an update on the Murney Tower Museum by Simge Erdogan-O'Connor, the Tower’s manager and curator. Sim and Tower Director Dr. Tabitha Renaud have worked tirelessly preparing for our modified opening and summer activities. They are also working with students from St. Lawrence College to create a new website for the Tower; are launching a “slogan contest”; and preparing a new strategic plan for the Tower. Check out all the activity at this link: <https://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/the-murney-tower/>

This being the last Limelight before our summer break, I want to take this opportunity to thank the sponsors for their generous support of our monthly newsletter. Kudos also to the many writers who offer such fascinating insights into our distant and not-so-distant past; and of course to Limelight’s editor Betty Andrews for a job well done!

Vincent

AMID THE PESTILENCE

by Eva Barnes

Reprinted from *Historical Reflections*, St. Andrew's Kingston, 2020

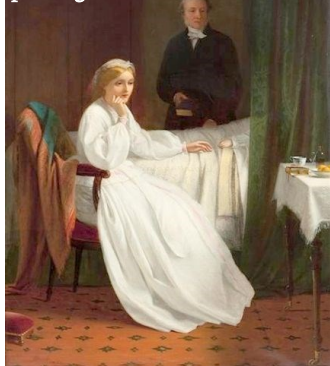
In 1850, during an era of rampant epidemics, the Cataraqui Cemetery was established in a pastoral setting outside of Kingston. Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, rests there, together with the good souls, rich and poor, mighty and mild, who contributed to the vibrant tapestry of life in this region for almost two centuries. All monuments hold precious individual stories, many forgotten, especially in the oldest section, where some of the weathered Victorian markers are almost unreadable now.

A small personal heritage preservation project for me has been taking care of the Cataraqui Cemetery gravesite of writer, artist, historian and social activist Agnes Maule Machar (b.1837 – d.1927) and, more recently, her father, the Rev. Dr. John Machar of St. Andrew's Church (b.1796 – d.1863).

During the horrific cholera outbreak of 1834, the Rev. Machar stood in an earlier Kingston graveyard, the Scottish Cemetery (now McBurney/Skeleton Park), for an entire fetid and scorching summer day, conducting funeral after hasty funeral, accompanied only by the church beadle. He lost a great many from his flock that year, suddenly and tragically.

Thirty-nine-year-old George Mackenzie, a prominent lawyer in town, and mentor to a student named John A. Macdonald, had felt increasingly unwell in his family pew at St. Andrew's during Sunday service on August 23rd. He staggered home and collapsed onto his bed. The doctor came to the house and tried blood-letting, but to no avail. There was no time to try Dr. James

Resignation, British Victorian painting, Thomas Brooks 1863



Sampson's experimental idea of injecting salt water into a vein. George suffered severe dehydration, dying, completely spent, as the sun rose on Monday morning. The Rev. Machar could offer only prayers to George's devoted wife in her stunned bedside grief. He preached later from the pulpit that this terrible and mysterious pestilence was surely a sign from God.

Kingston experienced many devastating epidemics of cholera and typhus as European settlers arrived during the 1800s. The last major lethal infection ravaged Kingston in 1918 when the population was just 22,000. Over 500 were lost, mostly soldiers returning home after

WWI. There were rebounding waves of this dreaded influenza in 1919, and also in 1920. St. Andrew's, and all public gathering places, were ordered closed for many months.

By the start of the 20th century, enormous progress had been made around understanding the importance of hygiene and isolation in microbial disease control. Biology had become a legitimate field of

Source references:

Armstrong, A., *Buckskin to Broadloom*, Kingston Groves Up, Kingston Whig-Standard, Hanson and Edgar Ltd., 1973.
Osborne, Brian S., *The Rock and The Sword, A History of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kingston, Ontario*, 2nd edition, Heinrich Heine Press at Grass Creek, 2017.

study at Queen's University. But antibiotics were yet to be discovered and vaccination was just a newly developed concept.

As we struggle with the challenges of COVID-19, many unknowns persist, but medical expertise is much more sophisticated now than in the time of the Rev. Machar. Complex scientific research strengthens the scaffolding of hope around the nature of personal prayers during the global pandemic of 2020...



Heritage preservation, Cataraqui Cemetery and National Historic Site, final resting places of the Machar family. (Photo J. A. Barnes)

Kingston's Bustling Waterfront

by Warren Everett

At the turn of the 20th century, Kingston's waterfront was quite a different place. Two railways, the Grand Trunk and the K&P, had stations on Ontario Street. One is now the tourist information centre and the other is Murphy's Irish pub. Steamers and sail vessels crowded the wharfs. Rail and ship were still the main transportation systems. This photograph, one of a set I acquired some years ago, was taken by a traveler on one of the ships that plied the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. Judging by the numbers on the photo mounts, the photographer was travelling upriver to Kingston and on to points west. Judging by the women's parasols and the jacketless men, it depicts a summer day. The ship is just tying up at the pier, while new passengers queue to board. Given the downward angle of the shot, our photographer is likely on an upper deck. In the middle ground is the Steamer Paul Smith. The ship was a local ferry and popular for private parties.

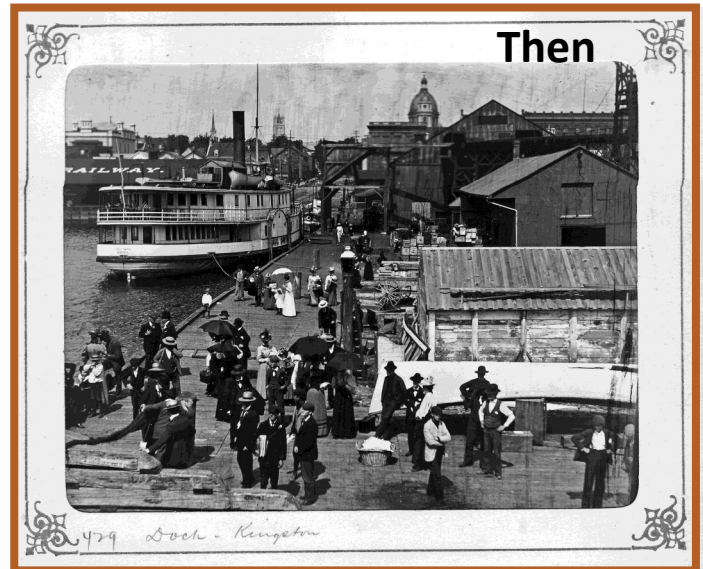
STEAMER "PAUL SMITH."

British Whig (Kingston, ON), 1 Jul 1897

Sunday trips for Garden and Wolfe Islands— 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m., and 1:15 and 6:30 p.m. Round trip only 10 cents. Saturdays 6:30, 8:30, 11:30 a.m., 2, 4 and 6 p.m. Other days 7, 8:30, 11:30 a.m., 3 and 6 p.m.

Picnic and private parties carried at greatly reduced rates. For further information apply to T.J. CRAIG, Manager.

The wharf at the foot of Johnson Street.



In the background, from right to left, is the dome of St George's Cathedral, the Tower of St Mary's Cathedral, and the Empire Life building. All three structures are still standing. The structures on the right side of the photo are gone; replaced by the Ramada Hotel and the St Lawrence retirement home. Things are much quieter now; not much bustle except for the poker run in the summer!

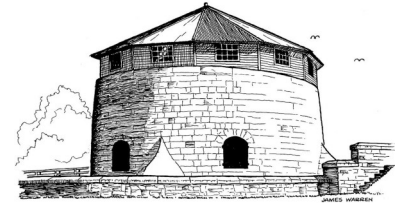


Warehouses, like the one in the left foreground in the picture above, were still in use in 1919 when this aerial photo was taken by the Bishop and Barker Company. (Both of the owners were pilots in WWI, and each received the Victoria Cross.)



Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society



Museum Updates by Manager and Curator, Simge Erdogan-O'Connor

Murney Tower Museum has welcomed the spring with a set of exciting, collaborative, community initiatives. We presented a fun and family-friendly activity for the virtual "March of the Museums" community event, which took place between April 12-16. The Kingston Association of Museums, Galleries and Historic Sites created this initiative for museums around Kingston to provide engaging art and craft activities for kids aged 5-12. In our rock painting activity, "Murney Tower Rocks!", we brought the Tower's limestone heritage to life by exploring its importance within Kingston's historical and geographical landscape. You can watch our video at the museum's YouTube Channel at Murney Tower. Another important aspect of our collaborative community work this month is the Regional Kingston Heritage Fair. We are aiming to reach approximately 250 students and 11 classrooms with a history workshop titled "Murney Redoubt". Geared towards grades 6-8,

our workshop will introduce the students to the history and structure of the Tower through a set of engaging group activities and instructional videos.

The museum has also been busy preparing for the seasonal opening. While the specifics of our opening are up in the air at the moment, I am very pleased to inform you that we are working enthusiastically towards ensuring a healthy, safe, and engaging museum visit this year. Our dates and plans are subject to change based on public health measures. Stay tuned for future updates and information.

Murney Tower staff members Amy Abraham and Meghan Webster.



Welcome, new members

Slawomir and Dorota Baczyk	John Chown and Marilou Dziuban
Ruth Lafarga	Barry Cahill Steven Davidson
Renee Van Weringh	Donald and Patricia Forsdyke



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From the recent past of the Kingston Historical Society's Proceedings Taken from THEN

May 1993 We are delighted...that our Kingston Historical Society has won the prestigious Scadding Award for Excellence presented by the Ontario Historical Society.

Once again, I have been attracted to an article in “LIMELIGHT” – this time the story in the March 2021 issue of a letter written home by an officer of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, Jim Macpherson, a Kingstonian. It was not the name of the author nor the contents of his letter that drew my attention but the name of place where the letter was written. “Les Buissons” is well known to those Kingstonians who were members of the 1st Battalion, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders (SD&G) but by a different name – “Hell’s Corners”. Herein lies a story.

Most Canadians are familiar with the date June 6, 1944 – D-Day, when Allied Forces landed in Normandy, France to begin a campaign in Northwest Europe to end the Second World War. Six infantry divisions (2 British, 3 American, 1 Canadian) and three airborne divisions (2 American, 1 British) made the initial assault. The one Canadian was the 3rd Infantry Division consisting of the 7th, 8th, and 9th Infantry Brigades, each having three battalions, an armoured reconnaissance regiment, three field artillery regiments, a light anti-aircraft regiment, an anti-tank regiment, four engineer companies, a signals company, a machine gun battalion (The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa), four service corps companies, three field ambulances and miscellaneous elements of the Dental Corps, Ordnance Corps, Provost Corps, and the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. This self-sufficient all-arms organization of about 18,000 all ranks, was supported by the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade consisting of three armoured regiments, and supporting services.

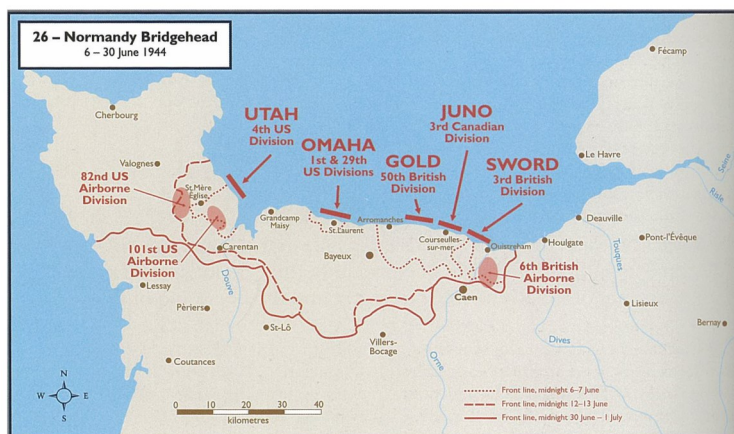
The assault on Normandy was carried out simultaneously in five different areas, and were code-named (east to west):

1. **SWORD** was in the locality of Ouistreham on the English Channel about 10 kilometres north of Caen, the capital of Normandy, population 100,000, a centre of road, rail, and telephone communications. A major river, the Orne, bisects the city and continues on to its mouth at Merville, just east of Ouistreham. Constructed beside the river is a ship canal. (On my last visit to Normandy, I took a spectacular ferry from Southampton, England directly to the inland harbour at Caen via this ship canal).

The 6th British Airborne Division dropped into the area of the Orne River and the Caen Canal to land close to the coastal road bridges and secure them so they could not be used by the German 711 Infantry Division, which was guarding both sides of the Bay of the River Seine. The British 3rd Infantry Division, supported by the 27th Armoured Brigade and a couple of Royal Marine Commando units, landed by sea to support the 6th Airborne, which had no heavy weapons, and to go on capture Caen, only a couple of marching hours away. They were opposed by the sea defences held by the elements of the 716th German Infantry Division, which manned all sea defences in Normandy, and the 21st Panzer Division, which had just moved into the area. It was responsible for keeping the British about 5 kilometres away from Caen for over a month, until it was captured by the Canadians July 9.

2. **JUNO** was the next beach area in the area of Courseulles-sur-Mer about 5 kilometres west of SWORD. It was the landing area of the Canadian 3rd Division and the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, which had as objectives Caen and its associated airfield at Carpiquet, and the seizure of the main road and rail line from Caen to Bayeux. I will look at its story later.

3. **GOLD** was the next beach area centred on Le Hamel, and was contiguous to JUNO. It was the landing area of the British 50th Infantry Division, supported by the 8th Armoured Brigade. Its mission was to strike inland to capture the local chief city, Bayeux, and seize the main road from Caen. It was opposed by the German 716 Infantry Division.



4. OMAHA was the next landing area, about 10 kilometres west of GOLD. It was a difficult hilly area that was the target of the US 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions, each of four brigades. Its objective was the City of St-Lo, about 40 kilometres inland. The movie "The Longest Day" was centred on the activities of the Americans at OMAHA. It was opposed by the German 352 Infantry Division, which had just moved into the area. OMAHA had the greatest number of casualties on D-Day.

5. UTAH was the last landing area, separated from OMAHA by 30 kilometres of difficult terrain, the area of bocage (small fields enclosed by high hedges) and drowned land. The US 4th Infantry Division with three brigades was supported by two US airborne divisions, the 82nd and the 101st. Its objective was the major port of Cherbourg and the City of Carentan, which controlled the railway to Cherbourg. It was opposed by the German 91st Infantry Division, while at same time the Cherbourg Peninsula was held by two German infantry divisions, the 109th and the 234th.

By the end of fighting on June 6, the Allied invasion units were all well-established in Normandy and beginning to build up strength to continue the advance. None of the day's objectives had been captured because of strong German resistance. Casualties on June 6 were Canadian— 946, British— 3,000 and American— 6,000. Let's return to the Canadian sector and follow the activities of the 3rd Division, and see how our letter-writer, Jim Macpherson, ended up in Les Buissons, France, on June 21, 1944, writing a letter home.

The Canadians landed on JUNO Beach beginning at 5 minutes after 8 am with the 7th Brigade landing in front of Courselles-sur-Mer, and the 8th Brigade, a little to the east, in front of Bernieres-sur-Mer and St. Aubin-sur Mer. The 9th Brigade, the divisional reserve, landed last and in the rear of the 8th Brigade. The 9th Brigade had an unopposed landing and, by following the 8th Brigade, moved 5 kilometres inland to Beny-sur-Mer, where it dug in for the night. During the hours of darkness, an armoured patrol of the German 21 Panzer Division, looking for the Canadians, attacked the SD&G, killing one soldier and wounding 12 others.

By the morning of June 7, the 3rd Canadian Division had shaken out into its battlefield formation – each brigade had an artillery regiment and an armoured regiment in direct support, and its share of the divisional anti-tank regiment and the Cameron Highlanders' companies armed with Vickers machine guns and its mortar company armed with 4.2 inch mortars.

Realizing there was a space between the 8th Brigade and the British 3rd Division with a main secondary road leading directly to Caen, the Commander of the 3rd Canadian Division decided to send the 9th Brigade on this route. First thing in the morning of June 7, it set off with an Advance Guard of the North Nova Scotia

Highlanders (North Novies) and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, the supporting tank regiment leading, followed by the SDG and the Highland Light Infantry (HLI). All went well until the Advance Guard came near the village of Buron, which had just been occupied by the troops of the 25th Brigade of the 12th SS Division, the first of the strong German panzer units sent to the area to drive the Allies back to the beaches. The 12th SS was like all of the SS formations, numerically strong (about 20,000 all ranks) and well-equipped with all the newest and best tanks and guns. The 12th was a new formation composed of young Nazi fanatics, drawing mostly from the Class of 1926 and officered by veterans of the Russian campaign. The commander of the 25th Brigade, Col. Kurt Meyer, was a typical example. He was trained as a policeman in the 1920s but switched in the 1930s to Hitler's SS bodyguard. When the SS began to raise military units, Meyer became an officer and served in the campaigns in France, the Balkans and Russia. He was noted for his bravery, leadership ability, and ruthlessness. (After the war he was tried for war crimes and sentenced to death for Canadians executed while prisoners-of-war of the 12th SS; his sentence was reduced to life imprisonment in Canada, where he was released after serving less than 10 years).



The Chateau Les Buissons
Regimental Aid Post during the fighting at Hell's Corners, 7 – 11 June 1944

The ensuing battle was brief as the Advance Guard was hit hard, losing 25 tanks, and the North Novies suffering 250 casualties. By this time, the SD&G had reached Les Buissons, a small village with a minor road junction and a manor house on the corner, about 10 kilometres from JUNO BEACH and about a kilometre from Buron. The Glens (37 officers and 810 men) were ordered to dig in and establish a defensive line to keep the SS from advancing any further. By night on June 7, the SS had advanced to Les Buissons and begun to shell and mortar the SDG, killing 10 and wounding many more. Attacks continued day and night until June 12 when the SDG began to lead the 9th Brigade attack towards Caen by capturing the adjoining village of Vieux Caen. Total casualties for the six days at Les Buissons were 32 killed and 96 wounded.

When Jim Macpherson wrote his letter on June 21, the SDG were still in Vieux Caen fending off the 12th SS. Jim moved into a barn that had been the headquarters of the SDG. He was obviously with an element of the Cameron Highlanders allocated to support the SDG with the firepower of its Vickers machine guns and 4.2 inch mortars.

The SDG stayed in Vieux Caen until July 8, when it began an advance to capture the City of Caen, which was a distance of 8 kilometres away. It took the Battalion two days to fight its way there, and become the first Canadians to move into Caen. They secured it on July 9. The cost was steep: 37 killed, including 2 majors, and 103 wounded.

While the SDG was in Vieux Caen, it celebrated its battalion's fourth birthday on June 20. Selectively, officers and men were taken out of the line and given a special steak dinner with refreshments. (Conveniently, a cow stepped on a German explosive device and was speedily carved up by the battalion cooks). Fortunately, pictures of the officers and sergeants who could be out of the line were taken. Some Kingston notables were present in the officers photo.

Back row: Reg Dixon was the first curator of Bellevue House, Mac Thomson (WW) was a brother of Kingston's popular realtor Graham Thomson, Fred Lander (W) was a KCVI teacher, Leon Brosso, Kingstonian (W), Jake Forman, Kingstonian, became the CEO of Dalton Hardware, Barney Fowler, Kingstonian (K); Front row, Frank Fisher (K) was a KCVI teacher. Three others in the photo were killed, Jim Hartley, Archie MacDonald, and Hal Murfitt. Note: W- wounded, K- killed.

The SDG fought its way through the suburbs of Caen on the eastern side of the River Orne. It was taken out of the line on July 31, having suffered 112 killed and 312 wounded, roughly 50 per cent of its strength. The remaining members had their first baths and changes of clothes in 55 days. Then the war went on.



Most of the 1st Battalion Officers
Celebrating the Battalion's fourth year of mobilization at Les Buissons, Normandy, 20 June 1944. Back row (l-r) Don Scott, Reg Dixon, Mac Thomson, Fred Lander, Leon Brosso, R. B. Rowed (MO), Reg Smith, Jake Forman, Barney Fowler, Lorne Smith, Neil Gemmell; Front row (l-r) Jim Hartley, Joe Donihee, Archie MacDonald, Jim McKinnell, Hal Murfitt, Shannon Lafontaine, Frank Fisher. Out of a total of 37 officers 18 are here, 14 were on duty, and 5 were casualties: 2 killed and 3 wounded.