

Limelight

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

Volume 7 no 8

ISSN 1488-5565

November 2025



The Kingston Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.



Kingston Historical Society Meeting 19 November 2025

presented live at 7pm, in the theatre lounge of the

Kingsbridge Retirement Community at 950 Centennial Drive

and simultaneously offered via >>>Zoom



Warren Everett

military historian, collector of military medals

will reflect upon the significance

of military decorations

for society, as well as for the immediate recipient

Warren will bring samples from his expansive collection.

By John Reid in Anglo-Celtic Connections

On 26 October 2025 Historian, author and great Canadian **Tim Cook** has died at 54. He was the Chief Historian and Director of Research at the Canadian War Museum.

Dr. Cook was highly respected for his extensive work on Canadian military history, particularly Canada's involvement in the two World Wars. His contributions deeply influenced the Canadian War Museum and the understanding of Canada's military past. He authored 19 books and numerous scholarly articles and won several prestigious awards, including the C.P. Stacey Prize and the Ottawa Book Award.

He was also a member of the Royal Society of Canada and the Order of Canada.

THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

LIMELIGHT is published nine times a year, September to May.

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

Reprinting of articles from the Limelight must be accompanied by an acknowledgment of the Society, the issue and date. Photo credits and by-lines must be retained.

Featured Sponsor

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The Kingston Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Kingston Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites and the City of Kingston.



The KHS gratefully acknowledges the support of its sponsors in producing Limelight.

HOMESTEAD

President: Peter Gower Vice President: Kat MacDonald Past President: Paul Charbonneau Treasurer: Peter Ginn Secretary: Don Richardson
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Ann Stevens, Publicity; Paul Van Nest, Membership Chair; Peter Gower, Editor of Historic Kingston.

President's Message

by Peter Gower

Just as I sat down to write my thoughts on KHS and November– Remembrance, Warren Everett and medals, and celebrating Guy Fawkes – came the devastating news to those with an interest in military history of the death of Tim Cook.

Dr. Cook had close connections with Kingston. He was born here on 10 November 1971, in KGH. His mother awakened the next morning to the strains of O Canada, which she thought very appropriate for her new son until she realized it was the beginning of the Remembrance Day service across the street. Later he would receive a Master's degree from the Royal Military College.



He became an expert on Canada's role in the two World Wars, and a very articulate writer and speaker, his thirteen books receiving much acclamation and many prizes. He was honoured with the Order of Canada. He became Chief Historian and Director of Research at the Canadian War Museum, but remained a very personable and friendly historian. You could stop and talk with him as he walked through the Museum, and he quickly answered my email requests when I was researching Kingston's part in the First World War.

He attended KHS talks by Zoom. His last contact with the Society was on 12 July this year, on a hot summer evening when he spoke on the Canada-U.S. relationship during the Second World War, and his book *The Good Allies*. With new tariffs being announced daily, he acknowledged the irony as he crouched beneath the 32-pound cannon aimed at the U. S. shore, noting that relationships had changed.

We, and Canada, will miss him.

On November 8th at 1:00 p.m. the Screening Room cinema will host a 50 minute documentary film on **the Farmerettes** followed by a Q&A session. The film tells the story of the 40,000 young women who volunteered on Canadian farms and helped win the Second World War. A former farmerette will present the event.

####

The **Ottawa Historical Society's** November speaker is Phil Emberley who will present '**A Holocaust Testimonial: My Father's Story**'. Wednesday, 12th at 7:00 p.m.

The Speaker Series features Jeff Wang who will present

'**Beneath the Archway: The History of Ottawa's Chinese Community**'. Sunday, November 23rd 1:30 p.m.

For both presentations the link for Zoom is <https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/activities/meeting>

####

On November 15th at 10:00 a.m. you can join the **Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society** meeting for speaker Mike Moore's presentation 'The First World War - Beyond the Western Front. Go to Kingston.ogs.on.ca for the Zoom link.

####

On Saturday, November 22 at 1:00 p.m. the Kingston & District Branch of the United Empire Loyalists is holding its meeting. The author and lecturer Jane McNamara will speak on "Untangling Township Papers". You can follow the history of your ancestors' property through these records. Zoom link: <https://www.uelac.org/Kingston-Branch/>

FYI

Limestone Lens: Host Donna Chambers does short interviews of local interest on this programme, available to Cogeco users. Each month one of the **KHS members** will be interviewed about an item of Kingston history important to them. The initial airing of each new show is Fridays at 6pm. For other airings, see yourtv.tv/kingston/schedule

Welcome, new members

Gail Hoskin Zillah Loney

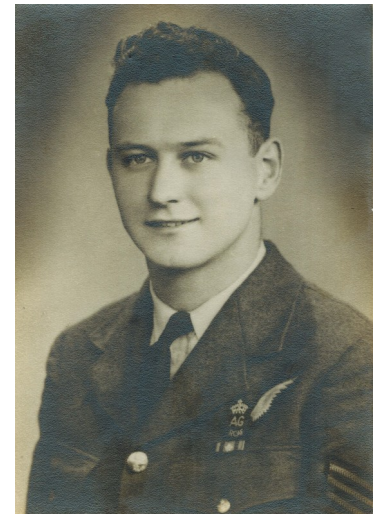


"I'll be home real soon":

From Ontario farm to Bomber Command

Even after seven decades, the trauma and sacrifice of World War II still haunt us. It is just so for Kingstonian **Paul Van Nest**, longtime KHS member and military historian. Paul vividly recalls that as a five-year old he was taken by his mother on a tearful visit to his cousin's home outside Bowmanville. It was a visit of condolence: Paul's cousin, twenty-one-year-old **Pilot Officer Glenn Brooks**, had been reported missing and was undoubtedly dead after his Halifax bomber had been fatally damaged by German flak on a night raid over Dortmund on the Ruhr. Paul never met his cousin, but his sacrifice has remained a haunting memory, one intensified by his reading of Glenn's letters back home. Just days before his death on 6 October 1944 he had assured his parents and his wife "I'll be home real soon."

Paul explained that his cousin had taken on one the most lethal assignments in the war – a tail gunner in a heavy bomber. RCAF squadrons of Halifax and Lancaster bombers operated out of bases in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire under control of Bomber Command. Since the dark early days of the war, bombing of Germany had offered the Allies the only direct means of striking Germany until D-Day put boots on the ground in Europe. The cost of such bombing was appalling to both aircrews and those targeted. Paul grimly noted that 74,000 Allied aircrew died in the war (about 10,000 of them Canadian) making the mortality rate among Allied air crews a staggering 60%. As many as 500,000 Germans died on the ground.



In December 1943, Glenn had arrived in England as an "air gunner". Quite literally, the gunner, crammed into the rear turret of a heavy bomber, was the "tail end Charlie" on a Halifax bomber. Small men were preferred for the role: they were better able to squeeze into the cubby hole with their four guns. The turret was also freezing, -40C at 20,000 feet, obliging the gunner to wear five layers of clothing, one of which was an electrically-heated flight suit. If their aircraft was fatally damaged, the rear gunner had to crawl back into the fuselage, retrieve his parachute, and then try to extricate himself from the doomed plane – virtually impossible if the electrical systems that powered the turret had failed.

A lucky bomber crew was one that conducted thirty operations completing a tour and being offered an honourable discharge. On Glenn's 27th or 28th operation fate intervened. The Halifax was mortally wounded by flak and plunged to earth a fireball. The flight engineer was mortally wounded by the flak but the remaining four crew members in the front of the plane bailed out into German hands and incarceration. Glenn and the mid gunner never had a chance and now the three lie in adjacent war graves.



Glenn, Paul stressed, was not just a military casualty, but also his death inflicted emotional scars back in Bowmanville. He never came home "real soon" to his family homestead. In April 1943, just before flight training began, Glenn had married his sweetheart, Dora. Their married life together would last just two weeks. Dora never saw her husband again.

Paul culminated his most authoritative and evocative lecture by gently singing the poem *In Flanders Fields*. None could have come away from the evening without a deep sense of *Lest we forget*.

Kingston Historical Society Award Nomination Form

The Kingston Historical Society Award was created in 1993 to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Kingston Historical Society. It is presented from time to time to those worthy individuals, groups or institutions in recognition of outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of local history.

Members of the Society are encouraged to be part of these deliberations by nominating individuals or groups whom they feel have met the criteria for the Award, by making nominations using this form. Completed forms may be mailed to the Awards Committee, Kingston Historical Society, Box 54, Kingston ON, K7L 4V8 or to Paul Charbonneau, Chair of the Awards Committee: bearsden1017@hotmail.com Please use the format below if responding via e-mail. The deadline for nominations is 15 January 2026.

Name of **NOMINEE**: _____

Address of Nominee: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone Number _____

Name of Nominator [KHS Member] _____

Address: _____ Postal Code _____

Telephone Number _____

Please give as much information as possible about your nominee. Details which are obvious to you may not be known by members of the Awards Committee.

KHS AWARD BEGUN

From November 1993 *Then* newsletter—editor **Jim Warren**

AWARDS TASK FORCE — Under the chairpersonship of Joe Boucher, Isobel Trumpour and Jack Pike have formed a task force to establish the Kingston **Historical Society Award** as part of our centennial celebrations. This will honour an institution, group or individual, whether member or non-member, and may be presented annually or at least every five years, at the formal December dinner meeting. The award will consist of a book of the recipient's choice and a certificate. While your editor has studied the Minutes of the Awards Task Force carefully, he can see no statement about the purpose of the awards or the basis for selecting candidates. Nevertheless, several names have already been put forward for the consideration of the Executive and Virtue will undoubtedly triumph.

Kingston Historical Society Membership Renewal

Membership includes a series of 8 lectures, the annual journal 'Historic Kingston', 9 issues of the newsletter 'Limelight', some sponsor discounts and some special event discounts. 'Historic Kingston' may be purchased by non-members for \$25.

Please Renew Your Membership for 2026 now. New members joining from September through December 2025 will receive credit for the year 2026.

☐ \$40 Individual ☐ \$50 Family ☐ \$10 Student
☐ \$50 Institution; and ☐ \$300 Sponsor

Name: _____

Street: _____ Apt. _____ City: _____ Prov. _____

Postal Code: _____ Tel: _____ - _____ - _____

Email: _____

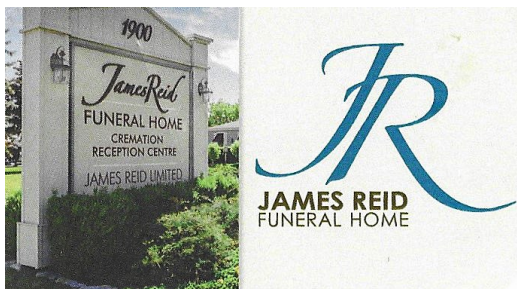
I would like to receive my Limelight online _____

Donation: Amount: \$ _____ (Charitable receipts for amounts exceeding \$19.99 with our thanks.)

You have three ways to join and pay your dues:

1. By cheque and mail: Kingston Historical Society, PO Box 54, Kingston ON K7L 4V6
2. Via the website: <https://kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca> > Membership tab
3. By e-Transfer: treasurer@kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca

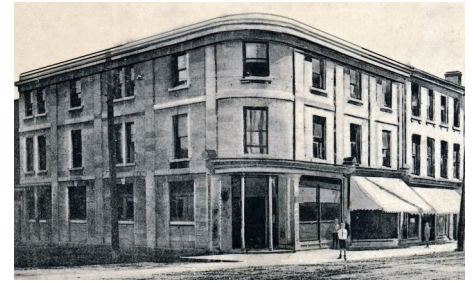
If we don't have your mailing address and telephone number, please include or send separately.



STILL STANDING: Looking at Regional Architecture with Dr. Jennifer McKendry

Commercial Round-Corner Buildings from the 1840s

George Browne, architect of Kingston City Hall, designed three round-corner buildings in the early 1840s but only two still stand. The Mowat Building (*right* conjectural view before 1903 addition of a 4th storey) at the corner of Princess and Bagot Streets was unfortunately demolished in



1974 despite protests by heritage advocates. How it could have been restored and integrated into today's downtown is demonstrated in Wilson's Building at the corner of Wellington and Brock Streets (*left*) and the Smith-Robinson Building ("S & R") at the corner of Ontario and Princess Streets (*below*, view c1875).

In early January 1842, Browne called for building tenders for the Smith-Robinson Building: "Three Cut Stone Wholesale Stores on Front [Ontario] and Store [Princess] Streets for Charles Hales, Esq." By July of the next year, one of Hales' tenants provided a further description, "The premises are fireproof, four Stories high, and within 50 yards of the Steam Boat Landing." He noted the complex was called the "Commercial Mart" which, indeed, was carved into the upper curved parapet, as seen in this photograph (*right*) from the mid 1870s. The original roof appears (replaced by a mansard type in the 1880s) and the roof ridges show the divisions among the three "stores" (warehouses). The 5-bay centre one with the curved corner is flanked to each side by a 3-bay one featuring an arch over the centre bay.



John Stevenson, owner since 1864, purchased in 1872 the adjacent lot on Princess and built seven more bays by architect John Power and contractor Richard Tossell. Piano manufacturing had been carried on under various names such as Fox and Weber since the mid 1860s. In 1894, the short-lived Kingston Vehicle Company (*right*) took over and manufactured carriages and sleighs. Wormworth pianos (*left*) replaced the vehicles company in 1900. In December 1908, fire broke out in the varnishing room and caused severe damage but the building was repaired.



Given the numerous changes in functions overtime, we are fortunate to have two early stone structures still standing on prominent downtown corners.



Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

www.murneytower.com



Liana Shaw Reports:



Murney Tower Ends the Year with Ghosts, Grants, and Great Ideas

With the Tower now closed for the season, Curator Alison Dringenberg and Museum Coordinator Alexa Grandy have been busy tackling year-end wrap-up tasks — from deep cleaning and organizing long-neglected cupboards to completing a detailed artifact inventory to ensure every item is properly documented before storage.

Behind the scenes, policy reviews and grant work have continued. Alison submitted our 2026 City of Kingston Heritage Fund operating-grant application in September, and both she and Alexa have remained active in local museum networks through KAM and Tourism Kingston.

The Tower's centennial exhibition partnership with Modern Fuel wrapped up at season's end, with artist Monique Martin donating her painting to the museum — a lasting memento of the celebration year.

Murney is also looking ahead to strengthening its educational offerings. Alison and Alexa recently met with Kevin Wood, a Grade 7/8 teacher at Central Public School, to brainstorm curriculum-based updates and additions to our in-school programming — an exciting step toward re-engaging students with Kingston's local history.

And finally, as autumn settles in, preparations have turned spooky! This year's Escape the Museum 3: Ghosts, Ghouls & Hidden Clues (Saturday, October 25) once again spanned both the Museum of Health Care and Murney Tower, with visitors solving clues and collecting treats at both museum sites. At Murney Tower, more than sixty guests braved the candle-lit corridors and eerie displays, brought to life by museum staff Alison Dringenberg and Alexa Grandy, and volunteers Liana Shaw, Callista Reis, and Melina Fragis. It was a fittingly spirited close to a year that celebrated both Murney's centennial and the museum's



continuing
role as a
place where
Kingston's
stories --
spooky and
otherwise --
come to life.

