

# Limelight

## Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

Volume 28 no 4

ISSN 1488-5565

April 2026



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



### Kingston Historical Society Meeting 15 April 2026 7pm

presented live at 7pm, in the theatre lounge of the  
Kingsbridge Retirement Community at 950 Centennial Drive  
and simultaneously offered via >>>Zoom

### Speaker: Thomas Harrison

**Richard Nixon's Secret 1957 Visit to Eastern Ontario, Prince Edward County and Hastings drawing on his recent book—**

***Searching for Richard Nixon: Finding Refuge and Making a Home in Prince Edward County***

**Thomas Harrison is a lawyer, artist and writer living in Prince Edward County.**



### Heritage Hour Series at City Hall 12PM on Thursday April 23, 2026

All welcome to an illustrated talk by Dr. Jennifer McKendry **"BUNGALOWS with emphasis on Kingston"**

"Bungalow" is an architectural term, which all of us understand as a house of one storey, often with useable space in the attic and/or basement. But how long has it been in use and how popular a form for residential buildings? In her presentation, Dr Jennifer McKendry will examine the pros and cons of the many mail-order catalogues produced throughout the 20th century. No doubt they were generally valued for the illustrations of the many styles of bungalows but, in addition, one could send for building plans and/or the actual assembled components, which would be shipped from distant locations and then fastened together to form a house on your building site. Styles ranged from the simple to complex, such as craftsman, half-timber, Spanish, colonial and finally modern. They were interspersed among older buildings in the city plus they are the homes dominating subdivisions.



373 Union Street  
Photo J. McKendry

# THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

## MAILING ADDRESS:

Kingston Historical Society  
P.O. Box 54,  
Kingston ON K7L 4V6  
[kingstonhs@gmail.ca](mailto:kingstonhs@gmail.ca)  
[www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca](http://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca)

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

*Please forward submissions to the Editor [betty.andrews@gmail.com](mailto: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

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 Treasurer: Peter Ginn Secretary: Don Richardson

Councillors: Betty Andrews, Editor of Limelight; Duncan McDowall, Programme Chair; Craig Pettis, Webmaster; Liana Shaw, Director of Murney Tower; Ann Stevens, Publicity; Paul Van Nest, Membership Chair; Editor of Historic Kingston, Peter Gower

## President's Message

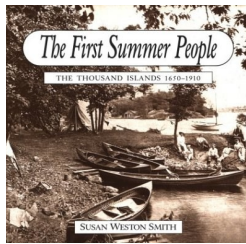
by Peter Gower

All who were members in 2025 should have received a copy of *Historic Kingston* by now. The postal delivery was usually fast and always expensive. Hand delivery was cost-saving, but hindered by snow, ice and illness.

If your copy has not arrived, please let us know at

[kingstonhs@gmail.ca](mailto:kingstonhs@gmail.ca)

Congratulations to Dianne Fielding whose copy included the Golden Ticket which she exchanged for a copy of Susie Smith's wonderful book *The First Summer People: The Thousand Islands 1650-1910*, donated to the Society after her September talk.



Again, our apologies for the many problems that occurred at the March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting and prevented the broadcast on Zoom. Luckily, everything went wrong in one meeting rather than in three separate meetings. Jake's talk was excellent, and I hope you will watch it on YouTube.

If your neighbour or friend is asking you what happened to their April copy of *Limelight*, you might gently ask them if they responded to Membership Chair Paul Van Nest's reminders to renew their memberships. Those who had not renewed by March 31 did not receive this issue. But, if it was an oversight, it is never too late to renew by sending the membership payment.

### 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](mailto:treasurer@kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca)

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

See you in person, or on Zoom, on 15 April when we hear about Richard Nixon in Prince Edward County!

## Wolfe Island's Old House Museum

by Brian MacDonald

In 2008, the Township of Frontenac Islands purchased a building often referred to as the oldest house on Wolfe Island. How old is it? This treatise will attempt to shed some light on that question.

When a government surveyor was sent to survey Wolfe Island in 1822, he found that a portion of the Island was occupied by tenants whose farms had been previously laid out in long narrow lots of 10 chains by 100 chains, or 100 acres each, including the area that became the village of Marysville. The land between today's St. Lawrence Street and Road 95 was then occupied by Mrs. Davis. Born Mary Hinckley in 1789, she married Thomas Davis in 1807. Following his drowning in 1821, she was remarried to Archibald Hitchcock about 1825 and by 1832 had added four more sons to her young family of seven. Mary, after whom Marysville was later named, was widowed a second time in 1842.

In his will, Archibald left each of his four sons a section of his farm of 243 acres, the north end of which was later developed into Marysville. In 1858, his third son, John Hitchcock (1830-1887) registered a subdivision on the north end of his property, bordered by Leander Street in the east and Division Street in the west, with a street in the middle he named Centre Street. The lot where the Old House Museum stands today is Lot No. 6 of his Registered Plan 26. In 1864, he sold Lot 6 to James Coyle (1844-1919). The sale price was nearly triple that of the adjacent Lot No. 5 sold the same day, suggesting a substantial building stood thereon.



The 1860 Walling map of the United Counties of Frontenac and Lennox & Addington included an insert of the village of Marysville. It identifies the residence of J. Hitchcock at the approximate location of the current museum. In 1919, James Coyle's widow Anne and son Enroy Coyle split Lot 6, which by then had two houses on it, occupied by tenants. Each part was sold to the tenant then in occupation. Louis and Dora LaRush purchased the house by the water, which remained in that family until their son Antoine "Tiner" LaRush died in December, 1986. A 1945 article in the Kingston Whig-Standard identified the house "occupied today by Mrs. Louis LaRush" as the oldest house on the Island.

In 1913, a history of Wolfe Island written by Ralph Spankie was presented to members of the Kingston Historical Society as well as visiting members of the New York Historical Association, in which Spankie stated that "the oldest house now standing on the Island," then occupied by Mrs. David Adair, had at one time been used as a school. Kingston's Daily News reported in July, 1908, that David Adair "has moved into James Coyle's house in the village."

### ***Another Battle of the Windmill Kingston Connection — Dr. Duncan McDowall***

***My great-great grandfather, the Reverend Robert McDowall (1768-1841) was an American-born missionary who came to Upper Canada in the Loyalist surge. He was instrumental in establishing the Dutch Reform and Presbyterian congregation of eastern Ontario and was active in the agitation for the founding of Queen's College as a Presbyterian institution in 1841 (He died just before the royal charter was issued and therefore not named a founder of QU). He is commemorated on an Ontario heritage plaque at Sandhurst on the way to Glenora and in an entry in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. Family lore tells the story that one or two of his three sons joined the large local militia force that bolstered the small force of British regulars mustered to repel the American Hunters who briefly occupied the windmill and Crysler's farm. I have no documentary evidence of this — militia muster roles have long ago disappeared — but is a nice bit of lore to adorn the family's "elbows up" sense of patriotism.***

Every February brings an opportunity for Canadians to reflect on their national and communal heritage. Black Canadians, for instance, celebrate Black History Month, a chance for Black Canadians to reflect on their roots in Canadian society, roots sometimes tangled in racial challenge but cumulatively contributing to a vibrant sense of multiracial community. In Kingston, our Society in partnership with the Frontenac Heritage Foundation takes the opportunity of Heritage Month in Ontario to reflect upon the abiding centrality of the city's genetic sense of heritage and its engaged management of that identity.

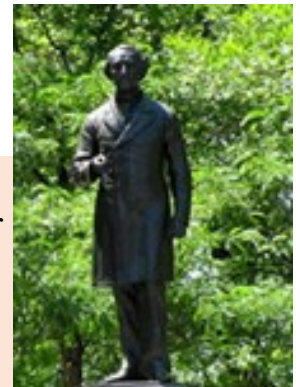


This year the annual heritage lecture focused on Kingston's hands-on preservation and grooming of its built and imagined heritage by city staff. That our heritage mindedness is shaped by elements of social, environmental, and economic consciousness. Primary to the administration of the city's heritage is our speaker was historian Dr. Joel Konrad, the city's Manager of Heritage Planning. Dr. Konrad began by noting the preservation and gradual adaptation of its renowned built heritage – the foundation of its long-standing reputation as “the limestone city.” This guardianship is governed by three legislative mandates: the Ontario Heritage Act, the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act, and various municipal by-laws dedicated to historically sensitive yet progressive property management.

Konrad is part of the city's four-person heritage management team. Its mandate is focused on evaluating and validating requests from property owners in the city's designated heritage conservation areas – notably Sydenham ward – to alter the appearance of their abodes or places of business. Over the last three years, Konrad reported, over 300 of these “alteration applications” had been vetted by city staff in a “complicated” process of consultation and approval or denial. Heritage, Konrad went on to say, must be an “adaptive” process as old structures must be refitted to modern purposes without abandoning their heritage genes. By way of example, he held up the recent adaptation of the old stone school at 47 Wellington Street into condominiums.

Konrad concluded his remarks by saying that the management of local heritage must be undertaken in a spirit of “balance and compromise” which tries to find a happy medium between jointly respecting property ownership and civic heritage. It must also accommodate society's need for sustainability in these times of climate change. It cannot therefore be driven only by abstract protocols of heritage preservation locked in time, but instead by a constant awareness of “community perspectives.”

Dr. Konrad's talk is on the Society's YouTube link and will appear in Historic Kingston.



The Canadian Institute for Historical Education (CIHE) recently brought before the City Heritage Property Committee their initiative to reinstall the Sir John A. statue which was raised in 1895 and removed in 2021. Dr. Duncan McDowall was one of the presenters. A survey they commissioned suggests the move has 71% local approval.

## “Heritage Now” can be an Oxymoron: Bricks, Mortar and People

By Donald R. Forsdyke

In a recent address to a joint meeting of the FHF and KHS, Dr. Joel Konrad spoke of the Kingston Heritage Department’s dealings with the many problems associated with heritage properties. These problems included interpretation of Ontario Heritage legislation to forestall developer overreach, that might lead to heritage building destruction and new buildings at inappropriate locations. He covered pressing concerns of FHF and KHS members, including financial help for heritage property owners and the cancelling of insurance policies.

There was then a 15-minute question period (recording retained at the KHS site). One questioner (at about 50 min.) noted that the talk had dealt with “bricks and mortar” issues, rather than other issues that might be relevant to the “heritage now” in his title ([2026 02 25 Frontenac Heritage Foundation Meeting](#)). [Cut and Paste to visit website](#). Someone recalled the UNESCO World Heritage designation program (like the smaller scale Ontario program that had selected Barriefield). Watching the recording, I was disappointed that there was no mention of the people who were earlier associated with heritage properties. Like their dwellings, these people have not gone away. They are as much a part of “heritage now” as are the bricks and mortar that once enclosed them. Yes, there are nice buildings that we must care for, but how much more interesting might it be to know more about those who had lived in them?

Dr. Konrad had shown a Venn diagram with three overlapping rings, one of which concerned “Social Factors” (noted by one questioner). This was later expanded under four headings, the last of which was “Education”, but this was not taken further. To be sure, a few plaques on Kingston buildings do mention historic figures, such as Sir. John A. Macdonald. In contrast, houses in Barriefield Heritage Village have plaques with the names, dates, and occupations of the original owners. But, as far as we know, they are mostly, if at all, celebrated today only by their descendants. Those who wander around great historic cities see plaques for local folk that, like Sir John A., are more widely known.

Tourists visiting Dublin, for example, can be seen checking plaques that celebrate Irish individuals, many of whom may have actually made their names in England. For many visitors, plaques come first and the residents secondarily. There happen to have been many non-politicians in Kingston who, likewise, left a mark on their times. And Kingston is fortunate in this respect since it has many post-secondary institutions where there are historians and other academics and their spouses, who have studied our history and have written books and papers on it.

One activist is geography professor, Brian Osborne, who described the life of Agnes Maule Machar, daughter of an early Queen’s University Principal (Osborne 2005, 2009), and supported the Rideau Canal’s UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. He received an Order of Canada award in 2019. Agnes lived at 169 Earl Street and had a country cottage in Gananoque (“Ferncliff”). The present resident, Karen Wand, recently gave a talk on her and her homes at the Gananoque Probus Club: “The Remarkable Agnes Maule Machar”. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqLT1M8J6X8>)

Another activist was Dr. Margaret Angus (1908-2008), who wrote 18 papers in *Historic Kingston*, the journal of the KHS, of which she was a President (as well as of the Historical Society (1969-71). Where possible, she wrote not only of “bricks and mortar”, but also noted the original and the current owners (See Angus, 1980, “Buildings of Architectural Significance” Vol. 5, City of Kingston). And, there are articles in local newspapers (e.g. Susanna McLeod’s “Wolfe Island childhood enlightened author’s life” *Whig Standard*, 9 January 2026).

Beyond those with local connections are Ontarian Mabel Ringereide (1979, 1984), and a Cambridge undergraduate, Elizabeth Barnes (1998). These provided invaluable material for my own studies (Forsdyke, 2004). Professional or not, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century many books and papers by the above-mentioned authors are available online (see notes below).

And, as discussed in an FHF Newsletter (Forsdyke 2020), there is also the laneway issue. Kingston does not get even close to Toronto in caring for its laneways. (<https://www.thelanewayproject.ca/>) This should include seizing the opportunity to add a heritage-relevant name when it arises. Indeed,

some concerned Kingstonians did identify unnamed laneways deserving accurate specification in case of emergencies. Furthermore, they found names that might positively reflect Sydenham Ward's heritage designation – Romanes, Grant Allen and, for good measure, a third lane that might be referred to as “Charles Darwin Lane”, or (closer to home) “Agnes Machar Lane.” In 2010 a petition with 96 signatures was formally accepted by City Hall. Sadly, the petition was tabled. Despite appeals, this remains the situation a decade and a half later.

Of course, politics is everywhere. For a current example see Tristin Hopper, 6 February 2026. <https://www.thewhig.com/news/group-alleges-kingston-broke-law-by-removing-sir-john-a-macdonald-statue> (The Kingston Whig Standard). Disputes with developers and insurance companies expose many issues that leave speakers like Dr. Konrad little time to go deeper. Gathering signatures for a petition to get a lane named after the local 20<sup>th</sup> century architect, Lily Inglis, went smoothly Gordon 2018: “Lily Lane”, a perfect legacy. *Whig Standard*, 15 February (https://www.thewhig.com/2018/02/14/letters-to-the-editor-feb-15) **Cut and Paste** However, hints at problems arose early in my attempts with 19<sup>th</sup> century figures. A householder with Jehovah's Witness affinities was shocked when I used the “D word” (Darwin), and the owners of a B&B just politely refused. How much better might it have been for their clients to hear breakfast stories on Kingston history?

**References:** Barnes, E. J. 1998. The early career of George John Romanes, 1867-1878. Undergraduate thesis, Newnham College, Cambridge <https://www.queensu.ca/academia/forsdyke/romanes4.htm>

Forsdyke, D. R. 2004. Grant Allen, George Romanes, Stephen Jay Gould and the evolution establishments of their times. And who was the Kingston lady? *Historic Kingston* 52, 95 -103. <https://www.queensu.ca/academia/forsdyke/romanes3.htm>

Forsdyke, D.R. 2020. Roads, streets, laneways, de-naming and naming relationships between Allens, Machars and Romanes families. *Frontenac Heritage Foundation Newsletter* 46 (1) 10-14. <https://www.queensu.ca/academia/forsdyke/romanes8.htm>

Osborne, B. S. 2005. The world of Agnes Maule Machar (1837-1927) social reform, nation, empire, nature. [Untitled 1](#)

Osborne, B. S. 2009. Around and about Kingston: Local connections to Charles Darwin. *Limelight* 11, no. 4, <https://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/LL-2009-04-Apr09.pdf>

Ringereide, M. 1979. Romanes - Father and Son. *The Bulletin* (1979) 28, 35-46. *Committee on Archives and History of the United Church of Canada in collaboration with Victoria University*. <https://www.queensu.ca/academia/forsdyke/romanes.htm#Romanes%20-%20Father%20and%20Son>

Ringereide, M. 1984. The Romanes Family: Canadian Connections, *Smith Falls Record News* ( 6 part series, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> February, and 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of March). Ringereide Papers (Queen's University Archives, 2000). [https://www.queensu.ca/academia/forsdyke/romanes.htm#The%20Romanes%20Family:%20Canadian%](https://www.queensu.ca/academia/forsdyke/romanes.htm#The%20Romanes%20Family:%20Canadian%20)

## Ear to the ground

*Elizabeth Durno* reporting on events of interest to history buffs

**The Eastern Ontario Spring Stamp Festival** takes place on April 18th from 10:00 - 3:00 p.m. at the Crossroads United Church, 690 Sir John A. MacDonald Blvd. There will be postal history displays and discussions showing how stamps reflect political, cultural and historical events.

On Saturday, April 25th at 1:00 p.m. musician Stephen Bruce Medd will perform ‘Ballads by the Boundary’, a medley of songs pertaining to Canadian history. This event is presented by the EULAC at St. Paul’s Anglican Church Hall, 137 Queen Street. Zoom: 12:30 p.m. - <https://kingston.UELAC.ca/>

Also on April 25th at 1:30 p.m. the **Ottawa Historical Society** speaker James Powell will give a presentation on ‘The Era of Bytown’ at the Ottawa Public Library auditorium, 129 Metcalfe Street. Link: <https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/activities/events>

On Friday, May 1st, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., the **Great Lakes Museum**, 55 Ontario Street, will feature a presentation on ‘Unearthing Lake Ontario’s Untouched Shipwreck’ with Heison Chak. \$15.00 per person

*Welcome New Members*

*Susan Smith Ed Leeman Trish Crawford and Robert Weisnagel*

## “This Old House” Kingston Style

One of PBS Television's perennially popular shows is “This Old House,” a weekly make-over of a venerable old dwelling by carpenters and heritage specialists. Off come the accretions of time and the original bones of the structure are revealed. At its March lecture, the Society was treated to a fascinating rhetorical renovation of one of Kingston's prominent old homes – Bellevue House. Our historical carpenter was Jake Breadman, a senior doctoral candidate at Queen's, who has spent much time around Canada's public history sites. Public history seeks to carry academic history into the sphere of public edification by setting places and artifacts in accessible settings where their heritage import can readily be appreciated. Since the 1960s, Bellevue House on Kingston's West King Street has been one such site, one that recently received a major renovation along public history lines.

Bellevue House was built in 1841-3 by local merchant Charles Hales, a vigorous Methodist who saw the profit possibilities of renting property to well-heeled Kingstonians in the tranquil lakeshore district on the western edge of the young city. Like the Italian villas it emulated, Bellevue House was built in the Italian Tuscan style and boasted seventeen rooms decorated in Greek Revival style. Down through its subsequent history, one tenant gave the house lasting celebrity – in 1848-9 it briefly became the home of local lawyer and rising politician John A. Macdonald. John A.'s stay at Bellevue House was cast in tragic hues: the death of an infant son, a chronically-ill wife and a topsy-turvy political career that took him away from his Kingston family for extended periods in Québec and Toronto.

In 1964, Parks Canada bought Bellevue House as a heritage venue for the Macdonald legend. The early twentieth century, however, has supplied new ingredients in the telling of Canada's evolution. Class, gender and indigeneity now all colour the picture of our past. With this in mind, Jake Breadman reported his research into the other tenants of Bellevue House and presented us with a collective biography of the people of Bellevue House. Using archival sources, census data, material objects and taxation rolls (all the paydirt of public history), Jake gave us a rolling chronicle of those who followed Macdonald to this lovely villa. Given the posh nature of this enclave in Victoria ward, Bellevue's tenancy attracted men of talent in the law, commerce, the military and the colonial bureaucracy. Supported by their wives in the life of the Kingston establishment, these were men who were framing the structures of Canada's unfolding as a nation. They ranged from William Ermatinger, a lawyer, and police inspector, to William Ferguson, a sheriff who bought the home in 1855 from Hales for £1,500.

By the end of the evening, Breadman had, in effect, introduced us to a cast of influential Kingstonians who, from a historical perspective, now felt like the “folks next door”. We also came away feeling that this young public historian had done a thoroughly instructive job of retrofitting our appreciation of Bellevue House. Jake's talk is available on YouTube through the KHS website and will appear in *Historic Kingston*.



Kingston Whig-Standard, 13 December 1963 re Bellevue House.

"[The Kingston Historical Society] had considered purchasing the home, refurbishing it in pieces of that time, and dedicating it to the memory of the first prime minister. The enormity of the task and the difficulty of raising the funds to purchase it before the Beveridges moved thwarted their plans however."

Dr. Duncan McDowall adds —Dr. James Beveridge was instrumental in the early 1960s in overseeing the expansion of the school of graduate studies at QU opening the door to making it what it is today. His role is discussed on page 81 of my history of QU, *Testing Tradition*. Many of the senior people at QU in those years liked living out in the Bellevue neck of the woods — Deusch, for instance on Alwington.

## Murney Tower Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

[www.murneytower.com](http://www.murneytower.com)



### Liana Shaw reports: Murney Tower Museum Update



Murney Tower Museum has had an active March, taking part in *March of the Museums* at Tourism Kingston's Visitor Information Centre with Murney's new *Marvelous Matching Game*. Alison and Alexa also appeared on YourTV Kingston's *Limestone Lens* to talk about Murney, KHS, and upcoming events, while Alison joined Anna Collett of the Museum of Health Care on *Your Local Show* to promote the upcoming **Eggs-treme Easter Fun at the Museum**. The museum has hired three summer students for the 2026 season.

Coming up next is the fourth annual **Eggs-treme Easter Fun at the Museum** on **Saturday, April 4, 2026, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.** at **Murney Tower Museum** and the **Canadian Museum of Health Care**. Families can enjoy an Easter egg scavenger hunt, crafts, goodies, and a prize for visiting both sites. Timed-entry tickets are required.

For more info visit [www.murneytower.com](http://www.murneytower.com) and get your tickets at through Zeffy at <https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/eggs-treme-easter-fun-at-the-museum--2026-2>



Paul Van Nest presents \$300. cheque to Residents Council Chair, Kingsbridge Retirement Community, Nattanya Hewitt, to be donated to the Partners in Mission Food Bank.

**Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre** in Kingston, Ontario, has rebranded to **Cultivate Art Commons**. Formerly known as the Kingston Artists' Association Inc. (K.A.A.I.), and later as Modern Fuel Gallery (established 1989/1995), the center has been a cornerstone for contemporary art since 1977. As it approaches its 50th anniversary, the rebrand aims to better reflect its role in fostering collective creativity.  
**Location: Top floor of the Tett Centre**



Alexa and Alison at the Tourism Visitor's Centre at March of the Museums.



People who have attended the Heritage events co-sponsored by the FHF and the KHS in the past will have expected refreshments to be served at the February 25 meeting this year. When only three people remained at the evening's end, it was discovered that the missing goodies were on the lower shelves of the drinks caddy, hidden by a tablecloth. Payment for the food had already been waived by Kingsbridge, as was payment for the meeting venue; the sponsoring groups offered their budgeted-for refreshment funds to the Residents Council which annually raises funds to make a donation to the Partners in Mission Foodbank. This year, our money will be added to the foodbank donation with their thanks.