



# NEWS FROM KING TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## KTHS 2023 AGM Update

The roster for the 2023 KTHS Board of Directors was presented and approved at the March 5th AGM and is as follows:

### **2023 KTHS Board of Directors**

Richard Vien – President  
Murdene Pozdrowski – Vice President  
Beverly Flanagan - Programs  
Sharon Bentley - Membership  
Linda Similas – Treasurer  
Ed Millar – Secretary  
Kim Sillcox – Newsletter  
Diana Armitage - *Director at Large*  
Tony Rolph – *Director at Large*

Bill Salter – *Director at Large*

Erica Baird - *Ex-Officio*

Liza Mallyon - *Ex-Officio*

### **Members of the *Fawcett Bequest***

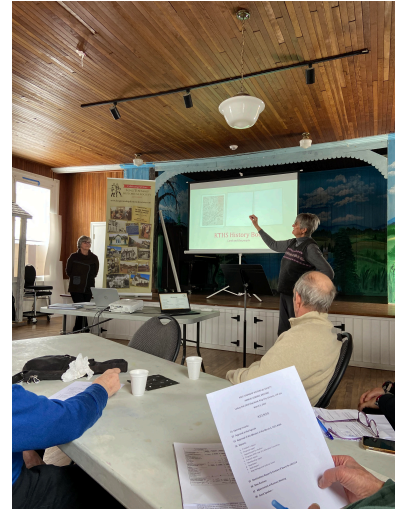
**Committee** include: Ann Love, Diana Armitage, Linda Similas and Tony Rolph.  
Richard Vien and Ed Millar serve as *ex officio* members.

**Ann Love and Sharon Bentley** outlined some of their exciting discoveries made while conducting research for the **King Book project**: The route taken south by Etienne Brulee may turn out to be different than described by other historians based on the 1647 map of Champlain; photos of four thousand year old artifacts found in King Township belonging to the Haudenosaunee First Nations; and how the results of a university-sponsored pollen count using a core sample taken from Kelly Lake underscored the impact of the land on the people and the people on the land.



Ann and Sharon's goal is to tell the story of King as a narrative through a series of stories, including some by guest authors, with a focus on the evolution of the land and community. We will continue to share some of these vignettes in this newsletter throughout the coming year to give you a taste of what is to come!

Following the AGM, **Barb McGuire Hepburn** joined us for a humorous and insightful presentation on the **history of the Schomberg Agricultural Fair**. Her life experiences growing up on her family's farm and memories of the Schomberg Fair were enjoyed by all in attendance. The 173<sup>rd</sup> Schomberg Fair is right around the corner on May 25-28.



This concluded the end of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year for KTHS!



**Save the date for our next KTHS Speaker - June 4!**

Professional journalist, historian and author **Malcolm Kelly**

**Kelly** will join us **Sunday, June 4th at 1:00 pm** to discuss his book **SPROG: A Novel of Bomber Command** in Laskay Hall. Mr. Kelly will speak about his debut novel which addresses the allure and danger of aviation in the 1930s and how it drew so many young men to join the RCAF.

**Free admission for KTHS members, \$10 for non-members** (option to purchase an annual KTTHS membership for \$25 for individuals/\$30 for a family at the door and attend for free).

The King Township Historical Society Speaker Series Presents:

**MALCOLM KELLY**  
Author, Journalist and Historian

**SPROG**

Toronto author Malcolm Kelly will speak about **SPROG, A NOVEL OF BOMBER COMMAND**, his first work of military fiction. **SPROG** focuses on the real lives of the young men of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, that trained pilots to fight in the skies over Europe in World War II.

**Sunday, June 4 - 1 pm**  
Laskay Hall, 2920 King Rd., King City

**FREE ADMISSION FOR KTTHS MEMBERS**  
**\$10 admission for non-members**

RSVP to: [kinghistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:kinghistoricalsociety@gmail.com)



***The following are two vignettes written by local guest writers who have contributed stories for the upcoming History of King book. We will continue to share these as features in the coming newsletters. Enjoy!***

## **The Pottageville Swamp: Zoological Studies Begin in Ontario** **by Vicki Hotte**

In 1924, the Pottageville Swamp attracted interest from the Zoology Department of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), which shared staff with the University of Toronto. Zoologists at the ROM needed a research station for their collecting and surveying expeditions. At the time, museums used stuffed specimens for display and study purposes. Lester L. Snyder (1894–1968), a taxidermist and Curator of the ROM's Zoology Department, led the project. His team included James L. Baillie, E.B. Shelley Logier, J.H. Fleming, H.H. Brown, and W. J. LeRay.

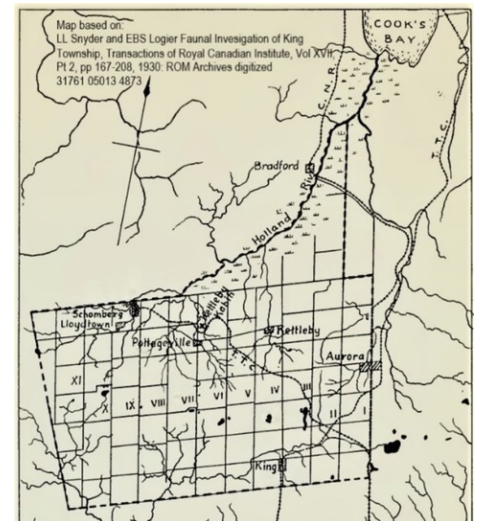
Since Ontario was zoologically “unknown” to academia at the time, establishing Ontario's fauna as a distinct field of scientific study was an inaugural moment. In 1925, the group leased land in the swamp from John A. Lloyd at the intersection of the 19<sup>th</sup> Sideroad and 7<sup>th</sup> Concession in Pottageville, as depicted in a hand-drawn map included in their publication.

The researchers finished the interior of a simple wooden structure, designed for temporary residence, by building shelves, tables, and stuffing burlap ‘mattresses’ for bedding at a total cost of \$161. The ROM team nicknamed their humble station “The Kettleby Kabin,” calling themselves “The Klub.” The old Schomberg & Aurora Railroad train, dubbed the “Annie Rooney,” passed by the Kabin providing initial convenient access.

In their 1930 publication, “A Faunal Investigation of King Township, York County, Ontario,” Snyder and Logier described the unique boggy conditions of the Pottageville Swamp as a remnant of glacial Lake Algonquin with slow subterranean drainage. Unsited for farming, the swamp provided a refuge for birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals.

In the same report, they noted the impending pressure on wildlife from the planned clearing and draining of 2,940 hectares of the northeastern segment of the nearby Holland Marsh for agricultural development. This drainage project was initiated in 1925 and lasted until 1930, diverting water permanently from dikes into canals.

The Kettleby Kabin researchers surveyed species using a rigorous identification process. For instance, a bird could not be counted unless captured, preferably with its nest. Consequently, known species were under-reported in their survey, which totalled 112 species of birds, 13 species of amphibians, 8 species of reptiles, and 33 species of mammals. Compare that with a separate long-term survey ending in 2010 that identified 240 species of birds in King Township.





James L. Baillie, a dedicated self-taught ornithologist, shared his knowledge through a popular *Toronto Telegram* weekly column, "Birdland," from 1931 until his death in 1970. Baillie also maintained the carefully detailed logbook of the Kettleby Kabin Klub: The Natural History of King Township, Apr. 4, 1925 to Apr. 5, 1942, or The Natural History of King Township, York Co. Ontario, now part of the James L. Baillie Collection at University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library.

As Assistant Curator of Ornithology at the ROM, Baillie welcomed students with a keen interest in nature, including author Farley Mowat and celebrated artist Robert Bateman. When contacted, Bateman offered fond memories of Saturday morning chats about birds with Baillie and other ROM staff, specifically acknowledging the talented museum artist, Terry Shortt.



Dr. Henry J.M. Barnett, a world-renowned neurologist who owned a home in King Township's Happy Valley Forest from 1959 to 2013, cherished a lifelong friendship with Jim Baillie, based upon their mutual avid interest in birds. At the age of 12, young Henry first met Jim Baillie at Ashbridge's Bay. When the curious boy asked what Jim was doing, he was given a set of binoculars to observe birds while Baillie identified each one.

Due to the ROM's ground-breaking work, the Pottageville Swamp was recognized as an International Biological Program Site in the 1970s, following a survey sponsored by the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU). Specifically, it was identified as Site 224 in Ecoregion 6E and named the Pottageville Bog and Swamp.

By the 1980s, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources followed up on the ICSU's survey with its own site assessments, noting the swamp supported 23 provincially and regionally rare known species of plants and animals, while its hydrogeological function merited protection. This led to two new provincial designations as a Class 1 Provincially Significant Wetland and as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI).

A 1985 study identified the Pottageville Swamp as one of southern Ontario's 53 most important wetlands south of the Precambrian Shield. During this time, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) assisted with the purchase of 432 acres in the swamp, the land title placed under the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA). NCC's Charles Sauriol and LSRCA's Basil Noels surveyed the swamp together. Since that time, LSRCA's acquisitions in the Swamp have increased to 540 acres.

If not for the pioneering efforts of the Kettleby Kabin Klub, the ecological significance of this swamp might never have been recognized. Even so, this Class 1 Wetland is now fragmented, and the reduced swamp area is ringed by developments along its artificial boundaries. Wetlands are refugia for various resident and migratory at-risk and endangered species when adequately buffered, connected, and protected along feeder creeks.

Wetlands absorb water like a huge natural sponge, releasing it slowly during periods of drought. They mitigate climate change, providing a valuable carbon sink. When wetlands are substantially damaged or disconnected from associated streams or tributaries, their natural storage capacity is lost. One consequence is increased flooding. Nearby development, however, continues to fill in the natural wetland environment.



The Kettleby Kabin Klub's research underscores the importance of habitat loss prevention, and the need to enshrine legal protection for the lives of all residents, whether they breathe through stomata, nostrils, gills, or spiracles.

## The Lady in the Mud House: Blair's Story (1884-1985)

### By Gillian Watt

In mid-life, when many people are accepting the routines of life, Blair Acton Burrows did an about-face and traded her very social city life for an adventure in country living. A woman of great vitality and resourcefulness, she was active as a skier, skater, golfer, traveller, and mountain climber. In 1936, she bought fifty acres in King Township and went about the business of building a house unlike any other in Canada. Blair had only her research to defend herself against what seemed to most of her friends an impossible dream, doomed to failure, and a subject of ridicule. Only Blair would think she could build a house out of mud.

She lived in Toronto with her autocratic father, but she drove up to King almost daily to work on her property, sometimes camping overnight with her dog. Blair wanted a house made of local materials and, after researching a variety of building techniques, decided to use the *pisé de terre*, or rammed earth building technique, for her King home.



Blair found she did not have enough field stone for the strong foundation she needed to hold the heavy walls of her house. But she did have many large boulders. She set a fire around these boulders, and when they were thoroughly heated, poured cold water on them to split them into manageable pieces. After a local stone mason finished the foundation, she found a carpenter who was willing to live on the property for the summer in the remains of a cottage and who, together with a couple of local young people, would build her house of rammed earth.

The carpenter constructed a form from matching planks of various lengths, bolted together with two-foot bolts. Then the workers rammed earth, of a particular mix found on the property, into the form until it was firm "and rang like a bell." The planks were then taken off and moved to the next section. It was important that rain did not penetrate the walls and, as it was a very stormy summer, much time was spent protecting the tops of the walls from the rain. Blair and a friend drove to the Credit River to find flat stones for the floor of her home.

People who knew Blair drove up to King to look, and snicker, at this crazy idea. They would poke things into the walls and say that it would never work. But by late autumn the house, 16' X 32' was finished, roofed, and stained. It still stands. When her father died nine years later, she added a basement apartment, a kitchen, and three bedrooms. Blair moved to King permanently where she took part in much of the village life.

Did Blair forgive her city friends who had laughed at her peculiar ideas? She did indeed. Every autumn, when the leaves were at their most colourful, she would hold a party and invite as many as one hundred friends to King for lunch and to enjoy the world she lived in.

## St. Mary's Catholic Church - The Oldest Church in King

### By Bill Salter



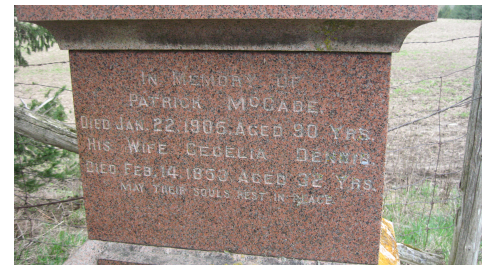
St. Mary's Catholic Church on the 10th line of King, is the oldest continuously operating church in the Township.

The church building was erected in 1855 on one acre of land donated by Patrick & Catherine Trainor. Originally a frame structure, the brick exterior was added before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. St. Mary's was officially opened with the first Mass at 11:00 AM on Sunday, September 23, 1855. A large ecumenical gathering of people, each of whom paid two shillings and sixpence entrance fee,

attended the service conducted by the founding priest, Father Patrick Rattigan, a "church building priest" who had already built a church at Colgan and at Arlington in North Adjalla.

St. Mary's is still referred to by earlier parishioners as "The Mission Church", as it was in its early days a mission church serving Nobleton, Schomberg, Bolton and Colgan. In 1876, it became a part of the Schomberg Parish along with St. Patrick's built in 1877. The church held services of worship for over 120 years until it was closed on the opening of the new St. Mary's Church in Nobleton. By that time it had become the oldest continuously operating church in King Township.

The cemetery on the property, which is still in use by the descendants of pioneer families, was opened two years earlier with the burial of Cecilia, the 32-year-old wife of Patrick McCabe who died on Valentine's Day, 1853. Patrick lived on to the age of 90, passing away in January of 1905 and is buried with his wife in the south west corner of the property.



I recall one weekend in about 1970, when a work party had worked all day to replace the fence around the cemetery, which had been knocked over by neighbouring cattle. At the end of the day, as the sun was setting and the fencing was finished, Charlie Kehoe and Vince O'Neill were leaning on their shovels surveying a job well done. Charlie Kehoe turned to Vince O'Neill and drawled, "Well Vince, I don't reckon we'll have to put her up again! Charlie Kehoe passed away in 1980 and Vince O'Neill in 1987. Both are buried there in the cemetery and the fence still stands.

As late as the early 1970's the church was still heated by a wood stove at the back of the church, with a stove pipe running the length of the church along the ceiling. In the winter time, a parishioner would arrive early on Sunday morning to light the fire and warm up the church for service. The stove pipe carried the heat throughout the building.

The oldest surviving member of St. Mary's was Miss Marion O'Neill, formerly a King Township school teacher, who was baptized at St. Mary's 105 years ago. Miss O'Neil passed away in 2014, and is buried beside her parents in the Churchyard just behind the church building. Miss O'Neill had an excellent memory and recalled the Sunday mornings in the wintertime, when her father would hitch the horse to the sleigh and transport their portable organ to and from the Church for Sunday Mass.

The stories that she told included one of Father Coleman, pastor of St Patrick's parish from 1915 to 1925, which then included both St. Patrick's in Schomberg and St. Mary's. One Sunday morning, with little time to spare between Masses, Father Coleman, on horseback, galloped his horse from St. Patrick's to St. Mary's. As he entered the Churchyard at full gallop, the horse fell dead. Father Coleman leapt off of his fallen steed and exclaimed "That's funny, he never did that before!"

One Sunday morning, the altar boy backed into a lighted candle beside the altar and set his robes afire. Fortunately, an agile parishioner in the front pew, leapt over the railing and extinguished the flame before any harm came to the boy. Most of the parishioners did not see the fire and thought the man had gone mad!

A much more serious fire had occurred on Sunday July 13, 1913, when worshippers smelling smoke, rushed out to find the drive shed on fire. The shed was completely destroyed along with seven fine horses and wagons. The shed was later rebuilt of concrete and steel and still stands today.



No longer in use for Sunday Mass, St. Mary's has been closed since the building of a new church in Nobleton on Highway 27, but many familiar old King Township family names can be found there in the cemetery, names like Trainor, O'Neill, McGuire, and Kehoe. The church, the drive shed and the cemetery remain and are in good repair, as a memorial to those early pioneer families who founded King Township.

## Help Grow Our Membership by Joining KTHS Today!

As our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year draws to a close, we are excited to continue to bring you inspirational programming and event opportunities for years to come. We encourage you to **renew your annual membership (individual \$25/family \$30) today** so that you may continue to take advantage of all that KTHS has to offer.

Know someone interested in learning more about the history of King who would enjoy becoming a member of KTHS? Have friends who are new to King City and looking to get involved in the community? Why not invite them to our next event and encourage them to join KTHS?

We are looking to grow our membership and welcome new members to our Board of Directors as well. Email [kinghistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:kinghistoricalsociety@gmail.com) to learn more today. **Only \$25 for an individual and \$30 for a family membership.** We look forward to hearing from you!



King Township Historical Society, 2920 King Road, King City ON L7B 1L6

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(PLEASE PRINT INFORMATION AND MAIL CHEQUE TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS)

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

NEW \_\_\_\_\_ RENEWAL \_\_\_\_\_

INDIVIDUAL \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ FAMILY \$30 \_\_\_\_\_ DONATION \_\_\_\_\_

ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_



## What's New at the King Museum?

2920 King Road, King [www.kingheritageandculture.ca](http://www.kingheritageandculture.ca)



### #SelfieKings Exhibit at KHCC Through May 27th

Say cheese and strike a pose. #selfieKings explores portraits and photography from throughout King's history, right up through present day.

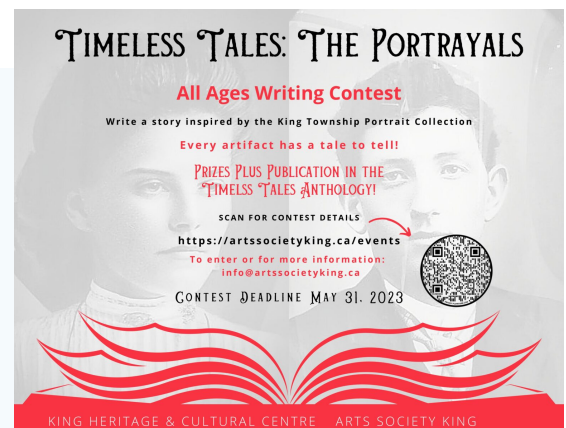


### Arts Society King in partnership with KHCC Timeless Tales III: The Portrayals Writing Contest Through May 31st

Who is the person behind the face in that old photograph? What secrets are hiding behind those eyes? That scowl?

And that antique book with the strange title? What clues does it offer about life in bygone days?

Put the two together and tell your own story set in King Township's past. Just mix and match one photo with any title of your choosing and let your imagination go wild.



The best of the best in each of 4 age categories, from children to adults, will be awarded a \$50 Indigo gift card, a Heritage Book, and a copy of Timeless Tales -The Portrayals Anthology. Submission deadline: May 31, 2023. For the complete rules and the entry form to the TIMELESS TALES Writing Contest, please see below. Brought to you by ASK in partnership with The King Heritage & Cultural Centre.

### Renewal of the Raspberry Social at Laskay Hall Saturday, July 15th - Details to follow soon!

Enjoy a summer evening out, while celebrating this traditional community event and enjoy some delicious raspberry desserts!



## On the Trail of the Monarch Butterfly

### August 19th - November 10th



Displays stunning micro-photographic images and aerial photographs depicting the monarch's amazing journey from Montreal to the mountains of central Mexico. This exhibit will also explore the life cycle of the Monarch butterfly – visit to see live Monarchs as we wait for them to emerge from their chrysalis (timing can't be guaranteed). Learn more about pollinators and how to create a butterfly friendly garden.

### **History of KTHS in Brief:**

*The KTHS dates back to 1972 when a group of dedicated residents, with interests in preserving the history of their Township, gathered to form the King Township Historical Society. In 1981 ~1982, the KTHS was incorporated by the Ontario Historical Society under a Provincial Letters Patent. Our goals and objectives are to encourage research into the history, to secure and preserve an accurate account of the progress and development, and to promote public interest in the history of King Township. More information, including details on membership, may be found on our website at [www.kingtowshiphistoricalsociety.com](http://www.kingtowshiphistoricalsociety.com).*



Original past artwork by (clockwise): Pat Earl, Eva Folks, Mary Morganelli, Hans Martin

# Spring Blooms

## Plant & Pop-up Art sale

Locally Grown Plants • Garden Accessories • Original Art for Sale

**Saturday, May 13, 10 am-1 pm, Rain or shine**  
King Heritage & Cultural Centre, 2920 King Road, King City  
[ArtsSocietyKing.ca](http://ArtsSocietyKing.ca)


[www.gardenontario.org/site.php/nobletonking](http://www.gardenontario.org/site.php/nobletonking) • [NobletonKingCityGardenClub@gmail.com](mailto:NobletonKingCityGardenClub@gmail.com)

*Nobleton & King City*  
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**KING**

**Arts**  
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