

# NEWS and views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

Vol. 41, No. 3

ISSN 0700-4427

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**Visit our Website**  
[www.simcoecountyhistory.ca](http://www.simcoecountyhistory.ca)

**SCHA**

Preserving the Past,  
in the Present,  
for the Future.

## October and November with the SCHA

For our regular monthly meetings, we begin in October with Aaron Kontkanen, the 2013 Winner of the Andrew Hunter Award. Aaron's topic will be his paper entitled "A case study of the United Farmers of Ontario in power 1919-1923", the fine work of Premier E. C. Drury in Simcoe County and how he misread the wishes of Ontario voters.

In November, we partner with the Barrie Legion and the Barrie Historical Association to welcome Ted Barris, well known author and military historian. His topic will be his most recent book, *The Great Escape: A Canadian Story*.

This is the war story we all think we know... but don't.

On the night of March 24, 1944, eighty Commonwealth airmen crawled through a 336-foot-long tunnel and slipped into the darkness of a pine forest beyond the wire of Stalag Luft III, a German prisoner-of-war compound near Sagan, Poland. The event became known as The Great Escape. The intricate breakout, more than a year in the making, involved as many as 2,000 POWs, extraordinary co-ordination and a battle of wits inconceivable for the time. Within a few days of the escape, however, all but three of the escapers were

recaptured; subsequently, on specific orders from Adolf Hitler, fifty were murdered, cremated and buried in a remote corner of the prison compound.

What most casual readers, history buffs, moviegoers and even some of the veterans themselves don't readily acknowledge is that The Great Escape was in many ways a "made-in-Canada escape." As Ted Barris writes in his new book, many of the principal planners, task leaders and key players, as well as some of those who actually got away that night were Canadian airmen, trained in Canada, serving in RCAF bomber and fighter squadrons, shot down over Europe, imprisoned at Stalag Luft III and ultimately participants in the actual Great Escape.

As he has done in his 16 previous books, Barris has assembled research, based on exclusive interviews, other unearthed recordings, transcripts, as well as unpublished letters, diaries and memoirs, and an assembly of photos, maps and drawings, into a compelling you-are-there account. *The Great Escape: A Canadian Story* offers a unique retelling of the story through first-hand recollections of the Canadians who experienced it. It's more riveting than the Hollywood movie. And it's all true!

## SCHA 2013 Schedule

**October 15** – Andrew Hunter Prize Winner, Aaron Kontkanen at the **Simcoe County Museum, Midhurst, at 7:30 p.m.**

**November 19** – Ted Barris at the **Barrie Legion, at 7:30 p.m.**

## President's Ponderings

As your new president for 2013-2014, I would like to welcome everyone back for another year with the Simcoe County Historical Association. I trust the summer has been relaxing and rewarding for all of you. My own travels took me to British Columbia for my daughter's wedding, but historically speaking I was able to travel through the varied interior of Washington and down the Columbia River. It is an area of dramatic landscapes with the hillsides covered in lush orchards and vineyards, courtesy of the heat and the irrigation waters siphoned from the Columbia. Thirty per cent of the American apple crop comes from Washington and as much wheat is grown as in Manitoba, to say nothing of the extensive timber reserves of the coast. The Tri-Cities area, where the Columbia turns to the west, survives mainly on agriculture, although it owes some of its origins to the nearby Hanford nuclear reservation that produced much of the plutonium for the atomic bombs of World War II and the early Cold War. All that remains today is an unholy mess of contaminated materials that will take until 2053 to deal with as long as Congress provides the necessary billions. On a happier note, the hundreds of windsurfers and parasailers in the Columbia River

gorge, set against the back-drop of snow covered Mount Hood, made for a spectacular scene. And Vancouver continues to be a city of increasing beauty and model planning from bike lanes to condo developments. How can they get it so right while Toronto and Barrie for that matter-get it so wrong?

And now down to business. First of all I would like to thank our past-president, Helen Coutts for her past five years of service as president of the SCHA. She more than kept things moving in an orderly fashion and along with the other executive members kept the organization alive. As has been mentioned before, we can only remain viable if enough people are willing to help out on our executive, if even for a short time. At present we need at least two more people to sit as directors-a not onerous position.

Partly as a result of a lack of volunteers in both the SCHA and the Barrie Historical Association (BHA) we have decided on closer cooperation for several reasons. We will have more joint meetings so that we can improve attendance and share the costs of speakers. This will allow us to draw on speakers who may have to travel some distance and will have added travel costs. A shared speaker list also means

less work in finding engaging and interesting speakers which is a time consuming task.

Our first activity for the year will be a tour of the S.S. Keewatin on Saturday September 14. Berthed in Port McNicoll this retired but restored steamship is well worth the \$15 cost of the guided tour. We can still accommodate more people so phone Gord Hanson (705-721-9401) if you are interested. On Thursday September 26 we will join with the Barrie Historical Association in the Sir Robert Barrie room at Barrie City Hall, 7:30 p.m., to hear Brad Rudachyk speak on "The Streets of Barrie and the War of 1812." For October we will have a presentation by Aaron Kontkanen, the winner of the Andrew Hunter prize and on November 19 both the SCHA and the BHA will join with the Legion to hear well known author Ted Barris on his latest book, *The Great Escape*. His extensive research on this desperate attempt of Canadian and British airmen to escape from a German prisoner of war camp is a story far more compelling than anything dreamt up by Steve McQueen or Hollywood. You will not want to miss this one! So we have a great program lined up for the fall with more to come in the new year. We hope to see you all there.

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## Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

Mark Fisher, President	728-3825	<a href="mailto:mwfisher2@hotmail.com">mwfisher2@hotmail.com</a>
Gord Harris, Treasurer	739-7649	<a href="mailto:gordon.harris67@gmail.com">gordon.harris67@gmail.com</a>
Amber Bagg, Corresponding Secretary	252-7094	<a href="mailto:amberbagg@hotmail.ca">amberbagg@hotmail.ca</a>

## For Membership Information, contact

Earl Elliott, Membership Chair	734-9808	<a href="mailto:earl.elliott@rogers.com">earl.elliott@rogers.com</a>
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You are invited to submit photos and articles regarding your historical happenings in Simcoe County. Photos will be returned.

Mail to SCHA, Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9.

Deadline for the next issue is November 25, 2013

## Innisfil Veterans Their Lives and Memories

After hundreds of interviews, stories and pictures, the Innisfil Historical Society is pleased to announce that their amazing project, *Innisfil Veterans: Their Lives and Memories* is now complete and will be revealed to the public on Monday November 11 from 2-8pm at the Innisfil Town Hall, 2101 Innisfil Beach Rd. including the Book Unveiling and Living Veterans Recognition Ceremony at 2:30p.m.

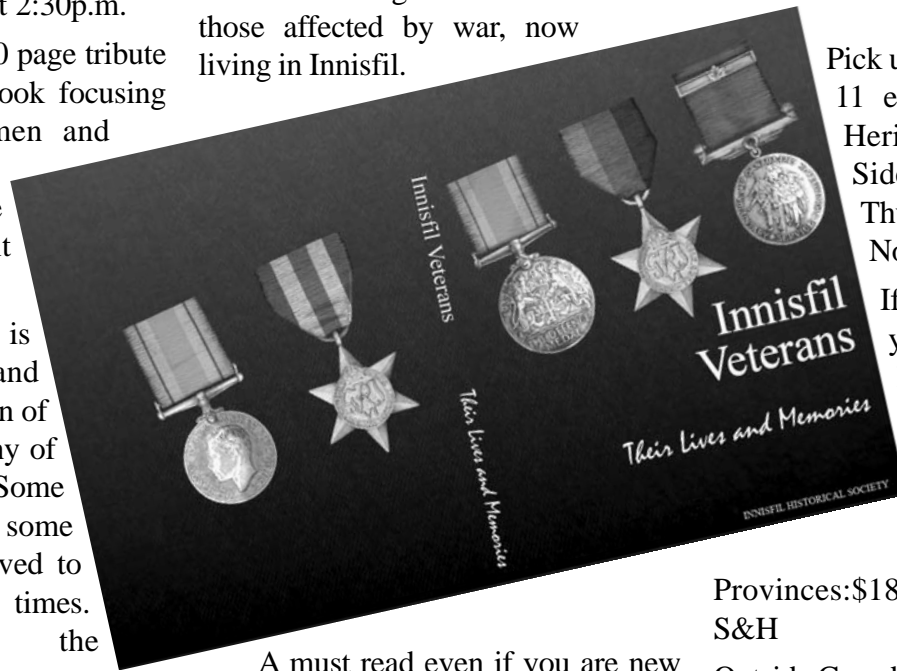
Get your copy of this 500 page tribute to Innisfil Veterans, a book focusing on the lives of the men and women who embarked on the quest for peace from early settlement years to the present day.

This hard cover treasure is intended to honour and thank the men and women of Innisfil who served in any of the world's conflicts. Some were born in Innisfil, some worked here, others moved to Innisfil in more recent times. Whether part of the Expeditionary forces, or as a sapper, stoker, craftsman, nursing sister, dispatch deliverer, infantry man, airframe mechanic, or more recently a peacekeeper, each put life on hold and

at risk to serve their country.

Read how in some cases lives were forever changed by their experiences; whether through physical injury or mental stress...never to return to the carefree days of their youth.

Featuring a complete index, this very readable book includes stories of over 700 WWI and WWII veterans plus a section focusing on the Memories of those affected by war, now living in Innisfil.



A must read even if you are new to Innisfil...the stories of Innisfil people are fascinating! Please spread the word to family, friends and neighbours.

Ordering early helps Innisfil Historical Society better determine how many books to have printed.

Regular price as of Nov. 1 is \$55

Order before Sept. 30 for \$45

Order before Oct. 30 for \$50

Please make cheque payable to Innisfil Historical Society and mail to: Innisfil Historical Society, P.O. Box 7176, Innisfil, ON L9S 1A9

Pick up your book at the Nov. 11 event or at the Knock Heritage Site, 7176 10<sup>th</sup> Sideroad, Innisfil, Thursdays 1-4 p.m. from Nov. 14 to Dec. 12.

If you cannot pick up your copy, shipping and handling costs are as follows:

In Ontario: \$15/book, 2nd book \$7.50

Other Canadian Provinces: \$18/book, 2nd book \$9 S&H

Outside Canada: phone Donna Wice at (705) 436-2578

or email [mdwice@sympatico.ca](mailto:mdwice@sympatico.ca) for individual pricing.

## OMAH Fundraiser

1000 Brushstrokes Raffle Fundraiser  
**SUPPORT OMAH BY HELPING TO CREATE A PAINTING!**

Tickets on sale until Saturday September 28 at 4pm!

**DRAW:** Monday September 30, 3pm  
The Orillia Museum of Art and History (OMAH) is asking the community to help create a painting by buying a brushstroke. *Each brushstroke supports OMAH's recent renovation!*

Tickets are available for purchase at the museum until Saturday, September 28, the day of OMAH's grand re-launch, part of the City of Orillia's Culture Days celebration of the arts.

Local artist Paul Shilling has generously agreed to work with us by creating one of his amazing paintings with 1,000 brushstrokes. Each brushstroke purchased entitles the supporter to a ticket that will be entered into a draw for the painting

on Sep. 30 at 3pm. One lucky supporter will win the painting with an estimated value of \$2,500.

Tickets are \$20 each or 3 for \$50. All proceeds from ticket sales will be used to purchase furniture for our newly renovated and expanded Museum.

Be a part of creating this painting and support OMAH in its mission to "inspire creativity + celebrate history" in our community.

## The War of 1812: reminiscences and recollections

by Jill Hynes

The following notes were compiled by the author for a presentation to the SCHA in October, 2011. This is the fourth installment of the series and publication will continue in upcoming issues of this newsletter.

As a background story to Tecumseh's life, I want to include this piece: In 1786 the Kentucky militia destroyed several Shawnee villages, including Tecumseh's. The tribe moved to the Maumee River, where they coordinated intertribal resistance to the white settlement of the Northwest. It was during these forays that Tecumseh, under the leadership of his oldest brother, Cheeseekau, earned a reputation as a brave and energetic warrior.

Tecumseh did not attend the signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, in which the American Indians ceded most of Ohio to the United States. In 1797 he led his following to the west fork of the White River, below present-day Anderson, Indiana. During the years that followed, the American Indian communities were troubled by alcoholism, disease, faltering economies, and after 1802, the renewal of American land hunger. Tecumseh spent several years traveling among the northwestern tribes, attempting to build a united front against the Americans. He contended that the American Indians held land in common and that no individual or tribe had the right to cede territory without the consent of the others. These ideas had been part of the rhetoric of pan-Indianism since 1783, and intertribal unity had been a mainstay of Shawnee diplomacy as early as 1746. Tecumseh was distinguished not by the originality of his ideas, but by the

energy and vitality he brought to the flagging cause.

Shortly after the outbreak of the War of 1812, Tecumseh joined the British at Fort Malden. He was instrumental in securing a band of warriors from various tribes that enabled the overextended British forces to defeat an invasion from across the Detroit River by an American army under Brigadier General William Hull. After Hull's forces occupied the Canadian town of Sandwich on July 13, Tecumseh's warriors skirmished with his advance troops.

He returned in April and participated in a campaign led by Procter to invade Ohio in an effort to forestall further attacks by the United States. Between April 28 and May 9, Tecumseh and a British-Indian army of 2,200 besieged Fort Meigs on the Maumee River. They failed to capture the fort but on May 5 severely defeated an American relief army.

Tecumseh's protection of prisoners after this battle increased his reputation for humanity. After the failure of a second attempt to take Fort Meigs, the destruction of British naval supremacy on Lake Erie in September restored the initiative to the United States. With communications to the St. Lawrence River threatened, Procter decided to retreat to the head of Lake Ontario.

Successive misadventures and evidence of bad faith on the part of Procter intensified the American Indians' distrust, and by October 5, at the Battle of the Thames, the British-Indian army was reduced to about 1,000 troops and was heavily outnumbered by the American army

under William Henry Harrison. The British quickly gave way in the fight, but the American Indians resisted bravely until Tecumseh was killed. In succeeding years many of his foes sought political capital out of Tecumseh's defeat and death, including Richard Mentor Johnson, whose election to the vice presidency in 1837 was assisted by a claim that he had personally killed the chief in the battle.

*And now, we return to the story of Amelia Ryerse Harris.*

During the summer of 1813, Captain Barclay used to have private information (not very reliable, as the result proved) of what progress the ships were making on the stocks. He used occasionally to leave the blockade and go to Amherstburg and come to Port Ryerse which was still Amelia's home. The Americans took note of this, and made their plans and preparations for his doing so. There was a pretty widow of an officer of some rank in Amherstburg, who was very anxious to go to Toronto. Captain Barclay offered her a passage in his ship and brought her to Ryerse, and then escorted her to Dr. Rolph's, where he and some of his officers remained to dinner the following day. When they came in sight of Eric, they saw all the American fleet riding safely at anchor outside the bar. The Americans had everything in readiness; and as soon as the watched-for opportunity came, and the British fleet left the station, they got their own ships over the bar, their guns in, and all things ready for defence or attack. They far outnumbered the British fleet, and were of heavier tonnage.

Captain Barclay consulted his senior officers whether it would be best to come into Long Point Bay to winter, where they could get supplies across the country from Burlington Bay of all the munitions of war, and leave the ship on the stocks at Amherstburg (the Detroit) to her fate, as neither the guns to arm nor the men to man her had yet been forwarded, and now could not unless by land, which for heavy guns and the munitions of war was the next thing to an impossibility. It was with great difficulty that food and clothing could be forwarded, where there was little more than an Indian path and no bridges. The wisdom of the fleet decided upon going to Amherstburg and trusting to arming the ships with the guns from the fort, and manning them with sailors from the fleet, and with soldiers and volunteers. They landed Captain O'Keefe, of the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment, who was doing marine duty near Otter Creek, to find his way to Ryerse, to tell the militia commandant that the whole frontier on Lake Erie was now open to American invasion. The new ship was launched, imperfectly armed and manned; and without a sufficient supply of ammunition for the fleet, and with little more than a day's rations for his men, Commodore Barclay was necessitated to risk an action.

The result is too well known. Nearly all the officers were killed or severely wounded. Captain Barclay, who had already lost one arm, was disabled in the other arm; but they did not strike their colours to Commodore Perry's superior force until their ammunition in some ships was all exhausted and in others nearly so. No one could have fought more bravely than Captain Barclay. At the same time, those who knew of his leaving the blockade could not help feeling that all the disasters of the upper part of the province lay at his door.

*to be continued*

## The Andrew Hunter Award 2014

The Andrew Hunter Award is offered annually for historical research on Simcoe County, Ontario, written by an undergraduate student for a course in any university or college. In this seventh year of competition, we look forward to receiving many worthy entries for each of the two awards being offered.

Conditions: The entry shall be an essay between 3,000 and 5,000 words in length or a fourth year undergraduate thesis paper (no length restriction) on some aspect of the history of Simcoe County, Ontario, written in English or in French. The author must have been a part-time or full-time undergraduate student in a degree program at an accredited university or college at the time of writing. The essay must have been written to meet the requirement of an undergraduate credit course during the 2013-2014 academic year. The thesis paper must have been submitted for grading in the 2012-2013 academic year. Entries become the property of the



Simcoe County Historical Association and may be published as part of an essay collection.

Submissions: Essay entries shall be postmarked by April 21, 2014 and undergraduate theses shall be postmarked by July 31, 2013. Submissions will not be returned to the contestants. Papers must be typed in Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced, and should not bear the instructor's comments or grade. Three copies must be provided. A cover sheet must list the author's name, address, phone number, year of study, school affiliation and department, and the name of the instructor for whom the paper was written.

Entries should be sent to:

The Corresponding Secretary  
 Simcoe County Historical Association  
 P.O. Box 144  
 Barrie, ON L4M 4S9

Adjudication: Entries will be judged by a distinguished panel appointed by the Simcoe County Historical Association. The winners will be announced in early May 2014 with the presentation of the awards to take place at the Annual General Meeting of the Association.

Award: There will be two awards offered in Canadian funds, one for \$500 for the best undergraduate essay and one for \$500 for the best undergraduate thesis. The Simcoe County Historical Association may edit the winning entries for the purpose of publication.

The Simcoe County Historical Association is under no obligation to grant the awards. For more information, see [www.simcoecountyhistory.ca](http://www.simcoecountyhistory.ca)



*The SCHA acknowledges the financial support of the County of Simcoe and of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Culture.*



# COMING EVENTS

## *of our Member Societies*

**Alliston Historical Society – contact**

**Jackie Baillie**

705-435-5626 or

cknowles@rogers.com

Meet at Museum on the Boyne,

Fletcher Cres., Alliston 2:00 p.m.

Second Wednesday of the month Feb.-

June and October - November

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**Barrie Historical Association –**

**contact Doug Hamilton**

Meet at Barrie City Hall – 7:30 p.m.

www.barriehistorical.com

**Sept. 26** – Brad Rudachyk – Early

historic streetnames and their

connection to the war of 1812

**Oct. 15** and **Nov. 19** – Joint Meetings

with SCHA - see page 1

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**Collingwood District Historical**

**Society – contact Joan Miller**

705-445-1119

Meet at Leisure Time Club, 100

Minnesota Street, Collingwood – 7:00

p.m. www.historicallyspeakingcdhs.ca

**Oct. 7** – Paul Carroll, author and

historian – The Sinking of the

Wexford, the Great Storm of Nov. 1913

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**Essa Historical Society – contact**

**Olive Lee**

705-458-9971

Meet at Thornton Library fourth

Saturday of the month except July,

Aug. & Dec. – 1:30 p.m.

**Sept. 14** – Plaque unveiling for the

Commemoration of the Founding of

Utopia

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**Friends of Historic Fort Willow –**

**contact Gord Hanson** fortwillow.com

**Sept. 14** – Festival at Fort Willow

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**Genealogical Society – contact Linda**

**Mitchell**

Meet at Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-Day Saints 79 Ferris Lane, Barrie

– 2:00 p.m.

www.simcoebugs.com

**Oct. 5** – Jane MacNamara –

Inheritance in Ontario: Estate Files and

Beyond

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**Nov. 2** – Marion Press – Google for

Genealogy

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**Huron Museum Huron**

**Ouendat Village – contact Jamie**

**Hunter**

549 Little Lake Park Road, Midland –

705-526-2844

www.huroniamuseum.com

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**Innisfil Historical Society – contact**

**Donna Wice**

Meet at Knock Community Centre,

10th SR at 9th Line, Innisfil – 2:00

p.m. www.innisfilhistorical.ca

**Sept. 21** – Innisfil Veterans Book

Committee – The inside story of the

many sources of their research

**Oct. 19** – Clint Lovell – Eastview

Collegiate

**Nov. 15** – AGM and banquet at Stroud

Presbyterian Church

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**Museum on the Boyne – contact**

**Katie Huddleston-Naieb**

250 Fletcher Crescent in Riverdale

Park, Alliston – 705-435-0167

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**Orillia History Speaker Series –**

**contact Daniel Byers**

Meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Orillia

Museum of Art & History, 30 Peter

Street South. – 7:30 p.m.

**Oct. 16** – Marcel Rousseau – Postcards

of Orillia

**Nov. 20** – Jim Watt – Orillia's War

Dead

**Orillia Museum of Art and History**

30 Peter Street South, Orillia –

705-326-2159 www.orilliamuseum.org

**Sept. 10 to Oct. 19** – Carmichael

Canadian Landscape Exhibition

**Se-pt. 27-28** – Orillia Culture Days –

various events at the museum including

soapstone carving, and grand re-

opening events throughout both days

**to Sept. 28** – 1000 Brushstrokes

Fundraiser – see page 3

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**Penetanguishene Centennial**

**Museum and Archives – contact**

**Nicole Jackson**

13 Burke St. at Beck Blvd.

Call 705-549-2150

www.pencenmuseum.com

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**Ramara Historical Society – contact**

**Cathy Westcott**

westcott.cathy963@gmail.com

Meet at Udney Community Centre,

2347 Concession Road 10 (east of

Orillia)

7:00 p.m. Third Thursday of the month

(except July and August)

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**Simcoe County Museum – contact**

**Kelley Swift-Jones**

1151 Highway 26, Midhurst –

705-728-3721 museum.simcoe.ca

**Sept. 20-22** – Quilt, Rug and Craft Fair

**Oct. 19** – Last Blast Equipment Event

**Nov. 16-17** – Artisans' Christmas Show

**Dec. 6-7** – Christmas Past and Present

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**Stayner Heritage Society – contact**

**Dorothy Millsap**

www.staynerheritagesociety.com

705-428-2540

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**Tecumseth & West Gwillimbury**

**Historical Society – contact June**

**Chambers**

Meet at Tec We Gwill Hall, Newton

Robinson, 7:30 p.m.

Third Monday of the month January-

May and September-November Call

905-775-7144 or 905-936-4086

**Sept. 16** – Ken Purvis, the

Programmes Co-ordinator and

Interpreter at Montgomery's Inn –

Music of the 1812 Era

**Oct. 21** – Tony Bellissimo, Barb Love

and Marj Mossman – Lake Simcoe

designation as a Heritage Lake

**Nov. 18** – Tribute to the veterans of

World War II

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