

ESQUESING
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 51, Georgetown, Ontario, Canada L7G 4T1
www.hhpl.on.ca/sigs/ehs/home.html

Vol. 26 No. 4

Nov. - Dec. 2001

The Lorne Scots at D-Day

Richard E. Ruggle

On the 6th of June, remember that the Lorne Scots were on the beaches of Normandy. Here's what I have been able to piece together.

Although the 9th Canadian Highland Brigade were in reserve on D-Day, circling and waiting to land as the 7th and 8th Brigades fought their way forward, their Defense Platoon would be the first of the three Lorne Scots platoons to set foot on French soil. About 60% of the men in the platoon were seasick, although they had been issued with seasick tablets and 'bags, vomit'. Sergeant J.A. Casey reported that at 0800 hours on June 6th the platoon sighted Bernières-sur-Mer, where they were to land, and came under fire for the first time. The landing ramp was damaged, so they placed ladders across to the next LCI (Landing Craft Infantry) and used their ramps, without any confusion. The platoon reassembled a mile inland, about 45 minutes after landing.

From the village of Bernières they advanced with C Company of Le Régiment de la Chaudière, southward over the road leading to Beny-sur-Mer. They came under light mortar fire and some sniping. At the assembly area they met Captain Thomson and Corporal Ward and again came under mortar fire. Much to the distress of the owner of a large farm, they dug slit trenches in his front yard. Brigade HQ was now pretty well assembled and took up positions at Beny-sur-Mer. There was more mortar fire, 'but we were well dug-in as we already realized the value of a slit trench.' Sections went sniper hunting many times on orders from Brigadier D.G. Cunningham.

The night of 6 June passed quietly, with the exception of light enemy air activity. Sentries were posted and the platoon set up a Brigade PW cage, which was not long in being occupied. The majority of PWs were Russians and Poles and their morale was very low. On the following day they were once more detailed as patrols searching for snipers and mortar positions, which were known to be in the area. One section came under fire from a tank--a Canadian tank--but there were no casualties. A guard of a Lance Corporal and three men was posted at A Echelon. Brigade moved its HQ to Colomby-sur-Thaon for several days and then to Villons-les-Buissons where on 11 June they were heavily mortared and shelled, for almost 24 hours continuously. The platoon suffered its first casualty, who was evacuated with battle exhaustion. Vehicle casualties were also noted, and when the only platoon vehicle on shore, a 60 cwt, was slightly damaged by shell fire, they managed to get it back with the brigade convoy. The brigade returned to the old HQ at Colomby, where it remained for the rest of the month. Daily routine consisted of guards with everyone standing to at first and last light.

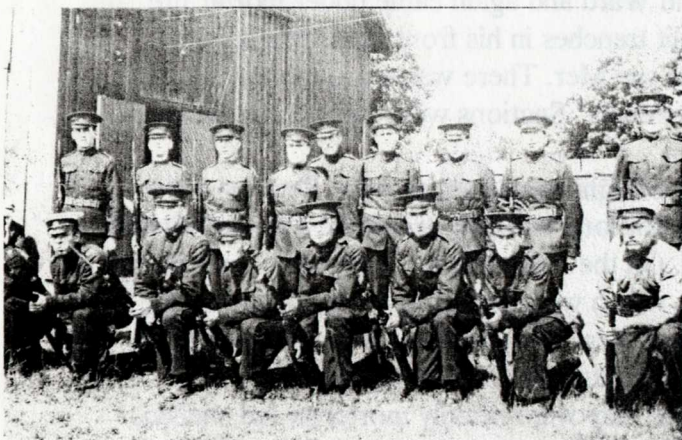
Towards the end of April 1944, the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade Ground Defense Platoon was

reconstituted, when 23 men were Taken on Strength from the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa. Throughout May, they trained at Hiltingbury in Hampshire: they took apart German mines; they practiced assaults, and drivers were given a demonstration of the signs that would be used on the beaches on D-Day. On the 13th of May General Eisenhower inspected a group of which the platoon formed part, and chatted with its commander, Sergeant E.J. Roberts. On the 25th, the camp was sealed off; and three days later the Brigade Major briefed them on the part they would play. On June 4th they were in Southampton, and loaded on LCI(L) 1131 with the 8th King's Regiment, 109 Pioneer Company, an RAF recce group and an RAMC Beach Dressing Station. To pass the time on the landing craft, the Canadians taught the British troops how to shoot craps. They made a choppy crossing of the channel, and were due to land at 0830 hours, but because of tie-ups on the beach, coasted back and forth until finally landing at 1515 hours. They waded ashore in chest-high water to Mike Green Beach, and went on to Bainville. There was some sniper trouble, but no casualties.

By the time that the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade Ground Defence Platoon landed at 0915 hours, enemy opposition was slight, although they too experienced some sniper fire as they moved inland.

The divisional defense platoons had not been disbanded, as the brigade ones had been, but at the end of December 1943 orders were given that the 3rd Canadian Division Defence and Employment Platoon would be taken over by Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa Support Battalion. On the last day of the year, Cameron badges and flashes arrived, and it appeared that the Lorne Scots platoon was at an end. Then in the middle of January there was a change in orders, and the unit was confirmed as a Lorne Scots one, attached to the Camerons. A week later, the platoon War Diary recorded with some satisfaction that the RSM of the Camerons had been informed that the duty roster was out of his hands. The War Diary records little detail of the training before the invasion, but one of its members, Private Cecil Brooks, remembered boarding ship on the 3rd of June, and disembarking on the beach at Bernières-sur-Mer with Division Headquarters, in the early evening on June 6th.

Join Rev. Richard Ruggle at the November meeting of the EHS at Knox Church, Georgetown as he shows pictures of the Lorne Scots and recounts some of their history during their 150th Anniversary year.



At the ready - Acton Drill Shed. Wilfred Coles is at the back, centre.
EHS p11341

My Experiences of the War

From August 1914 to Oct 1915.

Wilfred Coles

Enlistment Bugler Lea sounded the "Fall in", as fine a soldier as ever walked. When the call "Fall in" sounded through the streets of Acton, I was delivering a bag of feed. This call was quite a familiar one to me. I had been used to answering it in the old days & when I heard Corp'l Lea sound it on Aug 4th 1914 it came as an order to me. An order is an order so I fell in with some 17 other men & took the oath to serve his Majesty overseas until such time as the war should end.

The people of Acton & their idea of matters as they stood on Aug 4th

These 18 men were uniformed in the dark green of the 20th Halton Rifles & on the 8th of August we were marched to the station & went to Georgetown. The people of Acton were inclined to

treat the whole affair as a big joke. Many was the jibe thrown at us. The most complimentary remark I heard was "Well it shows that they are willing anyhow."

Georgetown

On arrival at Georgetown we quartered in the drill shed there & for 3 or 4 days were given drill & short route marches. On the 12th of August we left for Valcartier.

Valcartier

When we arrived at Valcartier it was raining & it was quite a while before we found [the] officer who was to guide us to our camp. Valcartier at this time was a big expanse of bush. It continued to rain all that day & of course everybody was thoroughly soaked through. However the men were enthusiastic & its a good job they were for their enthusiasm was needed under the circumstances. The food we got that day was one slice of bread & jam & a drink of coffee....

Embarkation.

On the 26th of September we embarked at Quebec & after laying in the river for 3 days steamed as far as Gaspé Bay which is at the mouth of the St Lawrence away back out of sight of the shipping route. When we arrived here we found our escort.

The Naval Escort.

The escort consisted of 6 battleships the names of which I am unable to tell you. I know that 3 of them were the Princess Royal, Glory & Lion. These men-o-war took up their positions, two on each horizon & 1 before & 1 behind the fleet of transports.

The Fleet.

The fleet consisted of 33 ships & we left Gaspé Bay in 3 long lines, each line 1/2 mile apart & each transport about 500 yards behind each other....

Reception at Plymouth

The reception accorded us was a magnificent one. An officer of the 4th Batt. said that that was all the English people were fit for to do a lot of flag waving. If he had only looked around him a little to see what men his battalion was made up of he might have had a different opinion. You all know the percentage of Canadians among the first contingent. I tell you there was something more than flag waving at this time in England especially in the feeling of the people towards the Canadians or the men from Canada. Many were the thanks showered upon us on every hand. The English people appreciated our coming and showed it in a very practical way....

Plymouth to Salisbury

The journey from Plymouth to Salisbury was done partly on the G.W.R. & partly on Shank's Pony. At every station huge crowds greeted us & showered upon all kinds of delicacies until we arrived at a place called Lavington....

Leaving Salisbury

During the first week in Feb the 5th Batt packed up & left Salisbury plain. The 1st Brigade left during the last few days of Jan. Many were the guesses as to where we were going to get our ship. Those of us who were acquainted with the west of England we[re] able to determine that Avonmouth would be our embarkation point. This proved to be correct & we worked all night getting our stores aboard & lay in Avonmouth Docks for 2 days & then off to France escorted by 2 destroyers, by a roundabout course through the Bay of Biscay to St Nazaire in the South of France.

Arrival in France

Here we lay in the roads outside the harbour for 2 days & then steamed into our wharf. It was amusing to hear the French boys trying to sing Tipperary in English. The French people received us very kindly the reception they tendered being almost as good as that of the English people.

Off to the Front.

A lot more hard work unloading the transport & reloading the stuff on to the train & off we go for the front in box cars.

The Box Car ride

The box cars in France are about 1/2 as big as the Canadian cars. Into these cars we packed ourselves from 36 to 40 in each car. The doors were opened on each side & as many as could do so sat down & hung their feet & legs outside. When night came on of course we had to get inside & such a picnic as we had trying to find space enough to lay down to sleep. Of course it could not be done, & we were glad when the journey which took about 3 days & nights was finished....

Going to the trenches.

When a Batt lines up for trench duty, they are a jolly lot of men. Supplies have to be carried to the trenches & it is quite a novel sight to see soldiers loaded up with all kinds of stuff for their own comfort as well as material to be used in the improvement of the trenches. One man has a bag of charcoal another a bundle of wood, another a small stock of bread, butter tea & sugar. Then there is scantlings & fine chicken wire to keep the walls of the trench from falling in boards which are used as floorings & huge wheels of barb wire which someone will have to take out into "No man's land" sometime during the night. We start off marching in fours then as the traffic becomes very thick we proceed two deep. Then as the trenches are approached we go in single file each man about 5 yds behind the other.

My first trip to the trenches.

We started out in the manner I have already described having previously been entertained to tea by the Essex Reg't who were going to instruct us in trench warfare. When we got to within 200 yards of the trenches the Germans opened fire on us with their machine guns. Before this happened, however, star shells were sent up which lighted up the country for a mile around. This is a signal for everybody to get as close to the ground as possible, & as you may imagine it is a very comical sight. The man with the charcoal throws his bag one way & himself dives in the opposite direction. The men with the heav[y] loads just fall down, & when the thing is over & another start is made everybody sees the humour of the thing & has a quiet laugh over it. When we arrive at the trenches we are

Trench Duty.

taken by the people who we are going to relieve & shown around & told of anything that might help us with our work. Sentries are then posted 1 man out of every 4 being put on Sentry Go, or as it is called in the Trenches "Look out." He does 1 hour on & 3 off. The rest of the men on the 1st night in busy themselves with the repairing of the trench or pumping the water out. When this work is done there is nothing to do but sit down or lie down & make yourself as comfortable as possible.

Our first trench 40 yds from the German Trench

Although we were only 40 yards from the German Trench we did not see a German while we were there & the only casualty we had was 1 man who put his head over the parapet twice in the same place to note the effect of the British shells on the German trenches. after a week of trench duty here we went to Fleurbaix which is a 2 days march from Armentiers. We had our own trenches here which proved to be a quiet spot for a couple for days, & then the enemy's artillery started to shell us. Fleurbaix is a far sized town & when we went into it there was not much damage done except for bullet holes in the doors & window frames which told us that there had been some stiff fighting at some time previous. We stayed here for two weeks during which time we were shelled every day but came off rather lucky losing only 6 killed & wounded. One morning a shell came right over the house where I was billeted & crashed into a house on the other side of the road & struck the house low down & got inside before it exploded. When it did explode it blew the head off a woman who was washing her breakfast dishes. Two minutes after that another shell came & killed 2 artillerymen. Our next move was to Estaires where we had a supposed rest of two weeks. We were not bothered much here except for aeroplanes. Here we found a hot bath waiting for us & a change of clothing....

ROYAL VISIT TO GEORGETOWN

To Celebrate the 135th anniversary of the Lorne Scots Regiment, HRH The Duke of Kent, Colonel-in-chief of the Lorne Scots was invited to attend festivities last month. Mayor Gastle of Halton Hills worked with Matthew Rowe of the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee and member of the Monarchist league of Canada, to arrange a side trip for HRH to Georgetown. On Sunday October, he arrived at the Cenotaph at Remembrance park to lay a wreath and to meet local veterans. Although the rain was unrelenting, a sizable crowd attended and thoroughly enjoyed the thirty minute ceremony. Edward, Duke of Kent, cousin of HM The Queen, thanked everyone for inviting him and was especially pleased when

students from Park School presented him with a birthday card. Inspired by the success, Mayor Gastle has extended an invitation to HM The Queen to visit Georgetown during her Golden Jubilee tour of Canada next year.



Mayor Kathy Gastle presents Matthew Rowe to HRH Edward, Duke of Kent at Remembrance park, Georgetown.

Historically, the visit if a Royal Duke is the highest ranking member of society to visit Halton Hills. The Governor-General visited Georgetown about 1935, I believe. Lt.-Governor Ray Lawson attended cenotaph dedication ceremonies in Acton in 1949. Lt.-Governor Hilary Weston attended a youth reception last year at the Halton Hills Civic Centre. Any more regal or vice-regal visits? Do let us know.

ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Wed. 14 Nov, 2001 **Lorne Scots** - Our salute to Remembrance Day this year will be a visual presentation on the Lorne Scots by Rev. Rick Ruggle, former military Chaplin. Rick will share some of his picture collection and stories with us.

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.

December

There will not be a meeting in December.

Wed. 9 Jan, 2002

The Age of Post Cards - Join the Society as we recall the popularity of post cards early in the 20th Century. The evening will feature a show of many of the post cards in the EHS collection.

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.

Wed. 13 Feb, 2002

Acton: The History of Leathertown - An exclusive preview of the latest publication of the EHS - our book on the history of Acton. Author Mark Rowe will highlight the features of the first book to explore the history of Acton from 1819 to 2000.

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT NO CHARGE!

Please bring your own cup for refreshments to help protect our environment.

EHS EXECUTIVE

Stephen Blake 877-8251 President
 Karen Hunter 838-2109
 Dawn Livingstone 877-6506
 Doug Cole 877-3657
 Sherry Westfahl 873-7145
 J. Mark Rowe 877-9510
 Carol Wood 873-0792
 Don't forget to add 905 when dialling the above listed numbers.

ARCHIVAL NEWS

A few more donations were received by the Society over the last two months. One donation from the Town Archives included documents relating to Wigglesworth School. Two interesting posters encouraging ratepayers to vote in favour of a second elementary school in Georgetown are reproduced at right.

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

The Esquering Historical Society has an official web site on the World Wide Web. You can visit us at <www.hhpl.on.ca/signs/ehs/home.html>

Send your e-mail to rowem@aztecnet.com or dlvngstn@stn.net

EHS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter was prepared by John Mark Rowe with assistance from Karen Hunter, Sherry Westfahl and Dawn Livingstone.

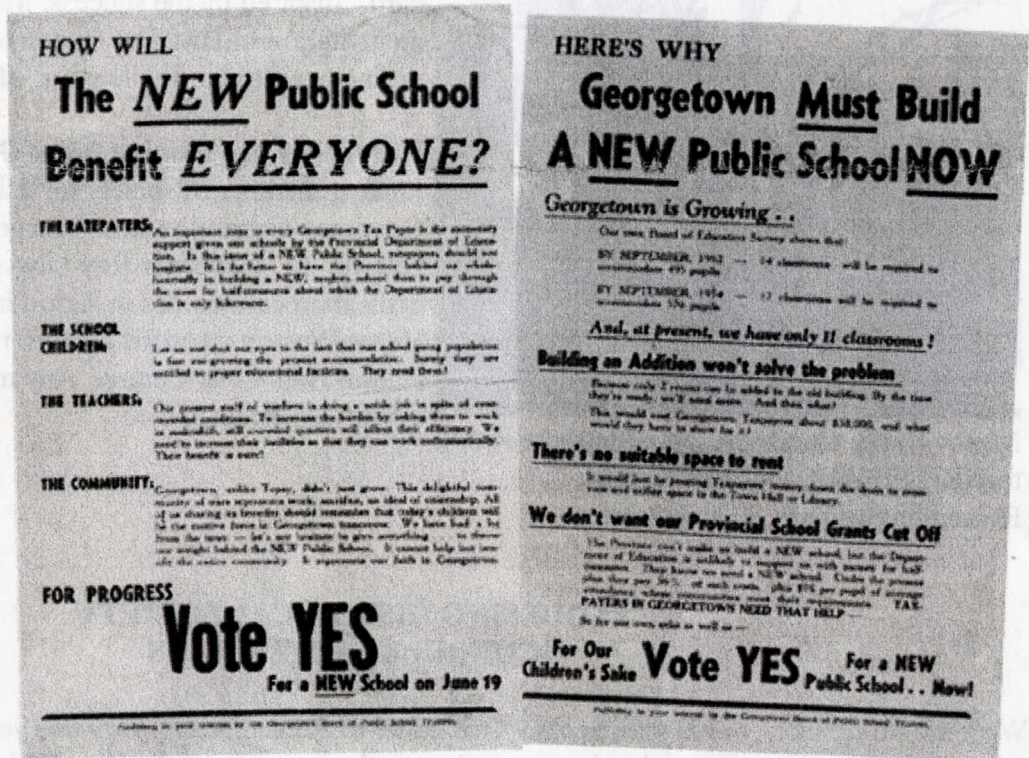
MEMBERSHIP

Membership fees for 2000 are valid until February, 2001. The individual rate is \$10. The family or institution rate is \$12. Cheques payable to the Society can be mailed to our post box. Our current 2001 membership stands at 84. Marj Allen, membership secretary, will gladly accept your fees at the next meeting.

RESEARCH REQUESTS

We are a small group of volunteers, and we do have difficulty getting the time and people to do much research. We charge \$5.00 for the initial fee, and \$1.00 per photocopied page. The request can be made by e-mail or regular mail, but we cannot guarantee a delivery time.

PHOTOGRAPH REPRINTS



The EHS has offered reprints of its vast photographic collection for many years. The executive have decided to set new rates. Besides the cost of printing a photo, an Archives user fee of \$5 will apply for the first photo and a \$2 fee for each subsequent photo, ordered at the same time.

LOCAL TOKENS ARE SCARCE!

Scott Douglas treated us to the history of coin use, especially merchant tokens which became the rage early in the twentieth century. Scott noted that tokens from Halton County are quite rare when compared to other Ontario counties. The October meeting of the Society proved very interesting and shed light on the activities of our ancestors.

FAIRVIEW CEMETERY TOUR

About 25 people enjoyed a very informative talk about the lives of several residents of Fairview Cemetery, Acton. Sherry Westfahl led a walking tour in September until dusk threatened to trap us in the midst of headstones.



Karen Hunter listens carefully to Sherry's interesting story at Fairview Cemetery, Acton on September 12, 2001.

BRAMPTON HAPPENINGS

Brampton Historical Society - **How to Start a Family Tree** by Dorothy Kew, Chair of the Halton/Peel Genealogical Society. This meeting includes elections for the new executive. November 15, 2001 at Heart Lake Presbyterian Church, 25 Ruth Street, Brampton.

Halton-Peel Branch of Ontario Genealogical Society - **Records of the Dead** with speaker J. Brian Gilchrist on Sunday 25 November at 2 p.m. at Chinguacousy Branch of the Brampton Public Library.

Historic Bovaird House - **Christmas Open House** on December 1st and 2nd from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the SE corner of Kennedy Road and Bovaird Drive, Brampton. 905.874.2804

NEW EXECUTIVE MEMBERS NEEDED!

The Esquesing Historical Society needs you to help out! We can use a few new members to help out with the executive of the Society. Please consider running for office at our Annual General Meeting in February.

NEW ACTON PLAQUE INSTALLED

The new plaque at the Laura Deitrich Gardens outside the Acton branch of the Halton Hills Libraries has been installed. On November 2nd, 2001 the new bi-lingual plaque was installed by the Halton Hills Works department. The revised wording was suggested by the Esquesing Historical Society to the Heritage Foundation. Drive by and take a look.

The old, uni-lingual plaque has been offered to Heritage Acton to mount outside the Acton Town Hall. It currently awaits pick up and installation.

TRILLIUM GRANT RECEIVED

In July, the EHS received a grant of \$22,000 to pay for the writing, advertising and publishing of a history of Acton. A popular history has been in great demand for years. This grant has ensured that the book will finally be published. The hard cover book will be about 96 pages long and will cover the history of Acton from 1818 up to the year 2000. Free copies will be provided for the Halton Hills libraries, Acton schools and nursing homes. The author, John Mark Rowe, raised and educated in Acton, now resides in Glen Williams. A publication date of February, 2002 is anticipated.

HISTORY IN A NUTSHELL

Explore the highways and by-ways of Esquesing township by reading our series of short informative pamphlets about settlements in our township. STEWARTTOWN is the latest pamphlet to join our collection. Read a synopsis of the history of Georgetown, Acton, Limehouse, BALLINAFAD, Glen Lawson, Glen Williams, Norval, Speyside, Ashgrove, Each pamphlet available for only 25 cents! Complete your collection at the next meeting!



Inscriptions From the Past



In a cemetery in Hartscombe, England:
On the 22nd of June
Jonathan Fiddle
Went out of tune.

In Memory of an accident in a Uniontown, Pennsylvania, cemetery
Here lies the body of Jonathan Blake
Stepped on the gas
Instead of the brake.

Playing with names, in a Ruidoso, New Mexico, cemetery
Here lies Johnny Yeast
Pardon me for not rising.

In a London, England, Cemetery
Dec. 8, 1767, Ann Mann
Here lies Ann Mann
Who lived an old maid
But died an old Mann



Merry Christmas
from
The Esquesing Historical Society
Executive 2001

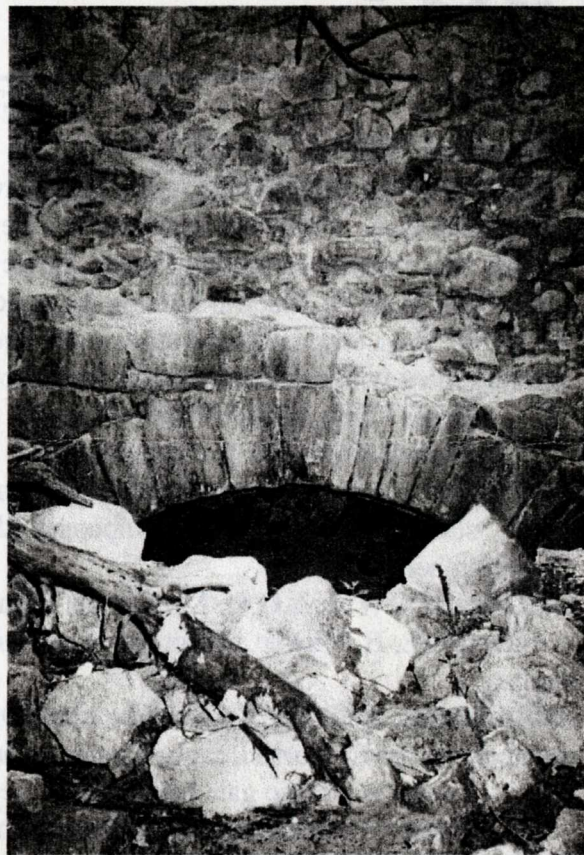


LIMEHOUSE KILN SOCIETY MASTER PLAN REPORT COMPLETED

The draft report for the Limehouse Kiln Society was completed in October, 2001 by Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited. The 43 page report summarized the summer long study to develop a plan process for historic kiln structures and associated historical resources within the village of Limehouse, the Limehouse Conservation Area, and at Dolly Varden.

Their recommendations include:

- Preserving and interpreting a significant and overlooked aspect of Ontario's and Canada's settlement and industrial history for the benefit of current and future residents and visitors to Limehouse and the Municipality of Halton Hills.
- Generating potential enterprise and employment opportunities through increased tourism.
- Providing an additional regional tourism attraction, particularly for hikers on the Bruce Trail...
- Documenting and stabilizing the set kilns, draw kiln and powder magazine at Limehouse with a future plan of dismantling and reconstructing them.
- Stabilizing and capping the masonry walls of the



One of the set kilns at Limehouse. P11835



Powder magazine ruins, Limehouse EHS
p11826

saw mill
ruins.

- Stabilizing and reconstructing the railway loading dock with a limited archeological dig on site.
- Documenting and constructing a temporary shelter over the kilns at Dolly Varden
- Seeking funding from all levels of government - including Parks Canada.

✂ _____ ✂

Yes! I am interested in local history and support the work of the Esquesing Historical Society in collecting and preserving our past. Please renew my membership in the Esquesing Historical Society.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Please find attached \$10 membership fee for the year 2002.

Please bring this form to the next meeting or post it to EHS, P.O. Box 51, Georgetown, ON L7G 4T1

ACTON FREE PRESS

DECEMBER 1899

7 December 1899

CREWSON'S CORNERS: James Ramshaw has been building a new paint shop in connection with his blacksmith shop. Three rail cars wrecked here on Thursday morning on GTR. A load of furniture from Eatons was reduced to kindling wood, however the sheep escaped without a scratch.

GEORGETOWN: Electric lighting for residences is growing more popular.

ACTON: Crescents Lacrosse team invite everyone to Town Hall Friday night for an "At Home". The entertainment will include the latest concertograph.

James Clark, miller of Acton has left to lease well-known Haynes Mill in Cheltenham. He was on municipal Council for two years.

The facade of the new leather warehouse being erected by Messrs Beardmore & Co. at the GTR station, presents quite an imposing edifice.

14 December, 1899

GEORGETOWN: A.G.H. Luxton has been honoured as President of Western Hockey League. Local president is E. B. Nicklin. Election of reeveship will probably be between Reeve Kennedy and Frank J. Barber.

ACTON: Mr. A. T. Brown, president and Dr. Forster, convenor of the Literary Committee, entertained members of the Epworth League Reading Circle in Matthews Hall last evening.

Tuesdays terrific gale blew down one of the electric lamps on Mill Street.

A meteor of exceptional brilliance crossed the heavens last Wednesday evening.

21 December 1899

CREWSON'S CORNERS: Mr. Wm Bryers of Acton preached in Methodist Church last Sabbath. Mr. Wansborough honoured for service as organist and choir leader for Methodist Church.

BALLINAFAD: Policeman Shortill of London is spending a couple of weeks at home. Come and see our large store since it is finished. Mr. Bett is a hustler. Mr. Graham, teacher will leave this week, to be replaced by Miss McKinnon of Hillsburg.

LIMEHOUSE: We take pleasure in complimenting Mr. McDermid on the way he decorated his store window for Christmas.

ACTON: The Commercial Hotel was thrown into confusion late Sunday evening when Miss Mabel Thompson, a maid, swallowed a large pin. Drs. Macdonald and Forster were called, but could not remove it. She was taken to Guelph General Hospital on a freight train, but on the operating table was seized by a violent coughing spell and brought it up.

A long series of Christmas entertainments will be inaugurated in the town hall this evening by St. Alban's Sunday School.

A smash up at Rockwood delayed the Tuesday evening trains two or three hours. Postmaster-General Mulock was amongst passengers delayed at Acton. He was entertained to supper by landlord Clark at the Campbell House.

28 December 1899

CREWSON'S CORNERS: Many went to ball at Eden Mills on Christmas night.

BALLINAFAD: Hunters and dogs are out but report game rather scarce.

GEORGETOWN: Ministerial Association meeting held at home of Mr. Crawford on 18th.

GLEN WILLIAMS: A shooting match was held here Christmas afternoon.

STEWARTTOWN: Reeve Stewart entertained council to dinner at Hill's hotel on 15th.