

# Bread, spirits and a feast for the eyes at this year's Doors Open

By Kristen Shane

This weekend, strangers will step inside John Thornburn's octagonal house in the former Bruce Township, explore a 140-year-old lime kiln in Inverhuron, or they might even broadcast their voices over the airwaves at The Coast FM radio station in downtown Kincardine.

These are sites whose owners wouldn't normally open their doors for strangers to poke around. But once a year, they welcome them as part of Doors Open Kincardine.

This is the fifth time owners of historical, culturally or architecturally significant buildings in the municipality are participating in the event, funded by about \$10,000 of municipal money. After last year's hiatus because of the Kincardine Old Boys and Girls Reunion, Doors Open is back by popular demand.

"It seems like (the municipality and the tourism office) got a lot of phone calls when it wasn't on. They missed it," says Jane Ribby, who heads the volunteer organizing committee with her husband Paul.

For merchants and restaurant-owners in Kincardine, says Paul, the event's return the weekend after Thanksgiving "brings back summer for a week in October," when the municipality would otherwise be quiet.

Hundreds of communities across Ontario, Canada and the world run free, self-guided Doors Open building tours every year. But Kincardine is the only town to do it in Bruce County this time around.

Tourists from as far away as Germany and the United Kingdom have visited buildings here in the past, says Jane. Still, about half of the 6,000 site visits each year are from locals.

"I think it's important because it broadens their understanding. It broadens their appreciation of where they live or where they're visiting," she says.

And there's so much to discover. Ribby herself, an architectural historian and member of Heritage Kincardine, recently stumbled upon Thornburn's octagonal house and three others built by his great grandfather, Alexander, in the early 1900s.

"I was just driving around. I nearly fell out of the car when I saw these houses," says Jane. "They're just so unusual... Most people would just drive by and not even notice them. But (for me) to see two of them in a row, I said, 'Wow. I've got to know more

about this.'"  
The Thornburn house is one of seven new buildings on display this year, all of which are located outside the town of Kincardine.

Uli and Martha Hack's organic farm and 128-year-old farmhouse are also new this year. Uli's parents moved there 27 years ago from Germany. The house was originally a manse for the Chalmers Community Congregational Church across the road, which is also participating in Doors Open.

"The fact that it is a manse, I feel that it's kind of a blessed house or it has a special healthy spirit in it," says Uli.

He and his brother farm about 900 acres of organic rye, spelt, flax, millet and other grains. They also own 70 beef cattle, a garden and small apple orchard beside the house.

On a cold, blustery day last week, Uli and Martha's sister-in-law is working inside the warm bakery that the Hack family added onto the back of their house when they moved in. She shows off the fine powdered spelt and rye flour that she has ground to bake bread the next day. She usually makes about 100 loaves every two weeks in an oil-fired industrial-sized oven the family brought over from Germany. The Hack families keep some and sell the rest.

This weekend, Uli says he plans to show guests around the house's main floor, including the bakery, and take those who have reserved seats on a wagon ride through the fields to his two-storey barn that he heard was one of the biggest in Bruce County when it was built in the 1950s.

A short drive away in Bervie, visitors can peer at Lynn and Russ Stevenson's collections of spoons, plates and other china, or the display of glass babyles and metal keys they have found in their backyard. If they're lucky, guests might even feel the presence of one of the handful of ghosts living in the farmhouse, which, like the Hack's house, used to be a home for church ministers. The Stevenson house was the rectory of Bervie's Anglican Church for 100 years.

"I've had a lot of people tell me they were married here or they had babies christened in this house," says Lynn.

She and Russ took ownership eight years ago.

"I was drawn to it and it just felt right," she says.

Shortly after they moved in, Lynn noticed a photo of Russ's grandfather



Lynn Stevenson shows off her haunted house on Highway 9, heading into Bervie.

on the kitchen windowsill – an odd place for a photo, she thought. But she didn't mind that Russ had put it there.

When she asked him about it, he said he hadn't.

"Neither of us unpacked it," she recalls. "We've left it there. We figure that's where he (Russ's grandfather) wants to be."

That was only the beginning of the haunted happenings. The couple's three dogs bark when no one's there. Lynn hears footsteps sometimes, or wakes up in the middle of the night to the sound of old-time music playing on a radio.

Lynn, a psychic, knows of five right: Uli and Martha Hack's farmhouse. The house used to serve as the manse for Chalmers Church across the road.

spirits who regularly roam the place. Some, she thinks, are former inhabitants of the house, and others are her and Russ's dead relatives.

"They're here; they're peaceful," says Stevenson. "We're used to it now."

To find out how to find Stevenson's house, or the 24 other buildings on display during Doors Open, you can pick up a guide book at the Independent office, the tourism office, Condo Fine Books or the Victoria Park Gallery.



Photos by Kristen Shane



Above: Chalmers Community Congregational Church, outside of Armow. One of the contractors who built the church, George Conley, also designed and built the beach pavilion in Kincardine. The pavilion is also on display for Doors Open.



Right: Martha, left, and Uli Hack stand before trays of loaf pans and the oven they use to bake bread at their organic farm and bakery near Armow.