

England links with Stoney Creek via satellite

Special to The News

Stoney Creek was linked with London England in June 1913 by a new technological discovery of the age - the telegraph.

It was an important event as her majesty Queen Mary pressed a telegraph key in London, England connecting electrically with a receiver in Stoney Creek to officially open the Stoney Creek Battlefield Monument, commemorating the battle of Stoney Creek, June 6, 1813.

Seventy seven years later, we

have again made an important link with England via a new technological technique — telecommunications.

The Cornwall Women's Institute was offered a link with its roots in Stoney Creek as a birthday present from British Telecommunications. The occasion would mark the 75th anniversary of the Women's Institutes in Britain. Every branch was expected to do something worthwhile as a memento of 1990. The Cornish ladies decided to use this offer of a gift as their big event for the

year.

Invitations were sent out to the Cornish Institutes to witness this link-up with Canada. So many requests for tickets poured in that many of the seats had to be decided by lottery, as the Goonhilly station auditorium only accommodated 150 people. Goonhilly Earth Station is situated on Goonhilly Downs in the extreme southeast corner of Cornwall.

Letters were written back and forth for several months preparing for the event. Between British Telecom on one side of

the Atlantic, and Bell Canada on this continent.

Speakers and receivers were put in place, and we were ready to link two-sister Institutes across a vast ocean. The program used by Bell Canada was called Conference 2000.

Messages from Cornwall would be beamed to a satellite in space and microwaved to an earth station near Ottawa where they would be relayed by telephone to the Erland Lee Home on Ridge Road. In the same way, our responses would be sent back to Cornwall and

picked up by the Goonhilly Earth Station.

Finally the day arrived, June 27, 1990. Twenty visitors and members of the Stoney Creek Women's Institute sat around the long pioneer table in the kitchen of the Lee Home, staring at the two boxes on the table, one for receiving and one for sending messages.

At 2:30 p.m. our time, a call came forth and we all snapped to attention. "Hello, Stoney Creek! Calling from Goonhilly Earth Station in Cornwall."

June Coombs, curator of the museum, responded to the call, introducing herself and giving a little information about the museum. She then introduced Sandra Kell, chairman of the Lee board, who was the moderator for the Canadian end.

Sandra gave a short description of the area, historical and geographical. Jane Croft, a board director for Wentworth North on FWIO, read a letter from Peggy Knapp, president of FWIO, sending greetings to our Cornish counterparts.

Jean Varns, national chairman from England, and Mary Thomas from Wales were part of the team from overseas. June Williams spoke for the Charter Women's Institute in Stoney Creek, describing our meetings, goals and interests.

It was an exciting day, and the reception was very good from both sides of the Atlantic. We learned quite a bit in the endeavour, and thank our Cornwall W.I. for the opportunity of being part of their 75th celebrations.

As soon as the telephone messages were complete, a large reception was held at Goonhilly Downs for the ladies in Cornwall, and a small reception with refreshment was held for our visitors at the Lee Home. Another link in the international scene had been forged.

