

Cut rope and ribbon to open fire hall addition

The extension to the Acton fire hall was well and truly opened on the weekend, with two separate official ceremonies.

At a dinner in the new upstairs hall Saturday night, mayor Tom Hill cut the ceremonial ribbon, mounted between two specially painted fire nozzles. The dinner was for firefighters, councillors and special guests.

On Sunday afternoon, Herb Ritchie used an axe to chop through a rope to again declare the new quarters

open. Mr. Ritchie was a firefighter years ago. After the ceremony, members of the public toured the new facilities.

Also assisting in the Sunday opening was Mike Shannon, son and grandson of firefighters Dave Shannon and Alf Duby. Russell Miller, chairman of the building committee, Chief Mick Holmes and councillor Pat McKenzie watched proudly. Members of the public toured the new facilities.

The ceremonies conclude the project which extended the original firehall and added a second storey. The cost of the project was \$208,611, including the wrecking of the stage area of the town hall. The sum was only \$210 over cost, which is probably a record, according to committee chairman Russell Miller. "Where we could cut money, we did it," he said. "I was very proud of that."

Since acquiring the increased space, the firefighters have added \$10,000 worth of

furnishings. This includes lounge furniture, all the kitchen equipment, tables, chairs, dishes, drapes, television set and office equipment. As well as money from draws and fund raising, each firefighter contributed \$75 from his honorarium. Much of the painting and decorating was done by volunteers, explained Jim Thornhill, chairman of the Acton Volunteer Fire Fighters Association.

Downstairs the brigade houses its equipment, trucks and radio room. In the new

3,000 square foot addition upstairs there is a lounge, kitchen, meeting and training room with washrooms.

On Saturday evening Bern Van Fleet acted as chairman for the official dinner. Phil McCristall said Grace and Harold Townsley proposed the toast to the Queen. Father Leo Speagle gave the invocation.

Those who spoke words of congratulations included Mayor Tom Hill, M.P.P. Julian Reed, Ontario Fire Marshal's representative Sid Oxenham, Jim Thornhill, chairman of the Acton

Volunteer Fire Fighters Association, Russell Miller, chairman of the building committee, councillor Les Duby, fire chief Mick Holmes and former chief Jack Newton.

On behalf of the Optimists club, Dave Henderson presented the brigade with a set of audio-visual slides prepared by Pinwheel Production of Acton. The audience enjoyed seeing some of the slides later.

Among the special guests introduced were former fire chief Jack Newton from

Etobicoke; Oakville fire chief Wes Miller; district chief of volunteers Bill Cunningham of Georgetown and Milton Fire Chief Jim Coulson, former Milton chief Babe Clement, Sid Oxenham of the fire marshal's office, engineer Allan Zeegen, M.P.P. Julian Reed, Mayor Tom Hill, councillors Les Duby, Pat McKenzie, Peter Marks, Peter Pomeroy, Russell Miller, Marilyn Serjeantson, Pat Patterson, Mike Armstrong, George Malby, Brian Evans of the fair board, Ed Wood of the Business

Association, Staff Sergeant Barrett, with former firefighters and friends, most with spouses as well.

When he spoke, Jack Newton mentioned what pleasure he had derived from having the Acton firefighters the Citizens of the Year for this year. Their fire service now covers 80 square miles, he said.

Chief Holmes expressed the pride of the firefighters and thanks to all concerned.

Duty firefighters seated at special tables near the door whipped out of the room at the

sound of an alarm but soon returned. No fire marred the evening's events... the alarm was due to a wrong phone number!

Firefighters and their families prepared the delicious meal. With Teresa Hanley supervising, the meal was served by firefighters' daughters Teresa Dunn, Beverly Duval, Janice and Debi Thornhill, Kris Spielvogel, Helen Synnott, Connie and Carrie McCristall, the fire chief's granddaughter Sherry Brace, plus a few of their friends.

100 years of firefighting

A century of Acton Fire Brigade and the firefighters was humorously reviewed by Johnny Goy Saturday. Here are a few of the highlights.

In 1879 there was only a bucket brigade in the village. When 500 cords of wood caught fire on the south side of Mill St., a special train came down from Guelph with a pumper to help control the fire.

In 1883 the bylaw was passed to build the town hall, council chamber, lock-up and engine room, not to exceed \$5,000 with 20 year debentures at \$2 per \$1,000 assessment to repay.

The long fire shed there remained standing and used until 1957 and it housed the steam pumper, ladder wagon and hose reels. The town hall outhouse, a three holer, withstood Halloween because the tools and equipment were all stored in it.

At the turn of the century three special wells supplied water for firefighting. One was at the town hall.

The second was at the Mainprize home at the corner of Frederick and Mill. These two wells were gravity fed by wooden troughs from Henderson's pond behind the present Dills Publishing plant. Later as the town grew a dry well was built on Jessie McGregor's property at Arthur and Mill Sts. This well was filled by the firemen as practice, from the Frederick St. well.

The steamer pump was acquired before the turn of the century and was usually moved to one of these three wells by manpower over rough and snow-filled roads. The firebox of the pumper was always kindled up and an oily rag ready to light. Three minutes was the time these men needed from the time the steamer was lit until the pumper was producing pressure. The firemen of the day were indeed dedicated volunteers!

The steamer served the village of Acton faithfully for many years and was useful even in its demise, going to a World War II brass drive, to provide scarce metals.

In 1919 council and the firefighters considered a waterworks system.

In 1921 the waterworks system was installed, a stand pipe and underground reservoir with two large fire pumps that had to be started when the fire bell rang. Charles Wilson started these pumps up for years.

Some merchants of the day led strong opposition to this project. Halloween night pumps from the home wells were left at their stores with a sign suggesting they put fires out with these dry pumps!

The fire alarm system of the day was a large bell on the town hall tower and it was rung by a large rope just inside the front hall. Mrs. Murray McDonald often rang the bell as the firefighters arrived and was considered, for her tiny size, an expert at the job. Her husband was fire chief at the time.

In 1922 the first fire truck was a used 1917 Ford which was equipped with ladders and two reels of hose—and had to be pushed up the hills. It ended up with a small box on it as Mr. Harrop's town truck, well into the 1930s. Mr. Harrop was the entire town staff in those days.

a new two-bay hall with training quarters in the rear was built and opened in 1958, as Acton's first fire hall. Also in 1957 a new Halton Mutual Aid program was put into effect and Acton firefighters were responsible for parts of Erin, Esqueving and Nassagaweya townships. A new rural pumper was housed in Acton bringing our pumper strength up to two units.

Chief Mick Holmes took over from Jack Newton in 1961 and has been Acton chief until the formation of the new town of Halton Hills when he became responsible for the Acton and Georgetown areas with two assistant chiefs on his staff.

The new fire hall being opened tonight is once again the result of concerned politicians and a dedicated group of firefighters. It seems this combination though trial and error, determination and patience over the past 100 years has kept Acton well protected from fire disaster, and to this group we all owe our gratitude.

The decade of the 50s was a period which saw several chiefs, Fred Dawkins, Bill Chisholm, Sam Tennant and Jack Newton.

Chief Newton was very active and through his efforts



SHELLEY and Cynthia Donston got a first hand view of the fire truck at the Acton fire hall open house Sunday.

About the fire hall

The renovations to the Acton Fire Hall include a second storey addition of approximately 3,000 sq. ft. This area includes a large meeting and training room, ladies' and men's washrooms, kitchen, lounge and small office. The second floor addition is fully air-conditioned, nicely decorated and is a pleasant area for the firefighters to meet and train.

The former downstairs area has been increased by the removal of partitions and includes two additional equipment bays. The original kitchen has been turned into a radio dispatch and receiving area. Parking area for the firefighters has been allotted in the area of the firehall and is used in times of emergency, practices and meetings.

The interior of the equipment area has had extra alterations and painting all completed by the volunteers.

All furnishings in the kitchen and lounge, chairs, tables and drapes in the meeting room were supplied through personal and fund-raising projects of the Acton Firefighters Association.

Who's who

ACTON FIRE DEPARTMENT (Halton Hills, Area 1):

Fire Chief C. H. Holmes; Deputy Chief R. Hyde; (Area 1) District Chief B. Van Fleet; (Area 1) District Ass't. Chief A. Duby.

Captains: Herb Dodds, Wilf Duval, Brent Marshall; Lieutenants: Phil McCristall, Harry Otterbein.

Dispatcher: W. "Red" Asseltine; Fire Prevention Officer: L. Brassard. Firefighters: Don Van Fleet, Lloyd McIntyre, Grant Withers, Leo Synnott, Allan

Thompson, Jim Thornhill, John Dunn, Larry Frizzell, Bill Spielvogel, Ken Hodgson, John Van den Brink, Norm Price, John Krapek, Doug Mason, Wayne Kelley, Bert Fowler, Sam Tennant, Harold Townsley, Ed McGiloway, Dorson Frizzell, R. Price, Dave Shannon, John McNabb, Ted Curtis, Randy Ridley, Bruce Fowler, Chris Tennant, George Cook.

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The October meeting of the U.C.W. of Trinity United Church followed the theme of Thanksgiving in the Devotions in Church of Miss Dorothy Simmons.

Psalm 23 was read, followed by an appropriate prayer by Mrs. Lidkea and Miss Simmons read several beautiful poems. Mrs. Reed read Psalm 100. Hymns 157 and 337 were sung.

Mrs. Ralph Denny substituted as secretary during Mrs. Helen Little's illness. The usual reports were given.

Roll call showed 20 home calls and 21 hospital calls had been made. Cards of appreciation were read from some of the sick for kindnesses received. Mrs. Shoemaker gave a detailed account of Sick and Shut-ins and had cards passed around for all members to sign for some still not well.

Notice of the T.A.G. Bazaar, Sat. Nov. 11 was given.

The plans for the luncheon for the Presbyterial to be held in the church Nov. 22 were dealt with. There are 120 people expected to attend the Presbyterial.

Next meeting will be held Nov. 14 when a good attendance is hoped for with members home from summer cottages and vacations, and sick and ailing members well and able to be out.

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JOHN GOY told tales of the fire brigade of years ago.

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