

GRAPEVINE

GILWELLS ARE COMING

Alex Tilley – developer of the indestructible hat that bears his name – is booked as the guest speaker at this year's Gilwell Reunion at Blue Spring Scout Reserve, west of Acton, in early September.

Since 1952, Gilwellians – Scout leaders with advanced training – have gathered at Blue Springs to have fun, learn new Scouting practices and revel in what one Gilwellian called a “carnival/group hug fest.” They are recognizable by the leather necklace strung with wooden beads they wear, a tradition begun by scouting leader Lord Baden-Powell who was given beads by a Zulu warrior in Africa. He gave the beads to those at a Scoutmaster training session in Gilwell Park, England to signify their advance Scout leadership training.

The Gilwells will turn Blue Springs into a mini-city with a mayor, fire department, communications centre, kitchen, hospital, welcome wagon and a daily newspaper, the *Log “N” Bead*.

SAFE SWIPE

Beginning in September, Acton's elementary schools, along with all those across the province, will adopt a safe welcome system, paid for by the Ministry of Education. The system is designed to increase safety in schools by making sure all visitors use the same entry doors and sign in.

Buzzer access and security cameras will be installed at the main door while other school doors will remain locked at all times. New swipe access devices will be installed at select doors, including doors accessed by students and staff in portables.

MS CYCLISTS COMING

Approximately 175 cyclists and their families and supporters will visit Acton on August 17 for the annual MS Bike event to raise money to fight multiple sclerosis.

Formerly a two-day ride with the start/finish in Prospect Park, the event this year features two one-day rides – a 75-kilometre route, and the so-called century loop – a 160-kilometres or 100-mile ride. Both begin and end in Acton and travel through Halton Hills, Wellington and Waterloo.

To ride, or volunteer for the event, call 416-967-3038.

BLUE BOXES AVAILABLE

Need a new, larger Blue Box? Halton is hosting four Blue Box free give-away events for residents – the closest to Acton is Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Austin Operations Centre on Trafalgar Road in Georgetown.

To date, Halton has distributed 40,000 of the bigger Blue Boxes and increased collection of Blue Box and Green Cart materials by 13 per cent, and decreased the amount of waste going to landfill by six per cent.

SUMMER WONDERFUL

Do you have a favourite summer activity or leisure location in Halton? Take a picture of it, and you could win a \$100 mall gift card, admission to Harvest Halton, or a \$50 Williams Mill Art Gallery gift certificate.

Submissions to Halton's “Summer Wonderful” photo contest will be judged by Halton Tourism staff based on originality and seasonality. For details about the contest, which runs until September 2, call 1-866-442-5866, or visit www.halton.ca/tourism



THAT SOMETHING SPECIAL: Vintage glassware sold well for Guelph's Jacqueline Malonda at Saturday's Acton Trunk Sale. – Ted Tyler photo

Former Olde Hide House employees stage reunion

To this day, when Regional/Acton Councillor Clark Somerville tells people across Canada that he's from Acton, they regularly respond, “Is it worth the drive to Acton?”

That phrase “It's Worth the Drive to Acton” – part of a million dollar marketing campaign begun by the olde Hide House (OHH) almost three decades ago – will be on the lips of many on Saturday at the Legion when former employees stage a reunion, billed as “nostalgic night of reminiscence, fun and good cheer.”

Somerville, who worked three times for the company over the years, beginning at the OHH's Jack Tanner's Table restaurant in 1981, and finishing in the furniture department. Asked about the best part of his OHH jobs, Somerville said it is “the number of friends I made there that I'm still in contact with 30 years later.”

In 1856, George L. Beardmore came to Acton and purchased a small tannery which had been operating in the area since 1844. In 1899 Beardmore & Company built a brick warehouse beside the Acton rail line that was known as the “hide house” because hides were stored there before being taken to the tannery for processing, and finished leather was stored in the building.

The leather business grew to become the major industry in Acton with a combined floor space of nearly a million square feet, becoming the largest tanning operation in the British Empire by the turn of the century.

The warehouse was sold in 1933, and various industries occupied the building for several decades until leather business resumed in 1969 when it was purchased by Acton's Frank Heller and Company. The building became surplus and Heller, and partners Don and Fred Dawkins renovated the warehouse and opened the Olde Hide House in 1980.

The business grew and at one-time included satellite stores

– Flightline and The Wool Combing in downtown Acton, and later stores in Toronto and Vaughn.

With two different owners, the business filed for bankruptcy protection from creditors three times, first in the early 1990s, in 2000, and again in 2008. The building, now owned by a Montreal businessman who was a partner, was for sale two years ago but is no longer on the market.

FLIGHTLINE

MAGAZINE/CATALOGUE PREMIER ISSUE 55

Pioneers of the Sky: Those Daring Young Men (and Women) with their Flying Machines!

How the Air was Won – the Ace-high Heroes of 'Canucks' in WWI

Expedition: Probing the New North with the James Bay Cree

Art, Books & More!

100% AUTHENTIC AVIATION LEATHERS FROM ACTON, ONTARIO – CANADA'S LEATHER TOWN

the olde Hide House

CORRECTION:

Acton BIA co-op student Jennifer MacDonald's surname was wrong in a photo cutline in last week's issue. The New Tanner regrets the error.