

# Idle Pursuits

## Renaissance romance in the old mill ruin

BY DEBORAH QUAILE

Step back 400 years to a time of romance: Shakespeare is in his prime, Sir Francis Drake has circumnavigated the globe and Queen Elizabeth I rules the British Empire. An upsurge of great artistic achievement and freedom, and vast advances in scientific knowledge have provided a leap into the future.

Using the rustic stone mill ruins by the whispering Eramosa River in Rockwood Conservation Area, Animals Homeward Bound has organized an evening of unforgettable enchantment named Essence of English Renaissance.

This is the second event to be put together by Animals Homeward Bound, the charitable organization formed by Dr. Clare Maine of the Rockwood Veterinary Clinic. The first, A Celtic Night of Mystery, was a phenomenal success. By popular request the charity is now celebrating the Renaissance with music, entertainment and fine dining under a luscious summer moon. The six-course meal will tempt the palate as the atmosphere offers all that could be desired for an evening of beauty. A quality silent auction, door prizes and other attractions will make this a night to remember.

The three-year-old charity, Animals Homeward Bound, provides care for both injured and orphaned wildlife, and domestic animals, providing suitable rehabilitation for many orphans and healing those in need of medical assistance. The non-profit charity runs strictly on volunteer labour and donations.

Essence of English Renaissance takes place on Saturday, July 12 at 6 p.m. There are only 200 tickets offered at \$125 a person, so please reserve early. Call 519-856-9002 for further details.

## Well-loved country school now closed

BY DEBORAH QUAILE

At the closing ceremony of Percy W. Merry Public School on June 21, former and current students and teachers mingled, offering hugs, handshakes and heartfelt memories. They scribbled signatures and magic thoughts, a phrase coined by school secretary, Barbie Taylor, into the guest book; they purchased raffle tickets, the proceeds of which will be contributed to the Mountsberg Conservation Area; and they listened to moving tributes by a selection of speakers, including Percy and Amy Merry's children, Lois McDougall and Keith Merry.

Mrs. McDougall gave a fitting tribute to her father's namesake school, mentioning that both she and her brother were present at its opening and now at its closure. Although Percy Merry will close as a public school, it will no doubt have a future and become as beloved in its new purpose.

Forty-five years of rural service is marked with memories. Do you remember, visitors asked each other, the blue gym bloomers or shorts; scampering down the hill away from the school in nuclear attack drills; reaching Grade Six and finally being good enough to sing *Hark, How the Bells* for Mr. Moore in the Christmas concert; going skating on the nearby creek;

or flora and fauna tours through the nearby woods? Such unique slices of life unfortunately disappeared with the last millennium, but were relived by the majority of the 1960s school pupils who attended the community open house.

"We may be small, but our hearts are big," remarked Ms. Taylor. "I love the school, the country, the people and the feeling. I hope that you're feeling it too. I hope you take that with you."

Nearly all the students of Percy W. Merry Public School will be attending Sam Sherratt in Milton this autumn. Since Shirley Chaisson has served as school administrator at both Percy Merry and Sam Sherratt, and will continue on at Sam Sherratt in the fall, the transition for the Percy Merry students should be easier.

Outside the school is a stone cairn that houses an old school bell commemorating the names of the rural schools that were closed and amalgamated into Percy Merry in 1958. In a short time a new plaque, signifying the importance of Percy W. Merry Public School in the heart of the community, will be affixed to the cairn's north side that faces the now empty school.

Deborah (Knox) Quaile was raised on a nearby Drumquin farm and attended Percy W. Merry Public School from 1965 to graduation in 1971.

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# Women 2 Women

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### July's Guest Speakers

- Karen Wilson, Bookkeeper
- Amy Cheng, Amden Consulting: Computer Programming and Web Design

To book your seat, call Kristine at 519-853-0077 Cost of dinner: \$10

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