



# DriftWords

The Newsletter of the Big Rideau Lake Association (BRLA)  
Serving the Rideau Since 1911 Poonamalie to Narrows Lock  
Winter 2012

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Hugh Burrows

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## From the Editor - Sue Van Slooten

Here's Warm Winter Greetings to all friends and fans of the Big Rideau. About the only advantage of climate change is that there could be open water in three months! The rest of climate change, like horrific storms, we can leave.

We have a wonderful issue this time with stories, poetry (what greater place to write poetry than by the lake?), lots of photos.

As usual, your board has been busy at coming up with an exciting array of events and activities for your boating pleasure. Cow Island, after all, is sporting its spiffy self, or as they say in boating circles, all the brightwork is gleaming for a new year. So stay tuned for all announcements here and in future issues.

-Sue

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Jenn and Colin at "Stillwaters" on Jerry Island.  
Photo Courtesy of Conrad Watters.

## President's Pen - Toby Spry

The winter is definitely upon us. This is the time of year when cottagers and boaters hunker down to read cottage and boating magazines and wish for an early spring. The BRLA has been working in the background

on your behalf. We have had many compliments on our involvement with the Walleye (Pickerel) spawning ground project and have recently donated funds to the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority to support the purchase of "Yak Trax" for their winter program. Both these projects were done through the Rideau Lakes Environment Fund.

The board has made arrangements for the Ontario Sailing Association to have two weeks of Sailing School during the first weeks of July. The application for Government support for the Fireworks has been forwarded to Heritage Canada.

On the Marine Safety side of things we are reviewing the state of the Buoys and are looking into requests for additional buoys suggested by members.

I would plead with members to check that their fellow cottagers are members and encourage them to join if they are not. Your membership funds the numerous lake projects and programs.

Have a safe and healthy winter.

The following two entries have been submitted courtesy of Doug Good:

A COLLECTION OF THE POETRY OF  
SAMUAL SOUTHMEADE (SIM) SCOVIL

THERE IS A POTENTIAL THAT MORE OF THE READERS OF THIS INTRODUCTION HAVE HEARD OF OR KNOWN SIM SCOVIL, THAN ADMIRAL SIR CHARLES KINGSMILL, FOR SIM SCOVIL WAS A STOREKEEPER WHO BELIEVED IN CUSTOMER SERVICE AND STAYING IN TOUCH WITH THOSE CUSTOMERS. SCOVILS STORE WAS WHERE HEATHER AND ROB HIENZ NOW LIVE AND THAT LOCATION HAD BEEN A STORE BACK INTO THE 1840'S.

AS PART OF HIS CUSTOMER CONTACT EACH SPRING AND FALL SIM WOULD

WRITE A SMALL VERSE AND SEND TO THOSE WHO PATRONIZED HIS ESTABLISHMENT.

The Portland Historical Society, through myself and others have a number of verses that Sim wrote between 1942 and 1966 when he retired, however, Sim started keeping store in 1924. They would like to try and assemble a complete collection of his verses and would ask readers to look and see in their memorabilia if they happen to have additional poems. Here is a copy of the verse from the fall of 1950.

Portland - on – the – Rideau, Fall, 1950

As the snow continues snowing,  
And the chilly winds are blowing,  
And the sun has ceased to sparkle  
in the sky,  
I just putter round the old stand  
In the sleepy town of Portland,  
And watch the snowflakes idly  
drifting by.

There's not many people come in,  
And not nearly so much fun in  
The old store, that summer's gone  
again;  
But there's solid comfort still in  
The Big I fit so well in,  
And I'm quite content to loaf some  
now and then.

So I'll "sit" and think of August,  
When the business was so robust,  
And July when we were busy as  
could be,  
But September and October  
We're not long in getting over,  
And November finds no one serene  
as me.

Now December is upon us,  
And I couldn't just feel honest  
If I didn't send my greetings once  
again,  
May your Christmas time be happy,  
But remember don't be sappy,  
And forget to come to Portland in the  
spring.

Sim Scovil

## Lucky

It happens to be Thanksgiving weekend as I sit down to write this article, and it is beautiful and warm, the lake is shimmering in the sun, man we are lucky to live in such a beautiful country and have such a marvelous lake to enjoy as the Big Rideau. It was only recently that I came across a couple of facts that re-enforced just how lucky we are to be able to enjoy the beauty of our beloved lake.

The first item that caught my attention was an article in the "Chaffey's Lock and Area Heritage Society" 2011 Newsletter, by Neil Patterson entitled "War of 1812 and After." It is the "after that" that is the really lucky part for those who love the Big Rideau Lake and the Rideau Canal. The article deals with the granting of lands to maintain a British colony following the War of 1812, but it also deals with a decision by a Lord Wellington, "Master of Ordinances," who determined that a new supply route was needed to the Great Lakes to avoid passing under the guns of the United States along the St. Lawrence. Now here is our first stroke of luck. The original route selected was "up the Ottawa River from Montreal to what became Ottawa, than down (Up) the Rideau River to present day Merrickville, down the Irish River to Irish Lake (the Irish River flows into the current Rideau system at Jasper and Irish Lake is just east of Toledo and Highway 29), through Plum Hollow to the Beverly Lakes (Delta) and down the White Fish River (Morton Creek) to Cranberry Lake and then to Kingston on the Cataragui River."

Our second piece of luck was thanks to Samuel Clowes, a civil engineer who began the surveys. "The surveys to establish the canal between the Ottawa River and Kingston were submitted to the British Government by the Macauley Commission. Approval was granted for detailed estimates to be acquired. Samuel Clowes, a civil engineer began the survey under the direction of the British Ordinance Department. Clowes survey would dramatically affect South Crosby and the Chaffey's Lock area." (In reality, all communities along the canal from

Kilmarnock Lock to Jones Falls, yes including our beloved Big Rideau). As we all know, as we complain about the high water in the spring and to low of water in fall, canals need water to function, my feeling is there was not enough tributary lakes to supply the canal route down through Irish lake and the Beverly lakes, therefore the current route with major sources of water supply through the Tay River into Big Rideau, and the Sand Lake /Wolf Lake system into the Upper Rideau was chosen. Just think if hadn't been for these two strokes of luck the beautiful lake and canal system we enjoy may not have been here at all.

But our luck doesn't end there. The third piece of luck comes in the form of a reminder from something Ken Watson told those attending his presentation on Cow Island in late August. Apparently Ken started off his presentation by asking those in attendance to think in terms of having a seven foot (a little more than two meters for the younger generations) stick and walking out in the water at high water mark. When the top of the stick was even with the water the bottom of the stick would be the high water mark of the original shoreline of what is now Big Rideau Lake. It is so easy to forget that there is a major control dam at Poonamalie that controls the height of the water in the Big Rideau, but the original lake was seven feet lower than the current lake, (so that's were those sand beaches that Big Rideau doesn't have are). There are bays lined with cottages on the Lower Rideau that would not exist if it were not for the flooding for the canal. Yes we have many bays with stumps and a few extra shoals, great for the fishing, but we have a beautiful lake for us to love and protect.

So the next time you are sitting on the porch or on the dock gazing at the lake, remember "Luck" had a major role in creating our beautiful lake.

**Editor's Note:** In keeping with the discussion of water levels of "Lucky," the following is a discussion about the low water levels we experienced on the Big Rideau this Fall. At what one reader, Mr. Bulsara, felt was unusually low. This will probably strike a

nerve with many of us, your editor included. Next issue will be responses from Parks Canada and the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority.

Mr. Bulsara:

“As a property owner on the Big Rideau Lake, I am concerned about the rapid drop in water levels during July and August 2011. July and August are surely the months of heaviest use on the lake. I understand that some people in some organizations believe that transportation is a primary function of the Rideau Canal System. I would disagree. The navigable route between Ottawa and Kingston, though historically for goods and military transportation, is now surely a recreational route. And the primary use by all the property owners and thousands of visitors surrounding the canal and lakes is for recreation. We rely on the good management of the system, to ensure a recreational fishery, the proper levels for fish and wildlife habitats and spawning, for the right levels for boaters, skiers, swimming, etc.

As such, it is my opinion that normally and normatively, Parks Canada’s Canal Office does and should hold the water levels in the lakes fairly constant between May and the end of August or September. I believe Parks Canada normally does a good juggling act to keep everyone happy with water levels, water use, ecological balances, etc.

I do realize that spring 2011, particularly April & May were extremely wet and rainy in the Rideau watershed, raising water levels too fast and that July and August, did not see much rain at all. But I wonder if somebody panicked a bit, and let too much water out of the system after the spring rains, assuming it was going to be a wet year, and then ended up with drawing down some of the big lakes that are used as “reservoirs” to supply water to the lower sections of the canal, to keep them navigable, etc. I’m also curious as to what commercial uses of water are on the Rideau system, and whether that is significant enough to have an impact on water use.

Personally, I find it hard to believe that 8”-10” of water simply evaporated out of Big Rideau Lake in July, and another similar amount in August. When looking at the

wetlands in and around my place in the vicinity of Old Kingston Road, they had water all summer. Many summers they are completely dry, but they were not, even in July and August. Yet, the Big Rideau itself was so low, that by early September, many boaters and marinas were scrambling to get their large boats out of the lake before it was too late. As such, the recreational season ended very early for many users.

Yet, every time I went through Smiths Falls, I noticed that water was going by the new plant just beyond the locks, all the time, so in effect, the lakes higher up, were draining all summer. Perhaps that’s necessary. I’m obviously not an expert on what needs to be done to keep the Rideau Waterway System functioning for everyone. Just a concerned property owner. I do believe the subject deserves discussion and analysis, as I worry about the effect that low water levels can have on the animal and fish populations.”

### Historical Question by D. Good

Question: Where was the "Angler's Inn" at Portland-on-the-Rideau?

Answer: The "First" Angler's Inn was opened in 1889 on the "Isle of Guernsey" portion of Long Island (now known as Colonel By Island) by R. G. Harvey who was one of the entrepreneurs behind the Brockville, Westport and Sault Ste. Marie Railway better known as the B&W Railway, for the railway never got beyond Westport) and went bankrupt in 1894.. The first inn appears to have been partially or completely burned down in 1889 (shortly after it was built). In 1893, the property was purchased by a syndicate of individuals mainly working for CPR and became known as the CPR Angler's club. Then sometime in the early 1900's I. G. Ogden, the vice president of the CPR, took over the lodge to use as his summer cottage. It burned down in the fall of 1915 and 1916 found Ogden busy building a new cottage, called the Angler's Inn. This Building was fitted with all modern conveniences, including a power plant to generate electricity and to pump water. The "Angler's Inn" was still there in

1920. It seems to have fallen out of use sometime in the 1920s.

The picture shown is most likely the Angler's Inn that Ogden built in 1916. If any of the readers have further information or pictures we would love to hear from you.



(Sources: "Fish Tales; The Lure and the Love of the Rideau" by Ed Bebee, and "Friends of the Rideau - Watson's Rideau Paddling Guides - Paddling Guide 8" by Ken Watson)

## RLEF MAJOR CATALYST IN NARROWS LOCK FISH SPAWNING BED REHABILITATION D. Good

Our local Ministry of Natural Resources Conservation officer, Mike Dube, who oversees fish spawning at the Narrows Lock came up with an idea that with some work the spawning bed on the Big Rideau side of the Narrow's lock could be improved to accommodate more fish during the spawning season. He approached the Westport District Outdoors Association, who became the project leaders, and Bill Stilwell who then came to the author about the possible involvement of the Big Rideau Lake Association. Thus was the commencement of a project that was completed the last week of September, thanks in large part to

the involvement of the Rideau Lakes Environmental Fund (RLEF).

The project was initially estimated to be just over seventeen thousand (\$17,000.00) dollars, and would require funding to be virtually secured before the project could commence. The RLEF saw the project as fitting into its mandate and was prepared to be a major contributor, and as importantly was prepared to issue tax receipts to those who made project designated contributions. Others who came forward were the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Municipality of Rideau Lakes, and especially G. Tackaberry and Sons Construction, who sharpened their pencil and helped bring the cost in lower than the initial estimate. The project became one of "community" involvement with manpower for initial installation and ultimate removal of turbidity currents and geocloth being undertaken by volunteers from MNR, Westport Outdoors and others assisting the staff from Tackaberry's. The final cost of the project was just over fourteen (\$14,000.00) thousand dollars.

It was a project that at times it was not certain whether it was on or off, permits and permissions were required from Ocean and Fisheries and Parks Canada. Then it was not certain whether large rocks for the fish to rest behind when the current was flowing could be incorporated. Then Transport Canada was asked to determine whether the large rocks would be a hindrance to navigable waters, in the end large rocks were placed as part of the project. The permits and permissions in the end turned out to be the easy part of the process, as the main concern became the location of 13 high voltage lines that lie on the lake bottom on the Big Rideau side of the Narrow's Lock. The work could not be undertaken until those lines were located and Ontario Hydro was satisfied that the project would not damage the lines. Because the lines were buried in silt, Ontario Hydro was not certain they could find them using the usual processes. The author had a conversation with Ken Bruyere, who has been Lock Master at the Narrows for a while, as to the location of the lines. Ken advised the lines are shown on the hydrographical maps of the system. Thus one foggy September

morning, Mike Dube, Bill Stillwell and yours truly, ended up searching for underwater hydro lines. We found two, not the high



voltage lines, but ones that ran to the lock house and we marked the lines with plastic jugs as well as the work site area. Ontario Hydro came and checked the locations and was satisfied that the project would not endanger their lines and gave approval to proceed. One week later the work was completed.

Without RLEF taking a leadership role with funding and processing of donations this project may not have happened, but because of your generous donations and those who made project specific donations, future generations will hopefully see the return of a least one species of fish, the elusive pickerel, also known as walleye and dore, to the lake. Ed Bebee in his book "Fish Tales, the lure and love of the Rideau" writes: "What about the fishing? Big Rideau Lake was celebrated for its fine salmon trout fishing as well as large pickeral. The bass and pike were almost incidental."

## Rideau Lakes Environmental Foundation / RLEF



*Photo: BRLA*

The Rideau Lakes Environmental Foundation (RLEF) is a registered charity, working with you to protect your lakes. RLEF actively solicits donations (in cash and kind) to support environmental programs on Big Rideau and Upper Rideau Lakes.

To contribute, download our [Brochure and Donation Form \(PDF\)](#) or give on-line



To suggest areas of activity, please contact us at [rlef@brla.on.ca](mailto:rlef@brla.on.ca)

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