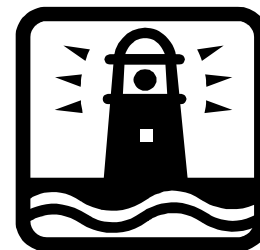


Amherst Island Beacon



Issue 478 *There's always another boat.* June 2020



Passings

Larry McGinn

Longtime employee of Amherst Roofing and Sheet Metal (48 yrs.). Passed away peacefully at Kingston Health Sciences Centre on Tuesday, June 2, 2020 at the age of 64. He will be deeply missed by his devoted wife Trudy (nee Brownell) of 22 years. Loving father of Terry, Tricia McGinn (Andy) and step son Bill Swerbrick (Lindsay). Caring grandfather of 6 grandchildren. Cherished son of Cora and the late Keith McGinn. Dear brother of the late Terry (Susan), Eric (Janice), late Yvonne, Leon (Joanne), and Kelly (Maureen) and their families. Celebration of Life service will take place when the COVID restrictions are lifted. Interment at Glenwood Cemetery, Amherst Island.

Colin Filson 1929-2020

Peacefully passed away Saturday May 2nd, 2020 the week before his 91st birthday. Mourning his passing are his children Kevin & Laurie, Kelly & Luda and Heather, dearly missed by his long-time partner Mary Doan and by his sister Diana Rutherford, her family as well as nieces and nephews. Remembered as Grandpa Cole by Tim (Jessica), Gregg, Dan and Joel (Bree) and Great Grandpa by Reilly, Ireland, Avery and Sophia Graham. Cole will be forever remembered by HIS Princess Rachel and the entire Roy family. **Born and raised on Amherst Island**, Dad moved to Napanee to start his police career on that city's force. He then moved to Port Colborne with the OPP in the late 50's and became Chief of Police for Wainfleet in 1960. When Wainfleet amalgamated as part of Niagara Region Dad was hired as a Desk Sergeant and retired from the NRPS in 1989. From the time Dad came to this area he was involved with coaching baseball. First with the Wainfleet Juveniles, then later with Kevin & Kelly's teams. He enjoyed his years as Wainfleet's representative for the O.R.S.A. Through the 70's Dad was heavily involved with the Golden Puck Hockey organization and was the announcer for the P.C. Junior B's. Dad continued to give back during his retirement by volunteering at Armstrong Funeral Home and Northland Pointe and enjoyed spending time with kindred spirits at Niagara's Ole Time Fiddlers. Dad took pride in all the organizations he gave his time to. The family would like to thank Northland Pointe LTC for their care and compassion of Colin, especially those on Starboard unit. We would like to give a special thank you to Staff Sergeant R. LaPlante from NRPS who went above and beyond having regular visits with Dad, showing such respect as always calling him Chief and was responsible for organizing the recent recognition with the Township of Wainfleet and NRPS for Dad's many years as being Wainfleet's only Chief of Police. Cremation has taken place. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date and burial on the Island is being arranged for this summer. Please direct any memorial donations to Central United Church, 30 Delhi Street, Port Colborne L3K 3K6.





American Goldfinches male and female and a chipping sparrow
Photo from Patricia Craig Harris Vincent

Editor's note



I have posted pictures of birds that you can find on Amherst Island. On Monday morning I have been helping Janet Scott do her Bird Show since she hasn't been able to come into the Radio Station because she is vulnerable to the COVID 19. I tried to put pictures of the birds that she talks about on the show.

Left: Black-capped Chickadee Photo from Jon Greer



Right: We'll have baby Kildeers on the Island soon
Photo from Jungle Lens

Amherst Island BEACON Issue 478, June 2020

Published monthly, the Beacon is provided free through the work of dedicated volunteers.

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Submission Deadline 25th of mth

Provided via: Amherstisland.on.ca/Beacon

(Operated by the Amherst Island Community Alliance)



Baltimore Oriole Photo from Ann M. Pacheco

Her Bird Show is at 9:00 to 10:00 Monday mornings. Don't miss it. The Island is in the top 10 places in Canada to bird. We are so lucky to be able to bird in our own backyard.



Birds found on AI Starling
Photo from Christine Thomas



Blue Heron with frog in beak

Photo from Joel Marshall

The next group of pictures is of Goodwill Rocks that have been appearing on the Island. The person who is painting them and giving them is a mystery, which makes it even more interesting. The rocks are absolutely beautiful and making many people very happy.



The CJAI rock.



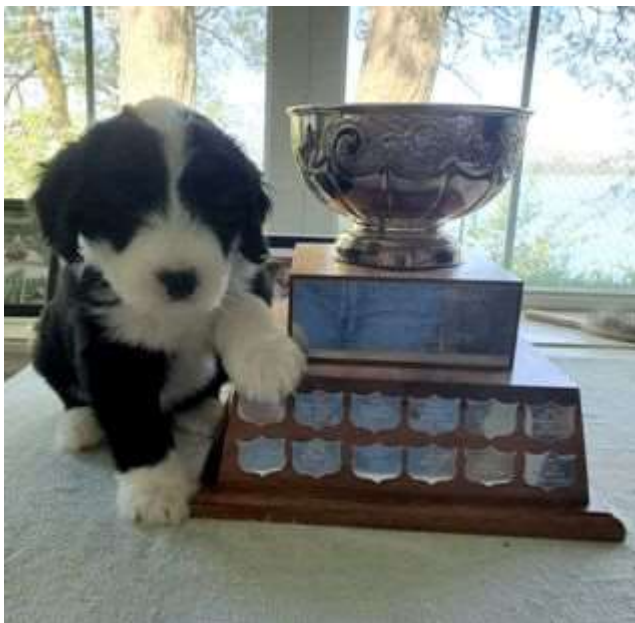
Bonnie Livingston's Rock

I always love to put pictures of people, children and pets from the Island. They are very cute and give you a warm feeling to see them. I take all the pictures from Facebook with permission from the people or parents in the pictures. Sometimes I do make mistakes so please let me know if you want your picture taken out of The Beacon and I can take the picture or story out.

There are a lot of very good photographers on the Island. I like to share with you the amazing sunsets, sunrises, shores and trees and celebrate their talents.



A very special painted rock on a very special day. Photo from Maryanne Mercer



My Isla/McGinn puppies are now 5 and a half weeks old. The time is passing too quickly. I wanted to share this cute picture of one of the puppies. (McGinn was the name of the stud, not a reference to the island family.)

This is Andy Orange Collar. He wants to claim his mom's Winners Bitch Trophy from the 2019 BCCC National. (From Joanne Watts)

I post Terry Culbert's art too because he used to live on the Island and often he paints pictures about the Island.

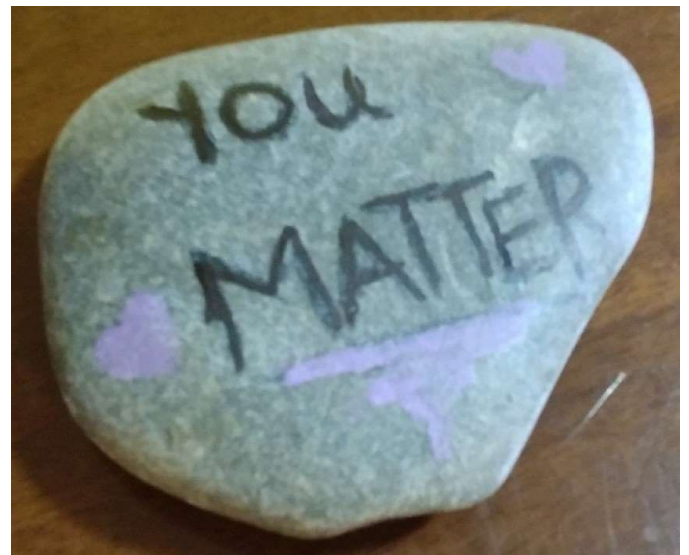
Topsy Farms is a very busy business on the Island

and they post a lot on Facebook, their web page and Instagram. They offer us very good information on lambing, gardening and food that grows in our backyard.

Blast from the Past: I like to remember what has happened on the Island in the past. I loved the picture that Helen Sychra Trotter posted of Garry Hitchen's retirement party. The ferry is such a big part of our life on the Island and it's a good time to say "Thank you" to all the crews on the ferry in the present and in the past We couldn't get to the mainland without them, seriously. I also love to see pictures of the people that I knew when I lived on the Island in the 60's. Warren Kilpatrick has lived on the Island his whole life and was a Captain on the ferry. He has a lot of wonderful history items and I love it when he shares them with us on Facebook.

Darlene Martin and Ross Stewart are loving the Island and their very special property on the Second Concession. I'm so happy they are bringing the house and buildings and land back to life. They have a studio for Ross' handmade instruments and Darlene's jewelry. It's fun to see Darlene enjoying the gardening so much. Gardening is very dear to many of the Islanders.

It's very sad to me that Doug Lamb is no longer on the Island. I worried about his walking on the roads but it kept him alive. I'm also sad he is so far away that we can't visit. I hate losing our older members on the Island.



A stone from Norma-Lynn.

I think it applies to Doug as well

I'm sad that there won't be an Emerald Music Festival. I totally understand and agree with their decision to not have it but I will absolutely miss it. I

used it as a family camping weekend. It has always produced great memories. I never missed it. I'm looking forward to 2021 Emerald Music Festival.



Blue Heron family
Photo from Joe Layno Ontario Birds



(Else you'll miss the birds.)
Anne Henderson's Rock

Finally, we have a hairdresser on the Island. Welcome to Gladice Koble. I hear she is making a list of people who want their hair cut when the quarantine is lifted.

I like to wish everyone a Happy Birthday. I know I miss some people's birthdays but I try to get as many as I can. Please send me a picture when it's your birthday and we can all wish you a Happy

Birthday in The Beacon.

Happy Mothers' Day to all the Mothers on the Island and the people that do Mothering. You are much appreciated and we love you.

I put in a poem by Joy Michael Ibizarose because it spoke to me and I thought it might speak to you too as we are all getting older.

And thank you to Ross from rossland for your story 3 Coffins. I love getting your stories and sharing them in The Beacon. I'm hoping that other people will write stories or poems for The Beacon. There aren't any minutes of any of the organizations on the Island because there haven't been any monthly meetings.

Thanks to Kayleigh for her beautiful pictures of the Fox family.

Thank you all for your support of The Beacon. Stay safe.

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Hair By Gladice
is opening soon at 14305 front Rd.
[**Gladou36@gmail.com**](mailto:Gladou36@gmail.com)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Property Location: 1955 Stella 40 Foot Road, Stella

Proposal:

Amherst Island Radio Broadcasting Inc., licensee of CJAI-FM (92.1 MHz), is proposing to locate a telecommunication tower, being 39.9 metres (131 feet) in height, on this property. The proposed tower will serve as a new transmitter site for CJAI to provide improved coverage of Amherst Island and Loyalist Township.

Public Consultation:

Amherst Island Radio Broadcasting Inc. is committed to effective public consultation. The purpose of public consultation is to allow the public, Loyalist Township, and the applicant to exchange information about this proposal.

To submit written comments, or for further information, please contact:

Hahn Broadcast Engineering

c/o Stuart Hahn

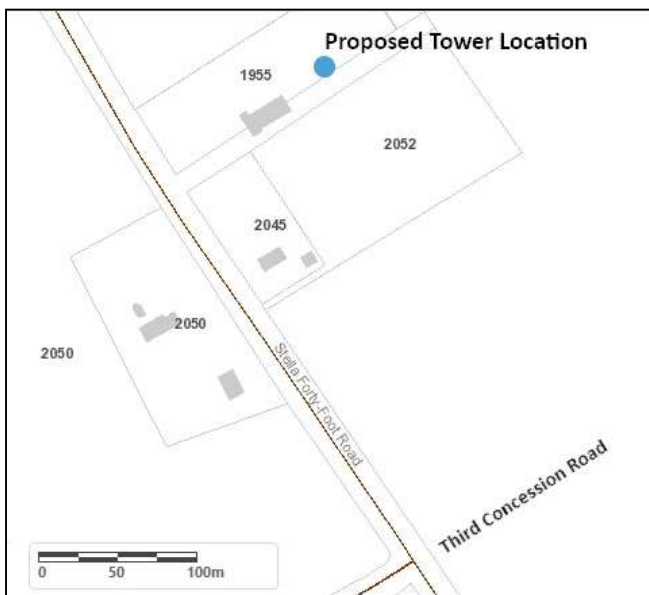
P.O. Box 145

King City, Ontario, L7B 1A4

Tel: 905-833-5141

E-mail: stuart@hbeng.ca

The closing date for submission of written comments is **Monday August 3rd, 2020.**



Municipal Contact:

Bohdan Wynnyckyj, R.P.P.

Supervisor of Planning Services

Loyalist Township

263 Main St.

Odessa ON, K0H 2H0

Tel: 613-386-7351 Ext 144

E-mail: bwynnyckyj@loyalist.ca

People of Amherst Island



Vaughn Kennedy Photo from Danielle Kennedy

Have you played with bubbles today?



**A little Islander Carter Brown,
Joan and Dan Simpson's grandson**



**Belles filles. Photo from
Renee Minville**



**Beautiful Eastern Towhee
Photo from Kelly Herbert
Ontario Birds**



**Good Morning Amherst
Island. Thank you for the
painted rock. I have been
busy trying to identify these
interesting bird visitors
to my mailbox.
Photo from Janet Scott.**



**Ruby Crowned Kinglet
Photo from Kelly Herbert**



Dave and Linda McGinn from McGinn General Store Photo by Woody-Don Woodiwiss



**We work like dogs for
Leon McGinn. In protest from
Snoopy and Ernie**





I have given it a lot of thought and have decided to start a personal instagram account to show glimpses of what it is like to establish, maintain and enjoy gardens at rossland. I will share these posts on my personal Facebook account so if you don't use Instagram you can still see what I'm posting about. I hope you will enjoy the photos, information, and stories!

Darlene Martin



Orioles and oranges Photo by Patricia-Craig Harris-Vincent.



My 'Stay Positive' Rock



Put up the gourd birdhouse I bought at the Weasel and Easel a couple of year ago. Wasn't up for 5 minutes and they wer fighting over it. Photo from Patricia-Craig Harris-Vincent



**Two sets of bakers. Above,
Rowan and Ainsley
Photo from Danielle Kennedy**



**Kass Wronski finally got his apple pie. The Island Stone Angel left him
this sweet surprise. So thoughtful. Whoever you are...YOU ROCK.**

**Below, Braelynn Arsenault
in the May 2020 Cutest Baby Photo Competition.
Karen and Wayne Fleming's granddaughter Photo from Karen Fleming**



Canine Birth Announcement

Joanne Watts is more than pleased to announce the birth of Isla and McGinn's new family. They arrived earlier than expected on day 59. There are six lovely, well marked black puppies. Three females and three males. The first five arrived in two hours starting at 5:15 am Friday morning. The last one came two hours later. She didn't even contract with this one. All six are big and healthy. Five are 1lb 5 ozs and the last one was 1 lb 4 ozs. These are the heaviest puppies I have ever had. The females are wearing pink, red and yellow. Green, blue and orange are males. Isla and the puppies are doing very well. I can not thank Sarah Duff enough for coming here early and helping Isla birth these puppies. — with Char Carentz and Sarah Duff.



Norma Lynn's Rock



**Thank you so much AI Stone Angel.
We love it...it made our day.
Photo from Sherri Jensen**



What a beautiful surprise. The Amherst Island Stone Angel has struck again. This time on the South Shore at the base of our mailbox. This gift is so thoughtful and uplifting. A treasure. Even our cats agree. Grateful thanks from Andrea Cross.



We have waited as long as we could in making this difficult decision. Out of an abundance of caution to protect the health and safety of our volunteers, the artists involved and our patrons at the festival, we will be cancelling for this year. Wish you all good health and stay safe. If you have any questions please call 613-389-8297. Dan & Joan

Reserve the Dates: August 13,14,15 of 2021



Mother's Day



Happy Mother's Day Danielle with Vaughn Photo from Steve Kennedy



Joyce Groot's Rock



Above, Happy Mother's Day to Helena Bierma 91 years old

**Left, Kids are luck.
Happy Mother's Day Kim
I can pick em and I'm damn lucky she picked me.
Photo from Duncan Ashley**



**Happy Mother's Day to Jessica and Ida
Photo from Jessica**

**Happy Mother's Day to my Mom in heaven.
She was a great Mom to 5 children.
Back row left to right Kenneth Reid, Beatrice
Wemp, Edward Reid
Front Row Marie's grandparents David and Edna
Reid Photo from Marie Ward (Wemp).**



**Happy Mother's Day to my Mama Bear.
Thank you for being my Mom.
Photo from Laura Welbanks**

Artwork



**Sunset from the Ferry
Photo by Shyanne Shurliffe**

Spring Photo from Carrie Sudds



**Staying at least SIX-FEET apart
Photo from Terry Culbert**

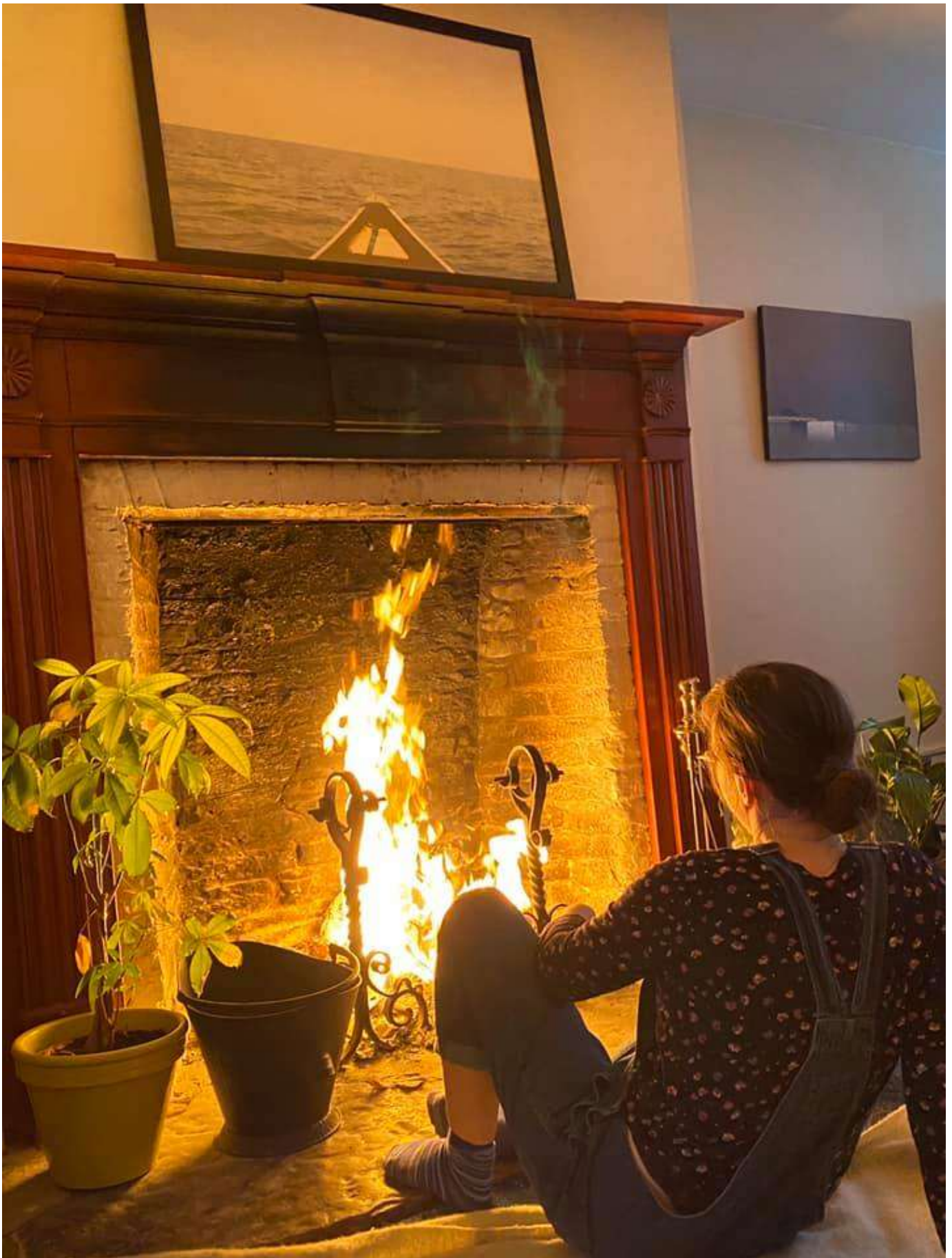




Even on the wettest gloomiest day the Lilacs can cheer you up. from Brian Little



**Some colour from
Eloise Gowan's garden
this rainy-day morning
Photo from Woody-Don
Woodiwiss**



**Or, perhaps, just stay inside.
Art photo from Bruce Sudds**



**A beautiful calm evening on the North Shore
Photo from Christie Alexander**

Our Pets.

By Sharen English

Years ago, I moved in with David at Canadian Forces Base, Kingston. Two female cats lived with him. They were Samantha and Rosie. Samantha was named after Samantha the witch from the T.V. show Bewitched. David and his first wife named her. It took Samantha 3 months to get used to me. She would leave the room whenever I entered it. I started calling Samantha "Lunch". I told her that I was going to eat her for lunch because she was no good to me in any way other than as a meal. Rosie was also their cat, she was a white housecat, she had green eyes and was deaf. Rosie slept on top of the VCR. She had a rotten disposition and hissed and scratched at you if you tried to touch her. I called her "La Bitch".

Allen was David's friend who drove him to The Kingston Humane Society to get a third cat. Beard was named after Allen's beard, which was orange. Beard was the fat, orange, Tabby that they chose to be the new cat in our house. Beard rolled over and asked

for a tummy rub any time that you entered the room. He was predictable and hilarious. He loved to be combed too, anytime. Beard coexisted comfortably with Samantha and Rosie.

We had a fanciful image of Beard, the male cat, wearing a leather jacket and riding a motorcycle. David used to ride a motorcycle. We would imagine Samantha or Rosie on the back of the bike. Beard was a happy boy and got the most out of life.

We lost all three in a housefire. That hurt for a very long time.



**Cool morning on the south shore
today. Interesting light. Photo
from Woody-Don Woodiwiss**

Jojie Alcantara ©2008



I am not old.. she said
I am rare.

I am the standing ovation
At the end of the play.

I am the retrospective
Of my life as art

I am the hours
Connected like dots
Into good sense

I am the fullness
Of existing.

You think I am waiting to die..
But I am waiting to be found

I am a treasure.
I am a map.

And these wrinkles are
Imprints of my journey

Ask me anything.

~ Samantha Reynolds

For those who remember our aged:

I wanted to provide an update on our friend Doug Lamb. His sons informed us yesterday that they have taken Doug to "a facility in Guelph to receive the care he needs." You may want to send him a card/note of encouragement to; The Village of Riverside Glen / Attention Doug Lamb

60 Woodlawn Road East, Guelph, Ontario, N1H 8M8

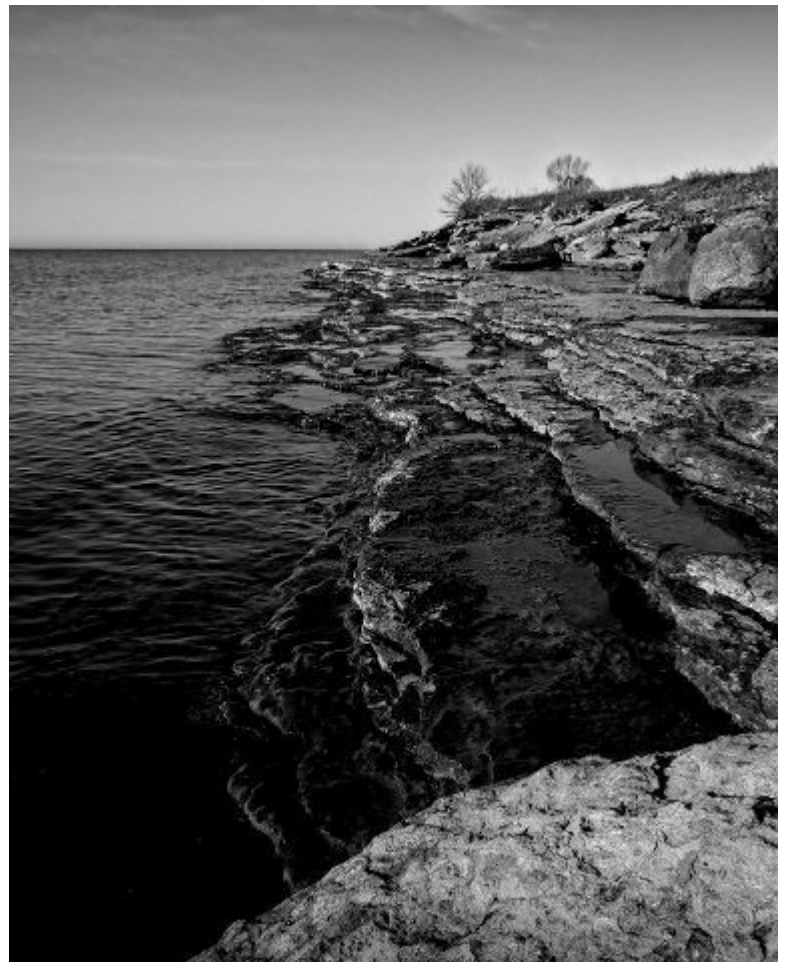
Doug and Helen came to the Island 30 years ago. They loved singing in choral groups and in the church choir and being part of the St. Paul's and Island Community. Many of you have helped Doug along life's way. God Bless you one and all. He certainly inspired us to walk and keep moving. Now Doug is off on another adventure. I thought that you all should be aware of Doug's move and please keep him in your prayers.

Sincerely, Susie



I never tire of capturing the many costumes of light worn by our beautiful island. Photo from Woody-Don Woodiwiss

**Saturday morning
Photo by Woody-Don Woodiwiss**



Birthdays



**Happy birthday to:
Terry Culbert
Molly Stroyman
Ellis Wolfreys**



Left: Colton, Above: 7yr old Hemi, Right Ashley Barbara



Doris Storrington-Wemp



Happy Birthday Keith Mercer
Photo from Maryanne Mercer



And finally, happy literal birthday to the triplet lambs born at David Willard's farm.

Doings at Topsy



Mushrooms

Some seasons are better than others for wild mushrooms. They need fall rains, but not too much. Ian learned to identify varieties from his dad, then he learned from others he trusts. Do not experiment if you don't know.

Dehydrating

We dehydrate lots of produce and plan to do more. That process frees us from dependency on electricity and freezer failure, takes way less space and preserves flavour and nutrients.

Garlic Mustard is an invasive species - and a high nutrient and tasty source of early spring greens. (See earlier posts about identification, and about Ian's Stoup). Right now, it is young, tender, and romping around our yards in joyful abandon. The least we can do is eat it.

We don't pretend to be experts on any of the garden food and preserving methods we describe, but we've been learning for about 45 years, so offering ideas.

Three of us picked masses, trying to get only the tops, not the roots or tougher stems. (Makes sorting easier).

Wash at this stage if you wish. We spread the tops

thinly in trays of a dehydrator purchased years ago from Lee Valley. It blows air and has a heat dial. All the extra greens went on cookie sheets in an oven dialed about 140 degrees.



Fill the trays lightly, without much overlap. They will dry more efficiently. The basket on the right looks pretty well sorted; the bottom container has too many longer stems and bits yet.

We also tried using a warm oven and metal trays as you see to the right.



We left both systems overnight. All were nice and crispy, done by morning. If not thoroughly dry, leave longer. Store in glass jars or other air-tight and critter- proof containers. Smells good, tastes good and enhances most cooking that calls for greens.



After drying, we smooshed the dried leaves down until they fit the gallon glass mason jar. This will easily store for a year if we don't eat it all first.

There are many internet sources to check about dehydrating. We hope to explore solar drying next. Anyone have experience?

Skippping Stones

Skippping Stones

Calm water

Clear evening

Bufflehead ducks float past

Paired off in their monogamist commitment

Leaving their dual "V" wakes behind

Buffleheads nest in woodpecker carvings

They deserve some small luxuries for having such a ridiculous name and haircut

The farm kid stands on the smooth limestone shelf

Stands on the edge of adulthood

The farm kid's footing is a large, flat, piece of stone that was once bedrock

It was once the field

But that is a different story

The kid is a Bruce Springsteen song in grey hoodie

Every opportunity is open in the first couple chords, the opening verse

The promise of all

Life choices and circumstances dictate the story

Easy to get swept away from the path of steady self

Easy to get washed off in Bufflehead wake

The steady self forgotten

The skipping stone is collected from a pile of 1000
 candidates
 It could have been time for any of them
 In a decade, this one will make it back to the shore
 Every ice sheet, west wind, and Bufflehead foot paddle
 edging it back for another to find
 The stone is smooth
 Still warm from the late April sun
 Warmer than the air
 The nearly perfect stone disc fits the work roughened hand
 Even at 15, the calluses have formed
 Life's work gloves
 The stone is the lid of an olive jar
 Too big and the spin won't be correct
 Too small and there will be insufficient weight
 Thumb and pointer finger encircle
 Middle finger mimics but takes a passive role; supporting
 the stone in place
 Hand, wrist, arm, elbow, shoulder; none of these skip a stone
 The stone is not thrown by arm
 Music is not made by the sitting audience
 The stone is launched from the head, the back, the guts, the hips, the knees and most of all;
 The stone is skipped from the feet
 This is the secret of life
 This is the secret of skipping a stone



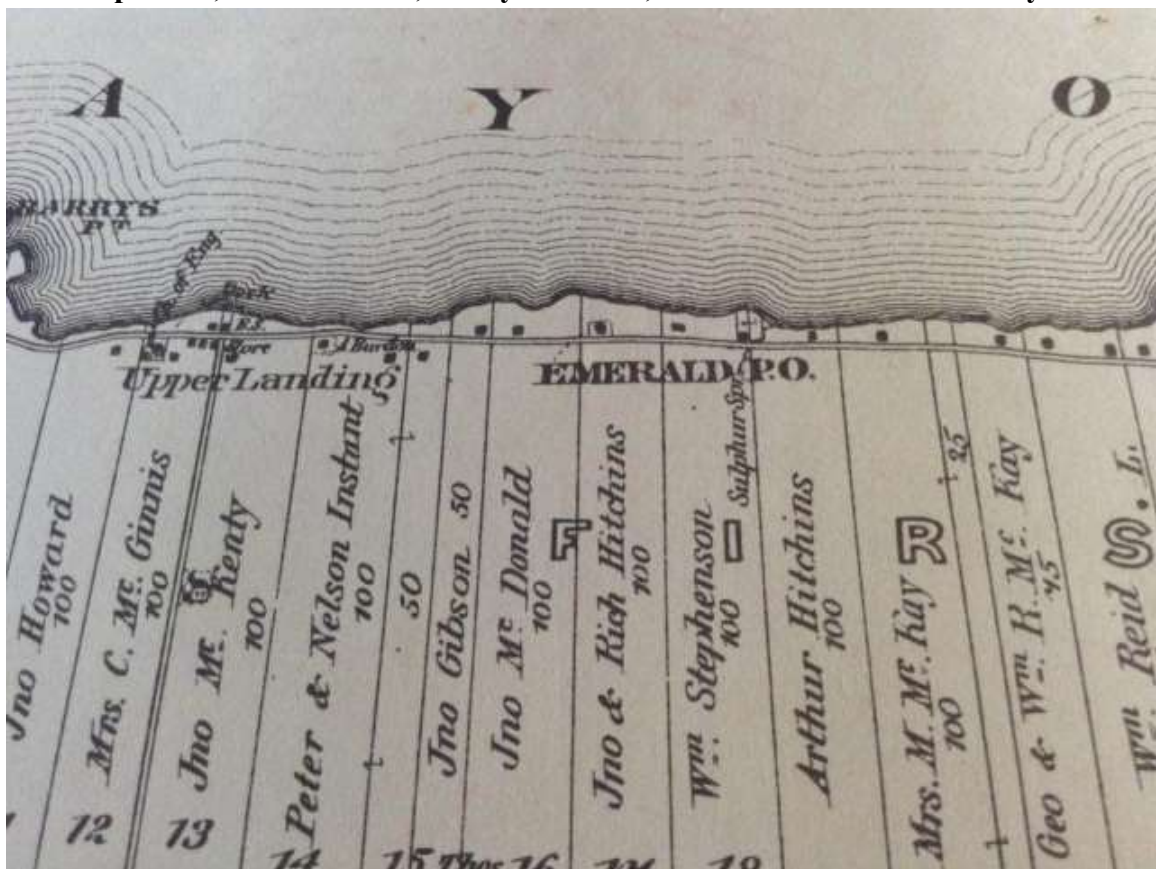
The farm kid will skip this perfect stone with his feet
 The spring coils
 Every muscle and synapse talking to the big toe
 Everything
 The stone flies
 The spin carries momentum
 The water's surface tension doesn't stand a chance
 The record of 20 skips and 10 pitter-pats won't be broken
 tonight;
 There is so much more being built.
 #GrowStronger

Fox pictures by Kayleigh Graham

Blast from the Past



Garry Hitchens Retirement Party April 25 2015
Warren Kilpatrick, Jane McGinn, Garry Hitchens, Darrell Miller and Helen Sychra Trotter



From the 1878 Amherst Island map. Looks like the Emerald Post Office was where Maryanne and Keith Mercer live. I think it was active before 1917.



The mail probably came by ship. Photo from Warren Kilpatrick



**53 years ago Dayle and I were married.
What an adventure, we started all those years ago.
A great life filled with wonderful family and friends.
Photo from Eloise Gowan**



Rhubarb Flowers

There are two rhubarb patches at rossland. Both have been here for many years. They are heirloom variety, which is easy to tell for two reasons:

- 1) they flower prolifically (bolt or go to seed) each year while newer cultivars do not and
- 2) this farm hasn't been worked for over thirty years.

Cutting the flowers does two things:

- 1) lets the plant put more growth energy into the stalks and
- 2) gives us a interesting bouquet that smells heavenly. #rhubarb

#growstronger

#interestingcutflowers

#growyourfood #pieisland

#countrygardens — at Amherst Island.

3 Coffins

We saw the lockdown coming in the month before it actually happened and so we stocked up. Toilet paper, potatoes, onions, condensed milk, flour, yeast and other stuff. I used the van at that time to transport all the wood necessary for three large raised vegetable beds: 24 inches wide by ten feet long and 18 inches deep. I nailed them up and filled them with the right mixtures of earth and compost and old hay and sheep manure from the barn. She also got the seeds started in little containers inside and we put them in the well-lit upstairs and waited for spring and for the swallows to return to the Great Hall as they did every year.

I watched and waited for their return with trepidation as I had news for them that they were not going to like. I'll tell you that last year came this Jerk swallow to move in and build a new nest below the underside of the top step leading into the loft. He brought his family along and they rapidly built a mud and thatch nest. Unlike the other swallows, with whom we co-existed peacefully, this soon-to-be-named 'jerk swallow' would dive bomb us relentlessly. We would peacefully walk about, minding our own business, when suddenly, from a height somewhere in the blinding sun, he would descend Stuka-like and pull back a few feet from our faces, shrieking and fluttering his wings with intimidating rage; or he would circle our heads and then fly at us dead on, eye to eye and make like a Kamikaze, only pulling up at the last second which was most unnerving.

I took to walking around the outside of the house holding a piece of plywood rectangle in my hand; when - and if - I saw him coming, coming in at my face like a tiny Orca whale, I would wait until the last instant and then hold up the plywood rectangle. He almost flew into it a couple of times before he learned to back off a little more. This swallow, by displaying such rude and unnecessary behaviour acquired the moniker of Jerk Swallow.

None of the other swallows took his cue. I think perhaps they also thought he was a bit of a jerk.

The other two swallow nests are up in the roof rafters. The rafters are unsquared tree trunks, bark still on, that hold up the 130 year old roof of this 'new addition' to the main house: this new addition being a woodshed /

barn that they attached to the main house around 1890. These much older nests are higher up. These can stay for now: they can have one more year.

I have been waiting to tell my family swallows this: that I will be higher up in their midst and making noise all spring and summer. 'So,' I will tell them: 'you can leave now and build elsewhere, or stay as you like and never mind me, as before; but I shall be only a few feet below your babies and you will have to accept it.'

I will tell them this with a heavy heart because I enjoy and appreciate my lovely swallows very much. They bring such joy, chattering like budgies, like ariel dolphins, squeaking and squealing, squabbling and loving each other. They are very social creatures.

They are also expert aviators: soaring, diving, alone or in two's and threes, sometimes in groups of many and come speeding into the Great Hall, zooming like starfighters through the abandoned, glassless window frame at terrific speed, stopping in an instant at the mud and thatch nest or onto the wire swing nailed to the rafters, left over from the old hay baling; or landing on the old half collar tie that should extend its full way across from rafter to rafter but hangs halfway, uselessly, its only practical use as a perch for the swallows. They sit there and chatter or they fly around and around inside the Great Hall, then cram themselves into a single nest at night. They have their babies. The nest is tiny. I have seen four heads - and the babies underneath - in a nest, the inside of which could not be bigger than the cupped palm of my hand.

Each year, I know when eggs have hatched because underneath the nest, onto the worn wood planking that once upon a time had been painted grey, arrives a frothy white poo. Baby swallow poo looks like frothy milk from a freshly made cappuccino coffee. Regular adult swallow poo has dark colour in it and a more solid consistency.



Many generations of these swallows were here before me. Even in the first year that I was here, they would fly into my workshop through the outer sliding door if it was open and look to see what I was doing. They would fly around inside the house, quite at home: they grew up here.

I watched their babies grow up and take their first flights: teenagers with wings and they loved to fly, once they had it figured out. Their joy at using their wings was inspiring: they flew and flew, carefully watched by vigilant parents who sat on the hydro cable outside, chattering and yammering away at them.

Four generations of swallows I have seen; year after year they come back. They remember me. I feel a family comradeship as we go about our business together and it makes me proud to be a part of it.

But I knew and I know, down in my human heart, that one day the time would come, one day it would be time to fix up the Great Hall, to clean it out, repair it and make it ours. Just cleaning out the Great Hall though isn't it, even then they could still

stay, if they chose to; if our friendship could survive me being so close to the nests up on the second floor: the door would close on my beautiful swallows when the glass goes back into the window frame.

The swallows didn't return this year for the longest time. I waited and waited.

This Spring is an unusually cold one. April has come, mid April has gone.

I did some cleaning and made some ground floor repairs. After great deliberation I took out the Jerk Swallow nest and tossed it. That family were newcomers: they didn't like me and I didn't like them. So out they go; they

can build a new nest somewhere else.

I am waiting for spring: true spring arrives with the swallows.

Before the public parks got shut to the public this year for the Covid-19 virus scare, d, Chico and I would go every day down to Sand Beach. After the great storm of 2017, Sand Beach was littered with uprooted trees that lay in great twisted heaps all over the waterfront. Over many years, soil erosion had created a cliff about ten feet high at the waterfront, with enough space to form a beach at the water wide enough to walk comfortably along, to stop and picnic, swim, or play with the dog. Now the upturned tree roots fallen in from the top of the embankment formed alcoves of alternately sandy and rocky bays. Much of the beach was no longer accessible, unless one approached directly from over the top of the roughly ten-foot embankment from the dirt road above. I sat in one such bay, which I had to get to by wading through shin deep water and as I sat quietly, a large water snake came up out of the water and glided past me straight into a hole at the base of the uprooted tree. It felt wild and special.

After a couple of years, the trees became part of the wilderness of that Sand Beach conservation area; the dirt road and the marsh on the other side made it feel like people weren't really there at all; that this new wilderness was here to stay. Then one day as we walked past the sign that told us we had to tread gently, that this was an ecologically sensitive area, that the wildlife, dunes and vegetation were protected and all the red line pictorial no's that came after the words, we followed the trail of wood chips and bulldozer tracks to find the beach opened up again, the trees cut and stacked, like a breakwater against the sand dune sides. Now we could walk uninterrupted once more, amble along the beach, throw the stick for the dog and not have to go into the water to get around a nuisance tree trunk. The whole beachfront had been opened up again. On the Amherst website was a notice from the Loyalist Township to say the work at Sand Beach was completed and we could walk safely upon its shores now. A smattering of people gave thanks. One person said he would 'miss old friends' and I knew just what he meant. The wilderness couldn't last. The undercurrent of the constant human agenda to 'develop' is all pervasive in our human psyche, all encompassing and must be obeyed.

Where one of the uprooted trees had been pulled from the sandy side and stacked, I saw broken glass sticking out of the embankment where the roots had been.

Three pieces of glass were sticking out and were of three different colours: green, white and brown. Three separate pieces. Carefully I pulled the glass from the dirt, they were at about eye level in the embankment and I looked them over. One was from a beer bottle, one was from a 7-up bottle and one came from a coke bottle, the kind from the seventies, when all pop came in little bottles for which you needed an opener. I figured that three people had sat there, on that spot, under that tree, sometime in the 1970's. Each drank a beverage: one beer, one coke and one 7-up. Then they left the bottles there and the bottles got swallowed up by sand and dirt and time, crushed by tree roots and pressures of earth. Now the bottles reappear, in another era, as glass fragments of three lives: a forgotten second-of-memory in a moment of time by three people at the beach.

When I got back I stood at the doorway to the Great Hall and saw myself being observed. A single swallow, a scout, sent on ahead to verify the summer heritage nest was safe for the rest to follow. The swallow looked at me. I looked at him. I greeted him. I immediately told him that this was going to be their last year. He flew three times around the loft silently and then out the window again and was gone. I knew that when he returned there would be two others with him. A few days after that, they would all be there, bringing Spring. Their chatter and joyful enthusiasm would once again infuse our lives with hopeful purpose as we dug the gardens and cleared away the winter, ready for the new year cycle of rebirth.

This year, once the swallows are gone, the derelict opening in the wall will inevitably close. They will have to leave. We can no longer share; the swallows are being evicted. I feel a sense of loss, of grief. I want to find an alternative. Who will ever know that once swallows lived here, that they called this house their own? That we lived together? What fragment will remain for the far distant future?



This year we have raised vegetable gardens to be self sufficient with our vegetable produce. To that end I built three large raised beds, spaced five feet apart; three so far of a planned nine. The human instinct for survival is equalled only by that of the rat, so I have read.

We are safe on our Island; we must believe so anyway. We keep to ourselves. As I look out of the parlour window into the back yard, the newly raised wooden beds still have the yellowy polished lumber factory shine and they seem to glow in the twilight. They look just like three large coffins.

Dandelions sautéed with garlic.
Photo from Phuong MacNeil

While lacking the grace of swallows, they still have precision and speed. Here, The Snowbirds fly over Amherst Island as a tribute to our Front Line Workers.

Photo from Lynn Fleming



On the ways of Dragons

Dravin sighs. "It appears that I have conflicted old age with fame."

Perhaps my deeds are starting to fade with time, as does my strength and memory. In any event, knowledge of dragons is less widespread than what it once was, and some have questioned the to what I referred in my last story. In response to those who are curious, I tell this tale.

In response to a courier contract, I heading for the cave of the wizard Bathshar in the land of Gordol. I expected to travel fast and alone; keeping my mission secret. I knew that what I was to carry had great value, and great danger. For this reason, I did not want to attract attention. While it is not like a dragon to use spies, I foolishly hoped that if I hid from men I would also hide from HER eyes. It shows the stupidity of men, but more about that anon.

Upon my arrival, Bathsim presented my charge to me. Molted and green it was; emitting a pulsing sickly light. It was as large as a man's head and the colours seemed to swirl inside it if one looked too long. Moreover, it tricked the eyes, and seemed to draw you in. I found that when I regarded it for more than a moment a pounding raised in my temples, and the world would seem to go dim. I cared not for it at all and was glad when it was locked in the case you saw that night here in this inn. Bathsim secured the steel bands and stated that I should not remove them though he would not say why. He was a wretched little man; crawling about his dark cave like a spider. Covered with uncombed hair and foul smelling robes. I doubt he ever bathed and some of his chemicals reeked. Or maybe it was him. In any event, I liked him not for he would not answer my questions nor look me in the eye as would an honest man.

I asked him how he came by the treasure of the egg and he said it was not my concern. He tried to dismiss me as he would a servant and if it were not for the contract which bound me, I would have challenged him, wizard or not. I asked about the mother and he said that the steel would hide the egg - for magic is blocked by iron. I later found that he spoke on rumor and guess - almost to the loss of mine own life. Someday, Bathsim and I will have a reckoning. Not today, but he will atone to me. In any event, I had given my bond so I took the egg packed in the case and strapped to my back. By the time the sun had cleared the trees I was leagues away and striding quickly through faint paths known only to woodland creatures and me.

The first day passed quickly. I paused only for a light lunch from my travel rations and by nightfall I had covered nigh on forty miles. I stopped at Manotick, a small town near the Tuoro river. I am slightly known there but the innkeeper is smart and keeps his mouth shut. I took bread and meat and wine in his place and contracted for a bed for the night. That night he sent me a girl to warm my bed. I suspect that her orders were more than that, though we shall never know. She offered herself to me, and she was comingly enough, but I turned her down. But the night was cool and the fire had not been banked so I allowed her to stay to warm me. I fell asleep quickly. In the morning, I found her dead.

What happened? I don't think I will ever know, though I suspect. The case was unlatched and she had collapsed just before it. When her body fell against the door she closed it again. When I turned the body over it was that of an old and haggard woman. The skin was dry and loose about her bones; the hair was lank and gray and thin; the eyes were sunken and the teeth were ragged and any life or beauty or warmth had long since left her body. It was only by the few clothes that she wore - and her jewellery - that I could identify the body. I do not know what killed her, or rather I did not then, but it filled me with unease. I re-latched the case and prepared to leave. If there was any mark of joy or humour on this trip, it was the face of that fat innkeeper when I passed him in the hall; and told him his slave was dead. He was not a man to love anything but coin and I think that whatever afterlife she went to would have been more pleasant than the time she spent with him. In any event - I'll speak not ill of the dead. Mayhaps she was but curious and not larcenous; we'll never know. The second day of my trip had begun; already under a shadow of death.

The second day was much like the first; I traveled fast and far, though I did notice that the final miles went harder than was their wont. My heart was beating fast and my breath was panting, though in all truth, the way was neither steep nor hard. On that night I resolved to stay apart from any others who might succumb, and so I set my camp in a grove of maples half way across the Abraham plains. I had hoped for a quiet night to recoup my mysteriously failing strength but it was not to be. I do not know if you have ever slept in a maple grove but it is a noisy place at night. There are squirrels and raccoons and porcupine and birds, owls and geese, and swallows and whip-er-wills. It is a friendly place, or it was that night, until the dark of the moon.

Now I know my calendars and am not a stupid man in my counting; there should have been no new moon that night, yet there was. When I awoke the night was black and disturbingly silent. All of the world was holding its breath; for somewhere above us a shadow was passing. Immense it was; gliding silently on wings like the sails of a great ship. Back and forth it traversed the skies, blocking out the stars and all other feeling of light and kindness. It was a dragon. It had a

size beyond measure, cruising the skies, silently looking. I feared that it was looking for me. That fear possessed me, though it had been many years since I last knew fear. For this creature could tear up trees with its claws, crumble mountains with its tail and boil oceans with its flame. My sword and I would be like an insect possibly not even noticed probably swatted flat and then passed over. But I realized that the outcome of being 'passed over', the best possible outcome, would not occur, for I had the egg; and it WANTED IT BACK !

I was lucky that night. The grove was fed by a stream, which had undercut a section of rock. It was one of the bones of the earth; hard and enduring. I knew from the speckles that it was iron bearing and so I hid beneath it. Deep in the mud and water and slime I pushed myself and the egg. Whatever; it worked for she passed away eventually and did not land. But the night was long and cold and I got very little of the rest my body sorely needed.

On the third day I awoke to find myself weak and shaking; feeling as if gripped by a sickness, but I was resolved to go on. I traveled as best I could, but my legs were trembling and my steps were shaking. The world swirled about me and a raging thirst beset me. My head pounded and there was a cold numbness in the centre of my back on which the case rested. Every step became agony as my stumbling steps jarred my aching head. More over, I was beset by doubts. Even when I took this commission I had had my concerns on the morality of it. I bore on my back the child of an ancient beast. How came it to the hands of Bathsim? By what right did he trade in the children of others? By what right did I? So the mother hunted me. Would I not do the same? Would not any parent? So I was carrying the egg to Bathshar, yet another wizard, and he would do what with it? I knew wizards enough to hate their ways; and to distrust them implicitly. What would he do with it? All my possible answers turned up thoughts of dread. While these thoughts swirled about my feverish brain my body continued to pace out the miles of my contract. It's strange but even when I could hardly think my will was such to push me to what I was duty bound to do. But now, I was not sure that I wanted to.

Sometime later, I lost consciousness for a time, though I kept walking. How I kept my direction, I do not know. I awakened abruptly when I walked into something. Something thick and hard. A trunk of a tree perhaps, old and knarled and covered in rough bark. In my foggy state I tried to go around it, or at least I thought I did. But I ran into it again. I shook my head, trying to clear it, without avail. I moved about again, watching it this time and I was sure it moved. Now this doesn't make sense. A tree trunk as wide as my chest does not move. I touched it. Hard and rough; harder than any trees I knew. I looked down at the thick hard roots which tore into the soft ground. They shone and the light glimmered off their black glossy finish. I looked up then to try to see the leaves to identify the tree. Instead, all I saw was the swirling kaleidoscope of her shimmering eyes.

Massive globes of fire they were, as big around as a wagon wheel. They had no iris, but simply flickered with an inner fire like sheet lightning in the summer. They gave no warmth though. The fire gave only thoughts of menace and a painful burning death. The eye, for the size precluded me from seeing more than one, regarded me. From somewhere deep inside I felt a tickle in my brain. This grew to a roaring growl like an avalanche in the mountains, ripping the side off a cliff. Through exhaustion and sickness and terror, I realized, she was laughing. It quieted to a voice, deep inside me. "Man, " it said, "you should be dead."

Laughter? Rage I would understand, or hurt, or hatred, or a lust for vengeance, but laughter? "Soon," she said, "you will die. Then, I shall eat what remains. Do you have any last words?" I did not doubt that she was right. I felt certain that I was moments from death.

"Yes, " I said. "Before I die, I wish to clear my soul from a crime." With that, I wrestled myself to my feet once again, weaving and shaking all the while. I fell to my knees twice while I tried to remove the case from my back, but each time I rose again to confront her. Finally I managed to open the case and extract the egg and held it aloft for her to see. As I did so - my arm went dead: a cold creeping numbness began to extend itself inwards; through my arm and to my heart. "Dragon", I gasped, "never before have I failed in a contract, but I will NOT die with this unholy agreement on my heart. I give you back your child for I would destroy my reputation before I would lose my honour to this theft of life." I felt the egg slipping from my grasp so I took it in both hands holding it high as I fell to my knees. "Take it," I sobbed, "and let me die with peace."

"DROP THE EGG!" It came as a roaring reverberating uncompromising ORDER which reverberated through my head. My hands loosed the orb and it stuck the ground with a thud and rolled about ten feet away; unharmed. The dragon swept one of her massive claws, and the egg went rolling down hill, bouncing off rocks and stones, and down an embankment. It landed in a shallow creek 200 feet away. She ignored it. My breath began to ease slightly though my heart was still shaken.

The monster regarded me. "Man," she said, "you interest me. Did you not lust for the egg?" I replied to her that I had not, for I distrusted it and feared it. "You knew it had value did you not?" Yes, I had known, but not for me. My commission was to bear it, not to own it. "Yet you tried to give it up?" I tried to explain the confused workings of my fevered mind, though in truth, I did not understand it all myself.

"Eons ago," she said, "we dragons laid our eggs at the power points of the earth. For centuries they would rest; absorbing the power of the world and passing it to the young life forming within. And then men came with their own brand of power. It was the simplest of tricks to make the eggs attractive and to make men lust for them; to crave them and wish to hold them. To have them pour power into them, or to have them used as traps for each other. It's really quite amusing."

"Bathsim spent half his wizard's might trying to find the 'secret' of the egg and only at the end realized what he had lost. So, he resolved to send it to his Master, thinking it would take his power too. Bathsim then felt he could reclaim the egg and reclaim the power of them both. Impossible of course. All he was doing was feeding my babe... and shortening his already mortal life. This egg will hatch in less than 100 years now; all because greedy and hateful men are so easy to fool. But you, you are different. You actually wanted to give the power up. You truly were driven by morality instead of lust, by honour instead of personal gain. That's rare. You impress me."

And with that, she healed me. I know not how it was done, but over the course of mere moments I found the strength returned to my limbs and the clarity to my brain. She even bade me recover the case and return the egg to its enclosure. She wanted me to deliver it to Bathshar. Though I was loath to touch the thing again, one does not argue with a dragon, even when it IS friendly towards you. She WANTED it delivered. Just as it had gotten power from Bathsim, she wanted it to 'suck' from Bathshar. She had no fears for it, and little mercy for the wizards who acted as its unwitting food sources. I took the egg, and went the final miles required to deliver it. I thought maybe I should warn the man. That was until I met him. He was as questionable in character as his rodent student. He positively gloated when he opened the case and called his student a 'asinine fool' for giving it up. I believe he thought he had 'tricked' Bathsim into sending it to him. He stated that 'it held a good portion of Bathsim's power and once it was released it would all belong to him.' As I said, the ways of wizards are steeped in treachery.



**This is the navigational Beacon that the Island paper is named after. It's on the west face of the island, as can be seen from the sun setting over Prince Edward County.
Photo from Brian Little**