Laura Howarth of Bay Berry Lane has a back deck overlooking the conservation area that has been cleared. She's unhappy that some dead ash trees remain too close to her deck and garden. (Mike Balsom)

Controversial Queenston Mile subject of second planning appeal

Penny Coles
The Local

Queenston Mile Vineyard, the subject of controversy since it initially sought zoning from the town to operate as an estate winery, is in the process of being acquired by Diamond Estates Wine and Spirits, with an expected date of completion of the sale in September.

There has already been one Local Planning Appeal Tribunal decision between the town and the winery owners — the tribunal ruled in favour of Queenston Mile — and now there is a second appeal filed by the winery.

Councillors were discussing the issue in a closed session Monday night. Lord Mayor Betty Disero said before the meeting, while not able to disclose the nature of the discussion, that council would be deciding how to proceed.

"We’ll be looking at our next steps," she said. "I suppose if they (the new owners) carry on with LPAT, we’ll have to carry on," she added. "I don’t know what their plans are."

Disero said she wasn’t surprised the winery had been sold. "They weren’t quite about wanting to sell," she said.

The outstanding issue with Queenston Mile, a continued sore spot with some councillors, had been the installation of commercial kitchen equipment, and the winery’s intentions of how they’re going to use it.

Continued on page 4

Neighbours dissatisfied with NPCA tree-clearing

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Laura Howarth stands in her Bay Berry Lane backyard bordering on the ravine that leads to the Two Mile Creek near Butler’s Burial Ground. The life-long Niagara-on-the-Lake resident points to a pair of ash trees poking up from the valley, standing ominously behind the residential homes. Their tops have been removed and they are totally devoid of any leaves.

"When you stand up on my deck, you can see the height," she says. "They grow this way, toward the sun. All these trees grow this way. And those are dead as doornails, those two. And there’s two more right there. They are tall enough." Tall enough to wreak havoc, she fears.

Howarth and other Bay Berry Lane residents are concerned that the dead trees may eventually fall and end up causing damage to their yards, and potentially their homes.

On the morning of July 22, Howarth’s garden was in a state of disarray.

“The tops had come off the ash trees and they were all over my garden, two feet from my deck. And I had just put a new deck in. There were large branches, about 20 feet, that did the damage. I had to throw them down (into the ravine). It knocked out solar lights and a bird house, and my fencing came out.”

The activity in the area was part of a forest and stream rehabilitation effort begun by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) on July 5. The forested floodplain is owned and managed by the NPCA.

In June, the NPCA distributed letters to nearby residents describing the planned removal of ash trees affected by the emerald ash borer infestation, as well as Manitoba maple trees that are not native to Niagara. A reforestation of the area, with native tree plantings, is planned for spring, 2022.

By the time Howarth had arrived home after attending some appointments later the same day, the crews from third party Aecon Six Nations had removed all of the heavy machinery used to tear down the trees and much of the trunks and branches. Howarth was miffed when she saw the
Sherlock opens much-anticipated indoor Shaw performances

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Sherlock Holmes is back at the Shaw, right where he belongs, on the indoor stage at the Festival Theatre.

Reprising the role he played in 2018, Damien Atkins walked the floorboards in front of a sold-out audience Friday night for Sherlock Holmes and the Raven’s Curse. It marked the return to indoor theatre at the Shaw for the first time since 2019.

Director Craig Hall is ecstatic.

“It’s an absolute relief,” he says on the phone from Victoria, where he is preparing for the fall season of his Calgary-based Vertigo Theatre. “It’s fantastic. We are the only show at the Festival this year where we rehearsed outside, but we always intended to start onset. It is a pure joy.”

Hall, who also directed 2018’s Sherlock Holmes and the Hound of the Baskervilles at Shaw, says without the return to the indoor setting, this year’s mystery may not have happened.

“I’m not sure we could have pulled off this show,” he admits. “The mystery genre needs, most of all, darkness. You need to be able to have secret spaces. You need to be able to hide certain things. And the nature of this piece, it travels from the streets of London, to Baker Street, onto a train, to the Isle of Skye. It would have been a tough one to do outside.”

Hall knows what it takes to mount a successful mystery production. His Vertigo Theatre company exclusively produces mystery plays. He’s become known across the country as an expert director of mysteries. During the pandemic, Vertigo shifted to offer Vertigo Mystery Radio, a ticketed online podcast in the style of classic radio dramas.

Opening night for Sherlock Holmes and the Raven’s Curse, written by R. Hamilton Wright, had been repeatedly pushed back until the province moved into the current step of its Roadmap to Recovery. For Hall, whose other commitments pulled him back to Western Canada a week ago, that meant he had to miss the debut performance.

“Originally, I was meant to be in Niagara until about the 15th of July,” Hall tells The Local. “It’s tough. I always say directors don’t finish, we kind of abandon the project long before we say it’s finished. This one I’ve been doing Sherlock Holmes, he’s become a bit of a obsession, and I all have this short-hand for it. When I’m doing it, I’m seeing it two dozen times, and I’m kind of ready to let it go. With this one, I feel like I left before I was ready to go, but not before the show was ready to go.”

Hall feels he has left the show in incredibly capable hands.

Atkins, who also appears in The Devil’s Disciple at Shaw this summer, is back in the lead role of the much-loved detective. Also reprising their 2018 roles are Shaw veterans Ric Reid as Dr. Watson, and Claire Julien as Mrs. Hudson. The remainder of the ensemble is largely composed of Shaw regulars.

“Damien, Ric and Claire and I all have this shorthand, having done one of these before,” explains Hall. “You do sort of build off of what was built before. It’s also the same playwright, so there’s also a common language there.”

“Damien is a playwright himself,” Hall continues, “and in the short time that he’s been doing Sherlock Holmes, he’s become a bit of a Sherlock Holmes fanatic. He has a deep, deep knowledge of the canon. He has a deep, deep knowledge of what Conan Doyle never really delved into. Wright is really able to dig into that stuff, and I think that’s really fun for fans of Sherlock who have never had that access.”

The story is an original, created by playwright Wright. Hall describes the play as “Sherlock Holmes meets Downstairs Abbey,” and says it will appeal to fans of both franchises.

In The Raven’s Curse, Sherlock Holmes is summoned to his childhood home to investigate the mysterious death of his favourite uncle, and to uncover the truth about an ancient family curse. Along the way he is reunited with some long-lost cousins, including one who might be withholding a dark secret. Holmes and Watson must race against time to get to the bottom of this mystery before the Raven’s Curse claims another life.

“Wright has done a masterful job of honouring the canon,” Hall says, “but yet expanding the characters, and maybe humanizing them a bit. This one delves into Sherlock’s personal history, and that’s something that Conan Doyle never really delved into. Wright is really able to dig into that stuff, and I think that’s really fun for fans of Sherlock who have never had that access.”

Hall is holding out hope that perhaps some time in the near future a third Sherlock Holmes mystery may take the stage in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He hints at the possibility of another Wright original, focusing more prominently on Julian’s character, Mrs. Hudson, as a perfect vehicle for a return in a year or two. It’s a similar idea to what he does out in Calgary with Vertigo.

“I think the idea is to build a fan base for it that you get to capitalize on,” he says. “It gives a shorthand to marketing, to the audiences who get to see the continued adventures. There’s not a lot of that happening anymore in the theatre world.”

Meanwhile, the return to an indoor setting in front of an audience is exciting for Hall and the cast, many of whom had to turn to online performances during the pandemic.

“It’s a genre where you kind of feed off the crowd,” he says. “They’re much more active participants. You get those reactions when there are revelations. There’s also much more humour in this show. I know that even having a small audience is such a big thing for them (the actors).”

Shaw is currently selling tickets for both indoor and outdoor shows at a reduced capacity to maintain physical distancing. The exact percentages of seating varies depending on each of their venue sizes and can change as the province moves beyond Step 3.

Sherlock Holmes and the Raven’s Curse is a two-act play, with an intermission. It is on now until Oct. 10. Visit shawfest.com for information and tickets.
The NPCA has left some dead trees standing to preserve wildlife habitat, but nearby resident Laura Howarth is afraid some of them can still damage homes in the area. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Dan Drennan of the NPCA is asking residents to be patient. About 5,000 trees will be planted in the spring of 2022.

Residents hope to meet with NPCA about tree clearing

operations Adam Christie to explain her concerns. He confirmed that the crew was done clearing trees and referred to Drennan’s decision-making on those near her property.

The Local was able to contact Drennan this week.

“We have taken down a lot of trees, and we had to leave some standing because of wild habitat, birds and bats,” he stated. “She’s upslope from the trees, so that’s one of the advantages that she (Howarth) has. We are following up on the damages that she said happened to her property, and we may have to take another look at those trees as well.”

Howarth is also concerned about the general state that the conservation area has been left in. Her worries are similar to those of nearby Mary Street resident Mary Ann Novaco, who often walks in the conservation area.

“1t’s unbelievable that they have to make a two-lane highway to cut down dead trees,” Novaco says about the wide swath left open, covered in wood chips from the felled trees. “They’ve been there before, and took down some of the ash trees and didn’t do any damage.”

“Both Howarth and Novaco fear that felled trees may bring flooding this winter. As well, they have concerns with the depth of the wood chips left on the path, especially in light of higher temperatures and news of forest fires in northern Ontario and elsewhere.

Drennan says there is very low potential for any kind of fire hazard along the creek.

“The ground is wet, it’s an actual floodplain-slash-wetland,” Drennan says. “Somebody would have to go in there and purposely light a fire for that to happen.”

“The intent was to reforest the property,” he adds. “When you do these operations, and I have 30 years experience in this, it doesn’t look pretty. When you fell 400 to 600 dead ash trees, it’s not going to be pleasing to the eye.”

Drennan asks the residents for patience.

“They will see the planting next year, and they will see the results over several years. It’s not an overnight thing. We’re creating plentiful ground for a spring 2022 plant of roughly 5,000 stems. Remember, this is not a walking path, it’s not a park, people should stick to the trails. We don’t want them walking through and ruining what we plant next year.”

“We keep taking away natural habitat,” says Novaco, “now in the name of conservation. Kids use Butler’s Graveyard all the time. God forbid someone lights a cigarette or sets off a firecracker. And think of the animals that they’ve displaced.”

Howarth also fears that deer, wild turkeys, beavers, coyotes, ducks and other species may never return to what she considers a safe haven. Earlier this week she discovered a turtle along the cleared area. Its shell had been partially crushed, likely by a felled tree. She picked it up and placed it in the creek.

“They should have just left the darn things (the ash trees) and let nature take its course,” concludes Novaco. Howarth echoes that sentiment.

As for the Bay Berry backyards, Howarth points to the information distributed to the residents stating that one of the objectives of the NPCA operation was to remove hazardous trees close to residential areas.

“This has not been done,” she says. “No one wants trees crashing through their roofs. The trees should be removed and others should be trimmed.”

Howarth and the other Bay Berry Lane residents are hoping to have a meeting with Drennan soon about the handful of trees they feel still threaten their properties.
Councillors have said in the past they’re concerned the plan is for the winery to use their event space as a restaurant, and some councillors are still having issues with what they see as discrepancies of total capacity of people at events, inside and outside.

Questions about the intent of the winery have consistently elicited responses from Queenston Mile representatives, from the earliest discussions, that there is no plan for a restaurant. They want to be able to offer food and wine pairings during tastings, and they may use the kitchen for special events, but not to serve patrons in a restaurant dining room, they have repeatedly told council.

Also continuing issues of residents and council are what kind of special events are permitted, whether there is enough parking, and even the water capacity of the winery.

Still outstanding in the minds of some council members is whether the processing of wine is being done on the property, as regulated for estate wineries, says Disero, giving the space that’s available.

Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery operator Paul Harber has told councillors and town staff that while some wine may be produced at the Queenston Road location, production of all 50 acres of grapes is not being done on site, contrary to the town by-law that regulates estate wineries.

“That was the real opposition, that people come to NOTL to visit wineries where grapes are grown and wine is processed onsite,” said Disero.

The fear of wineries processing offsite is that wine-making becomes a mass production, she added, and not what estate wineries were intended to be.

“It puts an end to that quaintness that is associated with farm wineries, that brought us our brand,”

Lawyer Tom Richardson, representing residents, has also expressed that concern, and has called on the town staff to investigate, and to contact the Alcoholic Gaming Commission of Ontario for an inspection.

Disero says it’s a question that won’t be answered until the fall, when production is underway and can be investigated.

But it’s the delay of the decision to allow the installation of the kitchen equipment that is going to ahead, lifting of the town’s earlier conditions for rezoning.

Disero said for the sake of the residents, they wanted to have conditions that would limit the number of events and the number of people at the events.

When councillors asked if they could continue to impose conditions before granting approval of the commercial kitchen, planning director Craig Larmour said he was not sure of the answer, and that it could take a month to find out.

Disero pointed to this particular situation as a symptom of a problem with the process, and the difficulty councillors are facing. They want to do the best they can for residents, but are facing a timeline for making planning decisions, as set by the province, that sometimes makes that impossible.

That leads to applications for a decision from the provincial planning tribunal, she explained. When proposed planning amendments are the subject of open houses and then statutory meetings, there is a report on the table with staff recommendations, says Disero. Councillors are not supposed to talk to staff or ask questions until these recommendations have been made, but by then, when residents speak out, it’s too far along in the process to respond to their concerns, she says.

Members of the public make their delegations, a number of questions are asked, “and then we’re expected as a council to approve the staff report, or be accused of making changes on the fly.”

If that’s the process, she says, “why bother having delegations? We can’t get the answers in a timeline that meets our deadline. Somehow we’ve got to get this turned around.”

Andrew Howard, president of Equity Wines, which includes Queenston Mile and Creekside Estates and is the company being purchased by Diamond Estates, says what should have been a relatively simple matter of zoning for an estate winery couldn’t have been more “complicated.”

The application for the first LPAT review was over a site plan agreement, with the town asking for the entrance to be moved from Queenston Road to Concession 6, away from nearby residents.

The decision was in favour of the winery, he said, with the tribunal agreeing that “you can’t build a road through vineyards.”

The winery has tried instead to work with the neighbours on Queenston Road, planting some trees, pruning up some of the aspects of the property, a complaint had complained about, building a fence and adding some landscaping.

“We want to be good neighbours,” he said. “All we’re asking for now is the right to use some cooking equipment.”

They have applied for a “non-decision appeal” given the planning department’s assertion it could take a while to give council the answers they are looking for.

“We’re expecting LPAT will decide for the town and for us, how the bylaw will be written, and give us some certainty about what the rules are,”

He doesn’t expect the sale of Equity Wines to change anything for Queenston Mile plans, he said.

Equity owners are also investors in Diamond Estates, and “the handful” of those who are involved in winery operations will continue to be involved.

The ongoing difficulties with rezoning have been a topic of conversation with the new owners, he added.

But more important, Diamond Estates like what Queenston Mile and Creekside have to offer in the way of “premiering their portfolio.”

Equity Wines “comes to the party with skills, production, and interesting brands they like. We will add to what they have, and their capability of selling premium wines.”

As to the question of where the wine is produced, he says, it has been answered, “full stop.” All wine production is done onsite, and cause they use more manual methods than other wineries, they don’t need as much space.

“We’re following all the rules.”

The Alcoholic Gaming Commission of Ontario has already sent an officer to look at the site, “and he told us ‘ev- erything is good order, you guys are good. You’re doing everything you need to do here.”

The file is closed, added Howard.

He questions why some wineries are opposed to what Queenston Mile is doing, and others are supportive.

“When we do a good job, when we support each other, it’s good for all of us.”
Caldwell Securities Ltd. is Bullish on Canada!
Border openings good news for local businesses

Opening Canadian borders to allow American visitors is understandably good news for local businesses. They’ve been hurting for a long time, and although they are open now, indoor dining at restaurants is welcome, it’s never going to be enough to make up for the many months they’ve been closed.

Opening the borders is exciting, but it is not without risk — there are far more COVID cases in the U.S. than in the U.S., and the Delta variant is seeing a dramatic increase. Protocols are so different south of the border, with few restrictions imposed on residents. There aren’t the same mandates for masks, or reduced capacities at events. Only about 50 per cent of U.S. residents are vaccinated, and the Delta variant’s high rate of infection has driven the number of new cases through the roof, to more than 90,000 a day.

Although there is grumbling about our prime minister allowing the borders, which is now reciprocal to welcome Canadian visitors, maybe for now we should be grateful. For those who are concerned about American visitors heading this way, happy to be able to travel, even if only to border towns, Canada is doing it in a way that feels like its safe.

Only visitors who are fully vaccinated can cross the border and negative COVID tests are still required. Unlike the Delta variant, which is also causing an increase in cases in Ontario and other parts of Canada, changes plans for the future, international travelers may also be welcomed soon, with the same restrictions as those crossing from the U.S.

We’ve done what we can as a community to support local businesses throughout the pandemic, but international travelers will do more than we ever could. We’re excited to see Shaw plays ourselves, and to eat out in our favourite restaurants, but it’s also great to know there will be Shaw theatre-goers and other visitors back in town, staying in hotels and local accommodations, and eating in restaurants.

One word of caution. We’ve heard some rumbling from people who are happy to be finally able to eat out, but are upset about slow service at some of their favourite dining spots.

We’ve heard from several servers who are the brunt of the impatience and anger of diners, making them go home at the end of the day, wondering why they wanted to work in the hospitality industry.

Let’s remember a lot of restaurants lost their experienced staff members when dining rooms were shut down. Many were forced to find work in other industries, and might be wary of giving up their jobs to return to local restaurants where they were formerly employed, fearing another lock-down could be in the future.

Some local businesses are struggling to find experienced people to employ, and are training new staff.

We’ve heard similar stories about people being upset about waiting for service in retail stores, or having to wear masks, and not being happy to take their frustration out on people who are just trying to help them.

Please, be kind. Be patient. Remember how we felt when we had to wait in line to even get into stores? We did it, and we survived. We’re closer to getting back to normal, but we’re not there yet. We are still in a pandemic. Waiting a few minutes longer for a meal isn’t going to hurt us. It’s nothing compared to what we’ve been through. We can line out with friends and family, when for months we couldn’t even see them. We should be grateful to enjoy eating, that favourable our favourite spots managed to stay in business through a very tough time, and grateful to be among family, friends and neighbours.

The future remains uncertain, and everyone is doing their best. Let’s keep this in mind.

Penny Coles
The Local

One word of caution.

OPENING THE BORDERS

More than 90,000 daily cases in the U.S.

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The future remains uncertain, and everyone is doing their best. Let’s keep this in mind.

Penny Coles
The Local

One word of caution.
Local LETTERS - Local Letters

Almost 25,000 Canadians have died from COVID

For many Niagara residents, the civic holiday weekend was an unfortunate milestone. It’s when some of our Niagara farms start their practice of using bird cannons again, I do decibels of un-strategic explosions starting every morning at around 5:45 a.m. If anyone knows enough, some have added acoustic distress devices so there is no reprieve from the cacophony. The decibels and squawking are relentless and being used even if there be not a bird in sight. Hundreds of town residents are concerned about this unnecessary and excessive noise pollution, and yet some farmers fade behind takes on the form of pest control unwanted for two years ago. Modern technology has created silent and very effective solutions, yet there seems no lack of the motivation to try new innovative solutions that would ultimately benefit our environment ecosystem. We have innovators in our community that we can look to as best-in-class examples. Winetiers like Ravine Vineyard Estates and Southbrook have embraced a nhiều solutions, and the research is pointing towards how the farming community; and their resident neighbors can live in harmony with the birds.

We were happy to read that town council is tabling the issue of noise from fireworks and noise complaints from short term rental properties. I would hope these initiatives would also apply to those of us that are experiencing noise from bird cannons that can last up to five months. I welcome all members of council to visit our neighbourhood to really understand the impact of these unrelenting bird cannons. Last year we endured over 90,000 blasts from dawn to dusk (and don’t worry about showing up too early, every day starts with a thunderous cannon blast well before 6 a.m.)

The province also continues to say that “noise pollution may have negative impacts on human health, including loss of sleep, increased stress levels and hearing loss, in severe cases”

Although the scenic exit into Lake Ontario is accompanied by old-growth forest and wetlands, it is still the last point of Four Mile Creek divers and troublesome journey. When the sun sets and rocks bottom, that means there is plenty of space for improvement. Improvement starts with two things. One, we need our town council, the NIPCA, and the region to take a more proactive stance on where future developments happen. They can work together, rather than delegating the effort and blame onto the others. Stop blaming the creek for a situation that our town has created, and let’s get to work on protecting it. Further altering its course may have good intentions on paper, but I fear for the environmental repercussions. Secondly, it takes people like you and me to act as the reader, to get outside and help protect our Four Mile Creek and our natural heritage.

Bob Oleksiw
NOTL

How to deal with poison ivy toxin?

I am not a Facebook subscriber, if so I might get an answer to the question I shall pose. I am hoping that this task might get a similar result.

I got poison ivy. It was horrid and the effects had lasted 10 days. That is not unusual I am told, but I was wearing white pants in order to see any ticks which might converge on me. These pants I washed immediately after the exposure with hot water and detergent (pity I couldn’t put my arms in the tub), and dried them on the line in the sun. There have emerged with lots of black spotted lines on the front, just where the toxin might have got. What could have caused this? I have worn these pants only for gardening. A previous wash had no effect. They are flax/cotton made of a chenille/cotton hemp. Could the hemp be affected by the toxin?

How did this happen? I wonder if I can bleach them with the hemp content?

Cynthia Ranis NOTL

Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor you’d like to see published, please send it to penny@notllocal.com. Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won’t publish anonymous letters. And please stick to the issue at hand, rather than attacking those involved. The deadline is Monday at noon.

NOTL LOCAL
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DON’T MISS
Contact us today. There are just a few dates left for this premium position for 2021!

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AUGUST 11, 2021 7
Those who knew Diane Moreau Hemmings would know of her extensive volunteer work in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and her extremely wide range of interests. But they might not realize the extent of her education, the wide range of her skills, the many places she has lived, the diversity of her careers or the number of organizations to which she lent her time and talents.

In short, Diane was an engaging, talented woman, and one who shared her many interests and skills to help make her community better for all who live here.

Her husband David Hemmings, an author of several books on local history, says about her presentation during a plaque dedication and tree-planting for Diane, that he missed her wordsmithing skills. Her passion for speech-writing and understanding of rhetoric stemmed from her persuasive speech studies that she did as a doctorate, her days as a political lobbyist on Capitol Hill in Washington, and her time as a docent at the Library of Congress, he says.

David spoke of his wife to a group of friends and fellow volunteers during a ceremony for Diane at the NOTL Museum Tuesday, one of the many local organizations she supported.

Born in Montreal, where David spoke of his wife to a group of friends and fellow volunteers during a ceremony for Diane at the NOTL Museum Tuesday, one of the many local organizations she supported.

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"She was a wonderful conversationalist, about all kinds of things. I liked just hanging out with Diane and David. It was always interesting. In terms of current events, world politics, and even locally, she was well-informed and knew what was going on. I could always rely on her for an honest opinion," says Davey. "I'm really going to miss her."

"She was a nice person, she was generous, and she could be brutally honest!" She was also very intelligent, adds Diervo.

"Anything I asked her to do, she could do it. She didn't want publicity. She just wanted to roll up her sleeves and get the job done. She was a very private person."

She was quick to tell the lord mayor what she was doing wrong, and what she was doing right. If there was an issue that needed attention, she would say so. And since Diane was connected to so many people through her volunteer work, she sometimes heard about issues before the lord mayor, and never hesitated to pass along what she had heard, so something could be done about them, says Diervo.

She was also a wonderful conversationalist, about all kinds of things. I liked just hanging out with Diane and David. It was always interesting. In terms of current events, world politics, and even locally, she was well-informed and knew what was going on. I could always rely on her for an honest opinion," says Davey. "I'm really going to miss her."

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"She was a nice person, she was generous, and she could be brutally honest!"
Bonnie Bagnulo, executive director of the NOTL Community Palliative Care Service, says the annual Shred-it event has been moved to Simpson’s Pharmacy on Niagara Stone Road. (Photo supplied)
Motown classics, originals featured in online concert

Mike Balsom

Special to The Local

Canadian singer-songwriter Luke McMaster brings his soulful tribute to the masters as part of Music Niagara’s At Home Concert Series. It’s a performance recorded in front of a small live audience by Niagara College’s broadcasting program July 21 at Chateau des Charmes Winery, to be presented online Aug. 12.

Formerly of the blue-eyed soul duo McMaster and James, the Brandon, Manitoba native has a deep love of the Motown sound evident throughout his oeuvre. His 2018 release Icons saw him take on Smokey Robinson classics: Supremes, Four Tops, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder. I became like Rain Man, totally obsessed with that music.

While in high school, McMaster taught himself to play guitar, and began writing songs. But he kept his musical pursuits hidden from his family until he decided to leave Brandon University after just a short stint there.

His father George, now 45-year-old Stoney Creek resident, and his mother have about 500 songs, many of which were written in the late-60s and early-70s. McMaster says a batch of songs exists, though, that could someday see the light of day. McMaster released an EP called This Time in 2018, but it wasn’t until 2013 when he truly moved back into the spotlight with the release of his debut album All Roads. His collaboration with pianist Jim Brickman on that album, Good Morning Beautiful, climbed to the number three position on the U.S. Billboard Adult Contemporary chart.

Not surprisingly, there are a couple of Motown covers on that debut solo album, too. McMaster’s set for Music Niagara features many of those Motown songs as well as his own compositions, which fit seamlessly in with the tried and true classics. In between he tells stories about his inspirations, such as the time Smokey Robinson himself tweeted his approval of McMaster’s version of one of his well-known soul numbers. A highlight of the show is My Life is a Song, a collaboration with Lamont Dozier, who was one-third of the Holland-Douglas-Holland Motown songwriting team. Without McMaster’s backstory, most would think it’s a 1960s-era song the two worked on about Dozier’s life.

“I half-jokingly said to him that we should write a song about him,” McMaster remembers. “He kind of sat there for a minute then said ‘it’s a great idea.’ He’s a really smart, affable guy. I really wanted to borrow the James Jamerson bass lines. He wrote that bass line.”

McMaster’s band seemed inspired by the bucolic setting under the tent, with the Chateau des Charmes vineyards and the town itself. “The show was so fun, and it’s really such a special area,” McMaster says. “Last night Tracy and I were saying ‘why don’t we live here?’ It’s one of the nicest towns I’ve ever been to. I’m hoping my agent can book us a wineries tour for next summer. That would be fantastic.”

With any luck, that might include another appearance for the Music Niagara Festival. Luke McMaster’s performance for the Music Niagara Festival At Home Concert Series debuts Thursday, Aug. 12, at 4 p.m. Visit musicniagara.org or the organization’s YouTube channel to watch the show.

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Local author has next new book in the works

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Any book lover will tell you that there is something special about buying a book directly from its author.

"That’s especially true when the author happens to be a fascinating 85-year-old history buff who lives right in your town," Baker says.

Jean Baker parked herself under the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum’s CommUNITY Courtyard tent last Saturday morning to sign copies of her new novel, Albatross Hall. And she was more than happy to chat about the circumstances that brought her to this point.

Described by the author as a historical fiction, Albatross Hall takes place during a dramatic period of European history, set as it is in the reigns of George III and IV, with a flashback to the reigns of Elizabeth I and Oliver Cromwell.

The Elmshaven manor house of the title is the ancient family seat of the aristocratic Ponsonbys, whose fortunes interact with the lives of prominent historical figures such as Napoleon, the Duke of Wellington, U.S. President Thomas Jefferson, and General John Burgoyne.

"The slave trade, witchcraft, daylight robbery, murder, adventure — it’s got everything," says Baker. "I love history, and every detail in that book, including the Cato Street Conspiracy (an attempt to murder all the British cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, in 1820) is verifiable."

"It covers three continents," she continues. "It covers the Battle of Waterloo, that’s one of the principal highlights. It also covers the fall on the eve of the battle, the Duchness of Richmond’s Hall. And I’ve got two crazy old ladies in it too."

Baker took almost four years to complete Albatross Hall, making sure she got all the dates correct and ensuring its historical accuracy. Two dictionary-like compendiums of British history helped in that process.

Jean is a delight to chat with. During a quiet moment on Saturday she shared her own story, which itself begins in a historical time and place.

"During the war years, it wasn’t so easy," she remembers. "I grew up during the Blitz. Our house was bombed. And after the war, we had to continue rationing. There was no sense of being able to go out and buy what we wanted. Coupons were in effect for many years after the end of the War in ’45. We were allowed two ounces of butter per person per week."

But she pushed on, attending college as a history major, eventually becoming an elementary school teacher in the U.K. She married Peter Baker, and the couple moved to Canada in 1957, where Peter took a position as an engineer with the federal government.

Peter, who passed away in January, 2020, eventually became a statistician, and was involved in a landmark federal lung cancer study in 1972.

Jean was able to pick up no practice in as well. "I joined eight (organizations) as soon as I moved in," she says. "Two weeks later I was in the church choir. I was a member of the church choir for 24 years, but I retired because my voice is not quite as strong."

The Niagara Historical Society, Amnesty International, the NOTL Horticultural Society and the Newcomers Club are just a few of the local organizations that have benefitted from Baker’s wisdom, wit and energy.

She also began studying piano, taking music alongside the organist at St. Mark’s Church. She continues this pursuit today with current St. Mark’s organist James Bourne.

Unfortunately, Peter began experiencing dementia in their early days in NOTL. While she had the idea for Albatross Hall back then, it took many years for her to get organized to put it all down on paper while she helped her husband with his struggles.

Baker says she has an idea for another novel that she may get down to finishing soon, as long as she can squeeze her piano practice in as well.

"I’m waiting for the cooler weather," she laughs. "For the brain to work. It’s a different era, set in Scotland. It’s about a gentleman who believed in the underwater. And he was a preacher. I’ve done part of it, but it needs some fine-tuning."

It’s pretty much a given that when that novel sees the light of day, it will be just as interesting and engaging as Albatross Hall and, more importantly, as its author.

Albatross Hall is published by Victoria, B.C.’s Friesen Press and available via its website. It is also available at the NOTL Museum, as well as at local bookstores and via Chapters and Amazon online.
In mid March, 2020 I remember huddling around the TV at the ReMax office (before social distancing was implemented!) wait- ing to hear Prime Minister Trudeau address our great country. There were so many questions: Was travel allowed? Would schools close? Would the markets crash? In my own little world I wondered what would happen to the beau- tiful listing I JUST posted on MLS THAT morning at 53 Queenston in Niaga- ra-on-the-Lake.

Would anyone come to see it? Would I be allowed to show people through? Could I sell a property in a pandemic? There was a brief moment where I was sincerely worried. I had some clients call and ask me to help them sell everything and liquidate their real estate portfolio, but for a few days, I wasn’t even sure we would be able to complete a real es- tate transaction! But what about folks who have sold their home and NEED to purchase a home? Thankfully, technology, lawyers, banks, land reg- istry etc have been able to pivot and continue to serve - albeit in ‘different than we’re used to’ ways. My father used to tell me that often, devastation leads to innovation and I would concur that there have been many changes to how we ‘do life’ in gen- eral! Multiple real estate agents, businesses own- ers and advertisers did a mass exits/reduction in advertising on billboards and signs throughout the region in an effort to save money. However, I decid- ed it may be a good (albeit risky) time to double down in advertising; so I took out nearly 40 new billboards/ signs around Niagara as they became vacant in an effort to take the oppor- tunity to get the word out that I was still in business and set up to serve. My phone began ringing more than it’s ever rang! From March 15 to about March 22 I navigated just ONE real estate deal and otherwise it was the qui- est week of my career. But I had no idea what was coming. By the end of March, the Real Estate Council Ontario imple- mented some excellent Covid regulations to al- low us to continue trading in real estate, to conduct business. My team and I invested in the best video marketing tools available and we begin to offer full virtual tours to our clients etc and by May 1st, we had sold more properties than we typically would sell in an entire year. Somehow, 2020 ended up being the busiest year in my 14 years as a real estate agent. Sometimes the biggest set backs can be our biggest set ups. Now, I do not want to be insensitive to the very real fact that Covid has devastatedly impact- ed millions and millions of people in a negative way and I would be remiss if I did not commend ev- ery essential worker for their heroism this past 18 months. We salute you!

In conclusion, although prices in some markets in Ontario have nearly dou- bled in the last two years, no one can claim to know precisely WHY. In my pro- fessional opinion, SOME of the contributing factors in Niagara are: people flee- ing the big cities to work from home, young people delaying their weddings and buying a home instead of paying for the wedding, enticingly low interest rates, rising costs of con- struction and the mass unloading of rental prop- erties (investors cashing in while the market is hot) - to name a few. Personally I believe that at some point the market needs to - and likely will - regulate itself, but in the meantime, prices continue to rise.

We don't have a crystal ball but we do know that people will. ALWAYS need to place to live, and living in Niagara-on-the-Lake is the best place to live in our beautiful country! As a resident of NOTL, I know and love this area and if you are thinking of buying or selling but don’t know where to start, please call me today. I would be delighted to have a cup of coffee with you, let you know what your home is worth and let you know what properties are avail- able for you to consider! Thanks for reading.

~ Greg Sykes
There is a familiar and neighbourly kind of culture about the Sandtrap that has attracted locals from the beginning, from those who gather there for lunch on their work day, to friends and families who enjoy dinner out. That’s the ambience the owners have created, and the regulars have embraced.

Paul and Matt are hoping those new to town who may not have visited the Sandtrap will give it a try and realize why the Mary Street restaurant has become a go-to for locals, why they leave smiling, and why they return.

The Sandtrap owners made sure they kept their core staff employed during the shut-down, while they continued with takeout, which was always surprisingly busy, says Paul. That has allowed them to reopen with experienced servers and kitchen staff, and they’ve had no trouble hiring a few more experienced people to continue providing a great dining experience.

Inside, the restaurant offers a spacious, meticulously cleaned area with tables, and large booths separated with plexiglass. All COVID protocols are being followed, making for a safe indoor dining experience, but for those who aren’t yet comfortable with that, the entire menu selection is still available for takeout, and regulars also enjoy the large patio space added last summer.

“We want to welcome you to come and enjoy our dining room, whether you’re one of our great regulars, new to town, or just visiting,” says Paul.

And as regulars appreciate, there are lots of TVs for those who want to enjoy their favourite sports.

As they look forward to welcoming new and returning customers, Paul and Matt want to say thank you to all those who supported them, and other local businesses, during the pandemic. It’s meant a lot to them to see friendly faces coming to pick up their takeout dinners, and they’re grateful for being part of such a great community. They can’t wait to be able to express their thanks in person to those who are as anxious and ready to get back to a more normal way of life as they are.
Successful cross-lake swim begins in NOTL

There is another name to add to the plaque at Queen’s Royal Park, following the successful swim across Lake Ontario of a woman determined to raise money to speed up organ transplants.

Jillian Best, a 34-year-old from London, Ont., is herself a liver transplant recipient, and her mother is a two-time transplant survivor, both of them suffering from a genetic condition that over time attacks and destroys the body’s organs.

Best left Niagara-on-the-Lake at 11 p.m. Tuesday, and reached Marilyn Bell Bark in Toronto just before 6 p.m. Wednesday, 18 hours and 36 minutes after she walked into the water, a crowd cheering her on from Queen’s Royal Park.

Sponsors and a crowd-funding campaign have helped Best raise about $130,000 for her foundation, Move for Life, which is dedicated to reducing the wait time for organ transplants. The money raised from her swim will help purchase equipment for the London Health Sciences Centre Multi-Transplant Organ Unit.

When talking to the press following her swim, Best said she couldn’t have done it alone, thanking her crew and “everyone helping her along the way.”

Local Tony Chisholm, at the beach to see her off, was one of those who helped Best behind the scenes.

He has been involved with Solo Swim Ontario, the organization which regulates lake crossings, since his son Shaun completed his crossing in 2008, which, as a Toronto firefighter, he had undertaken to raise funds for the burn unit at the Hospital for Sick Children.

Tony was accompanying the swim in his power boat, helping to navigate the route to Marilyn Bell Park, where many cross-lake swimmers, including Best, end their journey.

One of Solo Swims’ regulations is to complete half the distance in a specified amount of time before attempting a lake crossing, and Tony accompanied Best on that swim. The trial swim has to be 16 kilometres, and must be done in less than six hours. Best swam to the Welland Canal and back in five hours, 10 minutes, he says.

Although the distance from NOTL to Marilyn Bell is 52 kilometres, most swimmers travel further, due to waves and strong currents that push them off their route, says Chisholm. That was an issue as Shaun, then 40, approached Toronto. The lake, says Tony, who gave a lecture on cross-lake swims for the NOTL Museum last year, has a wicked ability to invert temperatures, treacherous waves, and a current from the Humber River. He had a tough time convincing Shaun to swim to the left of the CN tower — aiming for it would have thrown him off course.

Shaun finished his crossing in just over 19 hours, and has since become a swim master. He and Tony have gone on to assist 10 more cross-lake swimmers since. One of Solo Swims’ regulations is to complete half the distance in a specified amount of time before attempting a lake crossing, and Tony accompanied Best on that swim. The trial swim has to be 16 kilometres, and must be done in less than six hours. Best swam to the Welland Canal and back in five hours, 10 minutes, he says.

He also opened his home to her on from Queen’s Royal Park. Sponsors and a crowd-funding campaign have helped Best raise about $130,000 for her foundation, Move for Life, which is dedicated to reducing the wait time for organ transplants. The money raised from her swim will help purchase equipment for the London Health Sciences Centre Multi-transplant Organ Unit.

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It was the first swim from NOTL since 2018. There were two swimmers scheduled to make the crossing in 2020, says Chisholm, but they were cancelled. It would have been difficult to train for those events, with pools closed and unavailable for the important training — preparing to successfully make the crossing can take 18 months of training.

When Best finished her swim, in the same spot Marilyn Bell landed after her famous swim in 1954, she called to congratulate the London swimmer.

Penny Coles
The Local
Summer Art and Craft Market at museum Saturday

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum is a beautiful location to hold an event, says local resident Bianca Sorrenti. Sorrenti and Stephanie Panucci, “sisters in spirit,” have formed the Sorella Niagara Collective — sorella means ‘sister’ in Italian — and have organized their first event, the Summer Art and Craft Market, in the museum courtyard and on the lawn around it.

In addition to being a beautiful venue, says Sorrenti, she is hoping those visiting the Old Town will make their way to the museum. Their goal with the collective, she says, is to support businesses owned and operated by women, and is especially important now, with so many businesses suffering due to pandemic regulations and closures.

They will have more than 30 artisan vendors, offering a variety of products: handmade jewellery, both Bohemian and elegant; antique, vintage and custom clothing; mixed media artworks; art and home decor; pottery; handmade macramé; hair accessories; wooden charcuterie boards; soaps and skin care; embroidery; candles; antiques, and more.

There will be musical entertainment by local singer/songwriter Vibi (Valerie Borghesi), and the event will be held rain or shine at 43 Castleagh St.

For more information, visit www.NOTLMuseum.ca, or call 905-468-3912.

Bianca Sorrenti and Stephanie Panucci, “sisters in spirit,” have formed the Sorella Niagara Collective, and are holding a Summer Art and Craft Market in the museum courtyard. (Photos supplied)
Vidal Blanc popular for icewine, orange wine

Kim Wade Special to The Local

Many of us living in Niagara-on-the-Lake or having grown up in wine country may not have thought too much about what goes into making the wine we so enjoy.

If you have thought about it, you may still be perplexed by all the talk of varietals, soil, climate, terroir, etc. This series seeks to inform in a small way, about the common grape varieties grown locally, and to simplify some of the terminology surrounding this most venerated fruit, beginning with an exploration of the Vidal Blanc grape variety.

There are two main goals of this series. One is to give the reader a simple introduction in grape varieties, their properties and uses. The other goal is to get to know the farmers, viticulturists and sommeliers in our area and to share some of their knowledge, thoughts and insights.

First it is important to put NOTL as a wine-producing area in context within Canada. The four main wine-producing provinces in Canada are Ontario, B.C., Quebec and Nova Scotia. Within Ontario there are three major areas or “appellations” where wine is produced. These are Prince Edward County, Lake Erie North Shore and the Niagara Peninsula. Within the Niagara Peninsula, the areas where wine is produced is then subdivided again into two regional appellations, namely the Niagara Escarpment and NOTL. Each of these appellations are further divided, based on the soil type, climate and geographic position.

The NOTL regional appellation is divided into four sub-appellations, Niagara Lakeshore, Four Mile Creek, Niagara River and St. Davids Bench. The same grape variety growing in these areas will have different qualities, depending on where it is grown, or its “terroir.” Terroir refers to the particularities in weather pattern and soil composition of a specified area.

This week’s edition will explore the Vidal Blanc grape variety.

Vidal Blanc is one of two white hybrid French breeds planted in Niagara by the Vintner’s Quality Alliance (VQA). The plant is a cross pollination of a Vitis Vitisina father and another hybrid variety named Rayon d’Or, a native North American variety. Vidal vines were developed by Jean Louis Vidal in France in the 1930s. It was introduced to Canada in the 1940s, and was adopted and cultivated extensively for its winter hardiness, which is especially useful for making icewine. It was this grape that helped put Canada and Canadian icewine on the world wine stage when in 1991, a bottle of Inniskillin’s 1989 Vidal Icewine won Grand Prix d’Honneur at Vinexpo in Bordeaux, France. This is one of the most prestigious awards in winemaking.

As with most varieties in the area, Palatine Hills Estate Winery grows its Vidal Blanc mainly for use in icewine. According to Stephen Pietruniak, sommelier at the winery, this hybrid grape is “hearty, and its ability to survive harsh winters is derived from its parentage.”

She explains that in order to produce icewine, there need to be perfect conditions and “Vidal produces this consistently. Therefore, there is more incentive to use it as an icewine rather than a table wine.” She says the unique conditions of the soil and climate in the Niagara Lakeshore sub-appellation, where Palatine Hills is located, bring out the specific aromatics of the Vidal grapes in their 2012 Reserve Icewine. “You can smell the aromatics of the ripe orchard stone fruits and flavours, specifically of peach, nectarine and plum. It smells gorgeous,” she exclaims.

Although Palatine Hills does use a small amount in their Lakeshore White, which contains eight per cent Vidal Blanc, according to operations manager Thomas Reid, they have no plans to launch a 100 per cent Vidal Blanc table wine. Since they are equal parts grape grower and wine producer, most of their Vidal is sold to other wineries for icewine. “Because it is so robust, on average, it is easier to grow,” he explains. “By the time, it will be cheaper to produce than a Chardonnay.”

He believes “on its own as a table wine, it doesn’t stack up against other varietals. Others make far more intriguing table wine.”

Pietruniak states that some wineries, such as Southbrook Organic Vineyards, are getting creative with Vidal and using it to make products such as a wine production (a white wine made by leaving the grape skins and seeds in contact with the juice) or a light one and in blends. He applauds other wineries for experimenting with Vidal to create interesting and new products. However, it seems that while most wineries will continue to reserve these precious grapes for icewine production, some will continue to use Vidal grapes in a table wine or in a blend.

In addition to Southbrook Organic Vineyards, Konzelmann Estate Winery, Reif Estate Winery and Twin Winery have used Vidal Blanc for their orange wine. According to Reif’s tasting notes for their 2019 Sun Fermented Vidal, “our first orange wine was made using fruit from young Vidal vines. The grapes were fermented on the skins and allowed to age for a further 36 days on the skin.” This fermentation on the skins results in the wine’s distinctive orange colour.

Another winery that is using Vidal Blanc in a new way is The Hare Wine Co. On a recent visit to the winery, John Hare was gracious enough to allow a visit to his vineyard. We walked out past the guests at the tasting tables, crossed the outdoor patio, past the newly planted Cabinet Franc vines and over the bridge to where the Vidal Blanc grapes were lapping up the midday sunshine. Hare notes that some of these vineyards are more than 30 years old.

Hare appreciates the Vidal’s hardiness. “It grows like a weed,” he exclaims, as he pulls back the unruly vines to expose bunches of grapes underneath. He explains that although the vines were trimmed last week, they have grown rapidly, especially with all the rain the region has received. He notes that trimming is a necessary part of the process for all grape varieties to ensure that the grapes are exposed to as much sunlight as possible to produce the juice and sugar necessary for good wine production.

Hare notes that last year was a great year for wine production, including a bumper crop for his Vidal grapes. Two weeks ago, he released a limited-edition light Vidal named Frolic. This low-alcohol and low-calorie wine is in keeping with the trend for low carbohydrate beverages.

Hare has released a limited edition, light Vidal named Frolic. This low-alcohol and low-calorie wine is in keeping with the trend for low carbohydrate beverages.

Hare’s winemaking philosophy is “to produce icewine, where the wine is produced is then subdivided again into two regional appellations, namely the Niagara Escarpment and NOTL. Each of these appellations are further divided, based on the soil type, climate and geographic position.”
St. Andrew’s organist James van den Brink is offering Wednesday evening musical gatherings for the church and larger community. (Mike Balsom)

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

For a number of years now Niagara-on-the-Lake’s St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church has been a church in transition. With the hiring of 38-year-old organist James van den Brink, the first puzzle piece for the future has been set into place.

After substituting for previous St. Andrew’s organist Gerard Hoekstra, the Norwich, Ontario area native took on the role permanently in February, 2020. As he sat in for the first time, he could hear the organs French ter-
carousel console, though, the pa-
demic shut down all church ac-

Working with interim pas-
tor Reverend Dr. Clyde Ervine, van den Brink is looking out to the St. Andrew’s congregation and the larger NOTL community this month with Wednesday night Gatherings for Gateau and Grace.

One might be surprised to learn that the skilled, knowl-
edgable and passionate musi-
cian has had very little formal or academic training in music. The Foodlink resident holds a business degree from Brock University and is a certified professional accountant. He currently works as the control-
l er for NatureKast, an outdoor kitchen manufacturer based in St. Catharines.

But music, specifically of the organ and choral variety, has been a part of van den Brink’s life for as long as he can remember.

His father and his paternal uncles all played instruments. But the youngest of six children had very little time to get to know his father or his moth-
er. When James was only 15 months old, his father suffered a heart attack and died. Then, three weeks before his second birthday, his brother fell under the weight of ice and snow, crushing and killing his mother.

James was raised by his sister Marguerite, 23 years his senior, their Dutch Christian Reformed mother and their maternal grandparents.

“My sister was an organ-
ist,” he says. “She studied with Andre Knevel (a renowned concert organist and DMA student in the Netherlands who lives in St. Catharines). I grew up with a big, two-manual Baldwin full pedal organ in the house. We had LPs and tapes in the house. All we listened to was organ and classical music.”

Other than a brief phase during high school when van den Brink flirted a bit with the techno and dance genres, he has always first and foremost been a fan of organ and choral music.

“She taught me, and I started to pick up stuff,” van den Brink recalls. “Sometimes shell be in the kitchen yelling ‘hey that’s wrong, fix that rhythm, that should be a sharp! I loved it!’”

Van den Brink draws out the word “loved” with much enthusiasm. Almost immedi-
ately he decided that one day he wanted to be a concert or ganist.

Realizing that he would have to be “really good” to get into a concert organist’s school, he took lessons for an-
other “fall-back” pursuit, and settled on business. While at-
tending Redeemer Christian School in Norwich, he became fascinated with accounting.

“My Grade 11 accounting class got me hooked, and I sank” he says. “I was just sụtten with it. I remember the first time I understood how the accounting statements impacted into the balance sheet, through retained earnings. Suddenly, when that click was made, I said ‘that was cool!’”

As he was discovering his new love for crunching num-
bers, van den Brink continued honing his craft at the organ, often being called upon to pro-
vide music for his high school spiritual services and assem-
yblies.

It was during this time he would also discover another great love. While working at a grocery store owned by his brother, he met a co-worker named Tammy, who would be-
come his future wife.

Another co-worker at the time was beginning a small independent community choir. She asked van den Brink to play organ for their sessions. Soon, that friend was connecting James to sing tenor on hymns such as Holy Holy Holy, and another step in van den Brink’s musical evolution had begun.

James and Tammy ended up attending Brock University and informed music edu-
cation continued. While study-
ing business, he joined the university choir, where he con-
nected with freeway accompanist Leslie Kingsham, now the organist at St. Thomas’ Anglican Church in Guelph.

It was also at Brock where he sang under choir director and professor Dr. Harris Loew-
en, who had a major influence, along with Dr. Rachel Rensink-Hoff, artistic director of the Avanti Chamber Singers, with whom van den Brink sings.

“When two people have been mentors,” he says, “in terms of music and choral singing, terms of specifically the organ and play-
ing, it’s been my sister and Leslie Kingsham. I took lessons from Leslie off and on for a few years.”

Along the way, he contin-
ued to play organ at the church and in bands. He attended the University of Jordan and in 2012 he joined the Royal Ca-
nadian College of Organists (RCCO) local chapter. As often happens with anyone who is Accounting background, van den Brink got roped into be-
coming a member of the RCCO resource. He’s also the organizations cur-
rent president.

After 10 years of playing at the church in Jordan, van den Brink stepped aside in favour of joining the RCCCO subsidiary list. He spent 9 months at St. Paul Lutheran in Niagara Falls and otherwise took the organ seat at various churches around Niagara.

And that’s how he ended up connecting with St. Andrew’s.

Van den Brink admits that there are a few differences be-
tween his Dutch Reformed background and the Presbyte-
rian faith.

“The Presbyterian church there’s a choir, and in the con-
servative Dutch Reformed background and the Presbyte-
rian faith.”

“So the Presbyterian church there’s a choir, and in the con-
servative Dutch Reformed background and the Presbyte-
rian faith.”

“One need only to look at his selection of the next three sessions, including one from a Hauptwerk-style compos-
er from Germany named Paul McVeigh, who has more than 71,000 followers) was a church or-
ganist in the U.S. He built a Hauptwerk organ system in his
home during COVID.”

Hauptwerk is a software program that allows organists to digitally sample pipe organs from around the world. Van den Brink claims most people have a difficult time detecting the difference between the sim-
ulated sound and the real thing through music.

“When I started following a You-
Tube channel called Beauty in Sound,” van den Brink reveals. “He (host Richard McVeigh, who has more than 71,000 followers) was a church or-
ganist in the U.S. He built a Hauptwerk organ system in his
home during COVID.”

Hauptwerk is a software program that allows organists to digitally sample pipe organs from around the world. Van den Brink claims most people have a difficult time detecting the difference between the simulated sound and the real thing through music.

“The Gateau and Grace evenings include a serving of cake, or gateau, safely of course, along with a chance to mingle on the lawn. Guests are then in-
vited to enter the Greek reviv-

al-style church to experience the music, along with a short speech by Steve Led by Ervine.”

Van den Brink has lined up guest musicians for each per-
formance. Cynthia Vermeer, a Fonthill resident and flautist with the Burlington Sympho-

Wyness Orchestra, appeared Aug. 4.

Two Brock music grads will sit in the next two weeks: trumpet-
er Nathan Pol on Aug. 11 and soprano Enese Zaduban-Van-
den Beukel of Grimsby the fol-

lowing Wednesday.

Van den Brink admits that he can often feel intimidated working with musicians such as these, who have more formal training than he. He often refers to himself as “not a pro-
fessional” in conversation, but says that all of his guests have been welcoming and easy to work with.

The mid-week gatherings are a chance for a return to some semblance of normal for the community after a tough pandemic stretch.

“We open it up to ev-
eryone,” van den Brink says. “Many people have lost a sense of community, either from clubs or church or family. Clyde and I want to have that sense of community, and to be welcoming to the community.”

“What do people rally around and feel good about?” he asks. “Food and music. This is kind of a rallying cry for the community!”

Meanwhile, the观望 organist and his family are not currently able to fully exper-
ience their own normal.

As he divides his time between St. Andrew’s, Na-
tureKast and his role with the RCCO, James and Tammy are temporarily living in a trailer at Rossel’s Hideaway with their four children, aged two to 10, as they await approval to begin construction on a new home on Canboro Road, their third build in the past five years.

When they finally cross the threshold of their new home, it will likely be another occasion calling for gateau and grace.
‘It’s the lake that decides’

Continued from page 14

Bell, just 16 when she be-
came the first person ever
to successfully complete the
cross-lake swim, has stayed
involved in the crossing, and
typically comes to NOTL in the
fall when new names are added
to the plaque at the bottom of
King Street. Successful swim-
mers are invited to the cere-
mony, which usually involves
a lunch as well, says Chisholm.

When she made the cross-
ing, it was from Youngstown,
says Chisholm.

That summer, Canadian National Exhibition officials
decided to sponsor a cross-lake
swim, offering $10,000 to ac-
complish a feat most believed
would be impossible. Bell’s coach,
Gary Byder, decided Bell could
do it, and convinced her, with
her father’s support, to give it a try,
and began training her to
become a marathon swimmer.
On the night of Sept. 8, 1954,
Bell joined U.S. long-distance
swimmer Florence Chadwick
and another Canadian swim-
mmer in Youngstown, N.Y., and
when she reached the shores of
Toronto, she alone was success-
ful, pushed despite feeling il
comfortable and almost unconscou s,” says Chisholm, by her coach, with
a crowd of thousands who had
heard about her effort to cross
the lake and were waiting for her. ’She’s a tiny woman, but
impressive, and still supporting
the marathon community to-
day,” says Chisholm.

In his museum presentation,
he stresses the difficulties swim-
mers face, entering the water in
only a bathing suit, a cap and gog-
gles — nothing else is allowed.

Despite a swimmer’s ability,
says, success comes down
to weather conditions, and
the thunderstorms out on the lake
swimming season there can be
thunderstorms out on the lake
to provide an alternative — in a
swimming season there can be
thunderstorms out on the lake
every day for days, he says, and
Solo Swims prohibit swimmers
swimming from crossing when there is a
lot of thunder close by.

It is still considered one of
the toughest marathons swims in
the world, and is also one of the
most popular, he says, although
only about half of those who
make the attempt are successful.
Lake Ontario, he says, “is
powerful and unpredictable,”
and in the end, he adds, “it’s al-
ways the lake that decides.”

“Strengthen
"--- Got No Strings..."

Across:
1. Pitcher’s error
2. St REPLACE
5. Hall amphibian?
6. Enhancement
7. Country singer/songwriter
8. Lake ---
9. American flightless bird
10. Light gray brown
17. How to start a pudding
18. Dining in
19. Garden tool
20. Stand
21. Mary or Warner, e.g.
22. Adjusted
23. Longing
24. Place for experiments
25. Series of church
intercessions
26. Prom partner
29. Sarcastic praise
31. Reluctant
32. Ugly encourager
34. Oil well equipment
37. Arc
38. Apollo 11 lander
39. New in Tijuana
41. A
42. Stand-in
44. West
45. Thin pancake
46. The Volunteer State (Abbr.)
47. Wooden hammer
52. A long way
53. A-B-C-Dations
54. Bathtub residue
57. Where to find Peaks Pike
(Abbrev.)
58. Trim
59. Rent
60. Saturnalia
61. ‘Please on earth, good will...
62. A k c c c p

Down:
1. Balk
2. Toad
3. Add-on
4. Owen
5. Rhea
6. Beige
7. Sago
8. Shun, Cons.
9. Dans
10. Abstinence
11. Diana
12. Ogden
13. Deputy
14. Present
15. Rhea
16. Beige
17. Sago
18. Ed
19. Vivi
20. Owen
21. Rhea
22. Beige
23. Sago
25. Dans
26. Abstinence
27. Diana
28. Ogden
29. Deputy
30. Present
31. L C D
32. Needy
33. The present, 30 Remy
34. L C D
35. Needy
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37. Praiseworthy
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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from August 4, 2021

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Suduko solution from August 4, 2021
CELEBRATION OF LIFE

The family of Flora Bjorgan would like to invite you to a celebration of her life.

Sunday, August 15, 2021 at Red Roof Retreat at 2:30 p.m.
1594 Concession 6, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Bring a lawn chair and umbrella if needed. Refreshments provided.

OBITUARY

DICK, Arthur — Prof. Emerita Dr. Arthur Dick passed peacefully in Kentville, N.S. at the age of 81 on August 4, 2021. Arthur spent his childhood and school years in Niagara-on-the-Lake going to Parliament Oak School, Niagara Falls Collegiate and then, to Niagara District High School from which he graduated. He went on to get his PhD in Bio-Chemistry from Kingston’s Queens University where he met his life-long companion, Vi, and dear step-daughter Cathy. He took a position teaching at Acadia University in Wolfville, N.S. He was always an avid golfer, learning to golf at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf course. From age 12 he swam and collected golf balls that had gone down the bank into the water. These were sold back to the golfers. He will be missed by his buddies on the course. He leaves his step-daughter, Cathy and sister Anita Schick (Thunder Bay) and cousins, Victor Dyck and Charlotte Letkemann (Niagara-on-the-Lake). He was predeceased by his parents, Henry and Helen Dick and his brother, Henry (Hank).

WERNER, George Lawrence—September 19, 1985 - August 11, 2020

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there; I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamonds that glint on the snow,
I am the sunlight on ripened grapes.
I am the gentle autumn’s hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry
I am not there; I did not die.

We love you and miss you. You will always be our sunshine.

Forever in our hearts,
Love from the family and friends of Cub

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Deadline is Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

IN MEMORIAM

WERNER, George Lawrence
September 19, 1985 - August 11, 2020

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THE NOTL LOCAL

August 11, 2021

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The first tournaments at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club since 2019 were held last Friday and Saturday.

The mixed doubles competition held last weekend included some great tennis with extremely competitive matches, many going down to the wire with tie-breakers to decide the result, says member Holly Anderson.

“Judging by the cheers and applause, the many spectators present enjoyed the event and appreciated the quality of tennis involved. Delicious bagged lunches were prepared in place of a buffet by local caterer Mary Lou Turner of Let’s Get Fresh Catering/Lulu’s B&B,” says Anderson.

“It was a successful event, and we hope a tremendous return to normalcy.”

Results were as follows:

A Division champions - Kim Laidlaw and Paul Plourde
A Division finalists - Fran Doran and John Pilling
B Division champions - Margaret Hobbs-Mancusso and Enzo Mancusso
B Division finalists - Dorothy Booth and Scott McGregor

A Division consolation champions - Roman Korda and Nicole Marsh-Burke
A Division consolation finalists - Kendra Osa and Hugh Dow
B Division consolation champions - Amanda Thackray and Jim Thackray
B Division consolation finalists - Jennifer Allen and Terry Rakovsky

Third Place A Division champions - Cathy Bus and Scott Lewis
Third Place A Division finalists - Kathy Goodin and John Goodin
Third Place B Division champions - Anne Robinson & George Schachtschneider
Third Place B Division finalists - Ann Davies & Ross Robinson

Fourth Place A Division champions - Manny Umoquit & Zeny Umoquit
Fourth Place A Division finalists - Deb Robert and Ken McGillivray

Fourth Place B Division champions - Natalie Early and Bruce Zvania
Fourth Place B Division finalists - Margie Lambert-Sen and Maz Sen

The men’s doubles tournament will be held Aug. 16 and 22, and the ladies’ doubles Aug. 18 and 21.

A division champs are Paul Plourde and Kim Laidlaw. (Sonja Schindeler)

A division consolation champions are Roman Korda and Nicole Marsh-Burke, with A division champs Kim Laidlaw and Paul Plourde. (Sonja Schindeler)

A division finalists are Fran Doran and John Pilling. (Sonja Schindeler)

Kendra Osa and Hugh Dow are A division consolation finalists. (Sonja Schindeler)

A division consolation champions are Roman Korda and Nicole Marsh-Burke. (Sonja Schindeler)

Paul Plourde and Kim Laidlaw now go down in club history as A division mixed doubles champions. (Deb Roberts)

Amanda and Jim Thackray, father and daughter duo, are B division consolation champs. (Deb Roberts)

Enzo Mancusso and Margaret Hobbs-Mancusso are B division champs. (Deb Roberts)