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## Association du patrimoine de Potton

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## Potton Heritage Association

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### **23<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting – March 24, 2013, - 10 a.m.**

#### **PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**

##### **Continuity and Transition**

A year ago when Hans delivered his address to this Assembly – he said that 2011 was a year of continuity and transition. Those words struck me as an apparent dichotomy. Continuity is a state of stability and the absence of disruption; transition is the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another. The year that was 2012 was both!

The Round Barn, and the events surrounding a marvellous celebration of its centenary was the focus of much energy this past year – itself, a visible and practical example of continuity and transition. We celebrated the end of the Barn's original vocation – and introduced to our community to the possibilities of a new life of service.

To be the public face of a forward-thinking Association such as ours, which aims to protect our heritage in all its forms, has had both its privileges and reward. The challenges have been minor, thanks to the wonderful support of my fellow Board members. Through this past year, I have had the privilege of observing, participating and listening while I learned the ropes, so to speak. That in itself has been instructive. My occasional notes to you appear to have been well received and I intend to do this on a more regular basis in the future.

Insofar as concerns 2013, the play-list you have come to expect from us is already well started. Excursions, conferences, and publications are standard fare. We are launching, in the coming months, a bi-annual magazine called Histoire Potton History. Bilingual, it will deal with fact, stories and ancestry – subjects sure to fascinate the heritage buff! Look for it in May. You'll have to shuck out a few bucks for your copy, though. Such delight does not come cheap! You might be interested in knowing that our brochures and publicity folders are among the most popular and best quality at the Bureau d'information touristique on Autoroute 10.

While I am on the subject of publications, please share your opinion as to whether you think the download of our newest web offerings should be free of charge or not. It is a subject the Board will soon be examining.

This May, our delegate to the Congrès of the Fédération des sociétés d'histoire du Québec (FSHQ) in Chicoutimi will be Serge; while I will attend the QAHN general meeting at Stanstead's Golden Rule Lodge in June. (Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network) Last year, both Serge and I participated at the joint FSHQ-QAHN annual meeting in Sherbrooke where several valuable contacts were established, which are in our interest to

maintain. In that same vein, exchanges have taken place locally with Mme Jeanne Morazain, President of Heritage Sutton, and with Lizanne Ryan of the East Bolton Historical Association. Additionally we continue to work with the municipal authorities for the protection of heritage buildings in Potton. Although Hans has resigned from the Board, he will continue to be in charge of this file. We will of course be preparing an exhibition again this year in the Round Barn – this year called Archéologie à Potton, and it goes without saying that we wholeheartedly support the financial campaign about to be launched.

I hope to present a policy for the consideration of our municipal council, which will address our shameful lack of minimal care of our abandoned burial grounds and cemeteries. Several of these are found in Potton. They are neither under the care of the Mansonville Cemetery Company nor Eglise Saint-Cajetan. As a member of this community I find it unacceptable that we do not and have not given these places one modicum of decent respect and care.

2013 promises to be another busy year – already well started; and we could use any help you might feel you can offer. Last year, Bernard made the observation that more help was needed. In case you wondered, that need has not decreased! In fact with Hans departure, we are looking for another member of our team. At the moment, the Board of Directors numbers seven, of a possible nine. Many hands make light work – so perhaps you could write an article for the new magazine, or offer to guide our exhibit in the Round Barn, or something of the sort. Come to one of our meetings – you would be most welcome, though our quarters are a little cramped in the Reilly House.

Quite frankly, what I would find most reassuring is some feedback that we are reflecting your expectations. There is an old « country » expression to the effect that it is the willing horse who gets the most work. You have a Board of Directors comprised of willing horses. Need I say more? Let's not wear them out!

Which brings me to another and final point : – A great deal of energy was expended by the Association this year in reacting to issues confronting our municipal government. Flash points flared with a fervour and frequency that I have not before witnessed : – concern over the placement of the Bell cell towers, a referendum concerning the revitalization of the Village, the now distant issue of contracts and equipment purchase; the issue of snowmobile races and their location at the intersection of nature conservancy and the use of private land.

Inevitably, and of some concern to me both personally and as the chair of this Association, is a rift - once unspoken but now voiced between native and newcomer – whether resident or not. As I see it, part of this is the growing pains inherent in our evolution – as we transition from a community of « natives » to a preponderant culture devoted to récréo-tourism. How we might help avoid the unnecessary pain if this « rift » widens, preoccupies me. Our strength is in our diversity of community. Community is made up of people, who think and act differently. It takes seasoning to make a good broth, after all!

As a Board of Directors, we are aware of the influence we have in this community. To say otherwise would be disingenuous. The Association is a large and credible voice in Potton. That being the case, then there are incumbent responsibilities. E mails pass between us like a rain of spears on the medieval battlefield – information is quickly collated – action plans coalesce, and within the space of hours – a reaction is formulated

– a plan disseminated and we're off! This rapid response time has become such second nature to us that in some ways, it seems to invigorate the more politically inclined among us. It is seductive in its powerful appeal.

This « action-reaction » has shaped us and is subtly shaping our Association – particularly as regards our role perceived in the area of civic responsibility. As we tap on computer keyboards, formulating solutions, we in fact, segregate ourselves – distance ourselves from what solves most problems that are human related - which, in my opinion, begins simply by listening and hearing. It's called talking to each other.

Debate and perceived problems heat and cool with regularity, according to season and circumstance in Potton. This year of municipal elections promises to present its own share of consequential and inconsequential rhetoric for each of us to consider. As individuals, we must be vigilant in this world of competing causes.

With dedicated alacrity we try to mold the evolving Potton in our image – upscale enough to satisfy urban needs – while leaving enough « country » to maintain a colourful flavour. We champion the protection of our landscapes, our prettiest buildings, our town square and les Samedis à Potton. We frequent services and businesses that serve us well – populated for the most part by people born and raised here. The huge danger found in sterilized, solitary and immediate communication is its validation. Without actually talking to each other, and listening, how do we confirm the foundation of what we sense? How else to arrive at workable solutions of communal benefit but to build from the ground up?

As our earliest settlers did over 200 years ago, we come here of our own free will to build a society based on values we hold dear. The heritage this Association strives to champion, reflects the varied ways of life, land use and historical periods, including the recent past; and illustrates our region's development. Heritage helps maintain a social mix, vitality and identity in our Township, be it old or new, rich or poor. Notwithstanding our recognition of the importance of economic development, I hope that we will, as an Association, continue to insist on preserving the fabric of which « we » are made – that which gives us not only a sense of geography, but also our sense of time, memory and identity – so essential for our spiritual, cultural and creative growth.

Thank you!

Sandra Jewett, March 2013