

**Association du
patrimoine de Potton**

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**Potton Heritage
Association**

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Christmas Message



Hello everyone!

'Tis once again the season to bring warm greetings on behalf of my fellow directors of the Association, and to bring you up-to-date on our happenings and coming events. It goes without saying that 2014 was a busy year for the Association, and we now look forward to sharing the holidays with family and good friends. I wish you the same.

I'm sure that most of you refer regularly to our website for upcoming events; and, that many of you will have noticed that several of our brochures and pamphlets now appear in [PDF format on our website](#) – the most current of which *'The Landscapes of Potton'*, the complement to our exhibition in the Round Barn this summer. *Incomparable Potton* is also there and available for downloading when you intend a tour of our lovely municipality. Our *incomparable* website has resulted from Serge's technical know-how, his attention to detail, and frankly, countless hours of concentration. Few other associations are as lucky as Potton Heritage to have such a well developed, bilingual website.

When I think of Potton Heritage, words like loyalty, cooperation, competence, principles, tenacity, friendship and community come to mind. I'm very proud of our Association, which will in 2015 celebrate its 25th anniversary, in itself, a singular accomplishment. We were founded in 1990 by Gérard Leduc, whose fascination with Potton's archeological heritage is well known. Before long, he and the Board soon cemented the positive reputation of the Association by taking on the massive project of collecting pictures and texts for a book about Potton's history. I speak of course of *'Potton d'antan - Yesterdays of Potton'*, published in 1997; and which is still our most sought after publication, now available on our website. That publication was borne of a colossal effort, much personal effort fuelled by tenacity, dedication and the cooperation of many old friends like Paul Rouillard, Jean Soumis and our late friend, Peter Downman, all of whom were led by Gérard.

Our semi-annual publication of **Histoire Potton History** provides an in depth and continuing sequel to that original publication. Have you picked up your copy? Priced at \$10, (and below cost) it is a bargain for hours of interesting reading, all pertaining to our history. We're fortunate in enjoying close collaboration with well known historian Jean-Pierre Kesteman, and novelist Jean O'Neil, together with some lesser known luminaries like André Lamer (our # 1 interviewer!), and local story teller Lillian Smith-Sherrer. Jacqueline Robitaille examines every comma and syllable, Serge, every paragraph and its position on the page, and Jean-Louis edits and researches everything in exacting detail.

So, you may be sure we will celebrate our 25th with pride in the accomplishments thus far, and in humility with regard to the road ahead.

Our Association does nothing by half measure – witness the energy devoted to the production of 2014's exhibition in the Round Barn, the brainchild of our former President, Hans Walser – ably aided by Angèle Hébert, Ralph Milot, and Jean-Marc Bourgeois, among others. As usual, Bernard managed the scheduling of our volunteer guides, and we much appreciated the loan of Jordon Nichols, a young chap hired by the GBMP.

The barn clean-up and refurbishment of the 3rd floor display space was accomplished by some 20 volunteers wielding brooms, vacs, and paint-brushes! Museum qualities are now emerging.

The Landscapes of Potton', was crafted to deliver a serious message to its audience, and proved by far the most successful and well attended exhibition that the APP has ever sponsored. In a fashion so typical of Hans's exacting and pragmatic nature, the exhibition was designed to provoke concern for the protection of landscapes – arguably the foremost drawing card to our municipality. Hans has been the most consistently ardent defender of the landscapes of Potton. He is right to do so. I proudly support his efforts.

For months, Hans, Jean-Louis and I worked on producing the texts for our brochure – with input from our fellow directors and revision by the ever faithful Jacqueline Robitaille. It must be said that some felt the need for a more alarmist approach; however Hans convinced us of the benefits of a moderate message. Personally, I am very alarmed at the rate our beautiful landscapes are being invaded by brush and that previously well kept open fields are disappearing. I do not remember ever seeing Potton with such a forest cover as we saw this year. Only through persistent reinforcement and repetition of our message can we hope to convince proprietor and municipal administration alike that attitudes need to change.

As you know, there are differing and strong opinions locally as to the utility of the Round Barn in our community. But, there has been progress!

A Hallowe'en night shadow play danced eerily around the barn. Images appropriate to the occasion and fashioned by local children was the brainchild of Hiro Gagnon and team. Sonorous organ music reverberated, giving ambience, while the shadow play danced with glow and mysterious movement! And voilà! A steady stream of costumed characters, with parents in tow, stopping to collect treats venturing further into the darkened barn. Magical moments reminiscent of Hallowe'en past and treats begged from my grandfather, still milking his cows! We, his many grandchildren, were obliged to creep slowly into the darkened stable, knowing he would scare us at any moment – success his great delight! (Our reward was an apple and a fat, sticky popcorn ball!)

In any event, this influx of local visitors to the barn, resulted from the collaboration between the Optimist Club, the Cultural Committee (CCPP), and the GBMP and attracted many more than any exhibition thus far! That success may just have provided a crack in local public opinion as to the barn's utility and maybe, just maybe, the conversion of a few hardliners! The exhibit space, primitive though it may seem, is very presentable and will lend itself well to subsequent exhibitions.

Our friends, the indefatigable duo of Carol and Janine, presented us with an interesting roster of excursions and activities all summer. Carol's health was not quite up to par; however I am happy to report that her prognosis is far improved and her lovely smile has returned – encouraged I'm sure, by our cheerfully good-natured Janine. Carol has lined up an interesting [excursion schedule](#) until March.

About three years ago, I invited the Board to my home for breakfast and a working meeting, a gesture made to avoid the stifling heat of our Reilly House office in the summer! This has now become something of an enjoyable tradition, with Serge, Jean-Louis, and Janine also hosting the group to a lovely breakfast in cooler surroundings.

From time to time, with meeting space in the Town Hall becoming ever more difficult to book, we are sharing our space with other community groups, like Cinema Potton, the CCPP, and the Co-op des Petits Ziboux. As you might appreciate if you've ever frequented our 'office' – filing cabinets, various display panels and many boxes crowded the area, scarcely leaving room for 8 chairs and a table! To alleviate the problem, the Association has

rented a small storage unit at the facility on Route 243; and to offset the fees required, we adopted a policy of charging other groups a fee for the regular use of our office. So far, the arrangement is working well.

As we have done in years past, the Association partnered with the Ken Jones Centre to operate a canteen on the Owl's Head concourse during the Festival de plein air. Jacques Huppertz agreed to be our leader in that effort – with an entirely new organizational team when Colin Field resigned after many years. Jacques and David Stirling, his counter part for the KJC, produced excellent results for us to share equally, in the order of \$2800. Although I would cheerfully name every volunteer, I must draw attention to that of Monique Sourdif, whose generosity and good nature inspired all of us. She is Janine's sister, a member of neither the APP nor the KJC – who gave two days of hard work – and smiled happily through the whole experience – AND promises to return next year!

You may know that for various reasons Jacques Huppertz has resigned as President of the GBMP. In early September, Hans, representing the GBMP, and I, the APP, were invited to meet with the Council and the Mayor to discuss points of mutual concern. We were well received and given ample time for our presentation. Our discussion was interactive and frank. We were candid, and pointed out that valuable volunteer effort such as that provided by the APP and the Council's own asset management committee: the GBMP, was being seriously jeopardized by the absence of support and validation from our elected representatives. The Round Barn and the covered bridge are properties belonging to the Township of Potton that require maintenance and long term efforts for their survival as cited historic assets. Volunteers who happily give of their time and talents require similar maintenance efforts, quite frankly. The immediate result was a statement of open and written support from our Council.

Today, as I write this letter, voting on the zoning change and conditional uses near the NCC property and RVL T is taking place. The divisive and dangerous rift allowed to grow in our Municipality over this issue troubles me a great deal. It will take patient and consistent effort to re-establish equilibrium in all of this. But it must be found. I would like you to know that, in conformity with our bylaws and established policy, the APP remained strictly neutral in the whole debate. In mid September, I authored one letter to the Mayor and Council, which was widely distributed locally. Recently Hans did likewise with his personal view. In both cases, it is important to note that these were entirely personal initiatives. I know our names are synonymous with that of the Association and that to the surprise of many, our views were contradictory. The debate is closed. That being said, the dust settles slowly on this costly exercise; and I hope everyone will do his part to bridge the residual resentment. Winners or losers, we are all part of a municipal community that deserves more than grumbling and anger. I intend to do all that I can to mitigate any hard feelings.

Before closing, I must tell you that to my pure joy, I was invited to both schools: Mansonville Elementary and École du Baluchon, to make presentations to the Grade 3-4 classes about the genealogy and the history of Potton. Few things have ever energized me as much as the welcome those eager children gave to me! They were curious, involved and attentive, which gives me great hope! It may sound trite, but truly, I wish you could have been with me! I want so much to return to tell them more about the community and families of which they are part.

I sit on the Comité culturel et patrimonial de Potton, (CCPP) under the presidency of Thérèse Descary. Six members provide the input while Suzanne de Foy, records our decisions and makes us all sound very sensible! (Much as Jean-Louis does for our APP meetings – thank heavens for his attention to detail and interpretation of some rather *'interesting'* discussions!) I digress however. One of the aims of CCPP is to reach as many of our population as possible. Together the Committee members have decided to put greater emphasis on children's programmes, while maintaining the popular offerings the public has come to expect. I mention this particularly

since I find myself the only one currently representing the APP. The Association actually has the right of two votes on the CCPP. If there is someone out there who might be interested in productive discussion and about 4 meetings per year, please let me know. Meetings are held predominately in French, however English is an asset.

I know I have written only once this year and yet promised more frequent news. I will try harder next year.

Before we know it, it will be time for our Annual General Meeting, on March 29. By the way, have you paid your dues for 2014? If not, why not do it now?

And so, with this, my friends, with the holiday season almost upon us – and jack frost soon nipping at our noses – I am joined by the Board, in wishing each of you good health and good cheer! May your troubles be few and your happiness, abundant! Smiling is much better than frowning! Please remember that, even with all our troubles and picayune arguments, Potton is still a beautiful place filled with incredibly talented and gracious people – (like you!!)

All the very best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sandra Vale Perkins', written in black ink.

Sandra

Vale Perkins,

November 30, 2014

P.S. Thank you to Jean-Louis who makes me sound so very good in French!