

# The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959  
restored 1982

Spring 2023



## 2023-2024 Schedule of Events

There are no events are planned at this time.

### *This newsletter*

is published by *The Friends of the Schoolhouse* every Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer to inform members and the teachers of the Peel District School Board of activities and events organized by The Friends.

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### *Need more information?*

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## Spring 2023

### Message from the Chair Ruth Taylor

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riends had their first Schoolhouse meeting since last October, in April. We met again in May and will hold our final meeting for this school year in June before the summer break. Although our attendance has been low, we are happy to see people face-to-face. We are not holding our Annual Planning Meeting this July, since at this point, we are not sure of our plans.

The gardeners are busy weeding and sprucing up the gardens. You will also see they have been adding plants to the gardens.

Some of our members are channeling their creativity into newsletter articles. We welcome contributions from members sharing school memories, seasonal recipes, or hobbies.

My sister Joan, who earlier shared her school memories, told me that the holiday for the Queen's birthday (Victoria) was on the day of the actual birthday when possible.

The children learned this verse:

The twenty-fourth of May is the the Queen's birthday,  
If you don't give us a holiday, we will all run away.

### More Prices from 1923 Ruth Taylor

@

gain, these are some prices from the account books of my grandfather, Aaron Honsberger.

July 9 Pd Stove Wellington \$17.50

26 Pd Cutting wheat \$10.00

August 24 Pd Rawleigh Man \$4.15

Paid Dr. Addy \$1.50

September 15 Pd for  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton fertilizer \$44.40

26 (Canning) Jars \$3.70

October 20 Bread 39 (No mention of quantity)

November 11 String \$1.25

28 Grit (?) \$1.85

December 14 Pd Township taxes \$214.20

29 Pd Farmer's Advocate \$1.00

Receipts and Expenditures for the year 1923

\$1954.08      \$1771. 56

This covered running a 50-acre farm and providing for a family of 6 children. I wonder what my grandfather would have thought about his records being shared so many years later. The Rawleigh Man was the original home salesman. Rawleigh pepper was the best. Dr. Addy was still our family doctor in the 50's.

**Rhubarb Cinnamon Muffins**  
Ruth Taylor

**S** In a large bowl add and combine well:

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2 eggs   | 1/2 cup plain yoghurt or buttermilk |
| 1 cup sugar                                    | 1 tsp. vanilla                      |
| 1/4 cup oil                                    |                                     |
| 1 3/4 cup chopped fresh rhubarb lightly packed |                                     |
- In smaller bowl combine well:
- |                          |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| 2 cups all-purpose flour | 1/2 tsp. salt |
| 2 tsp. baking powder     | 1/4 cinnamon  |
| 1/2 tsp baking soda      |               |

Note: You can add 1 tsp. vinegar to regular milk to make buttermilk. Combine wet and dry mixtures and fold together gently until just mixed. Spoon into prepared muffin pan or cups. Bake at 375 degrees for 20-25 minutes. Remove from pan and cool.

Makes 12 medium.

From "Mad About Muffins" by Angela Clubb



Spring 2023

**The Brampton Conservator**  
**15 JUNE 1877**  
**BRITANNIA**  
**PIC-NIC**  
Shirley Hoad



On Friday, the 8<sup>th</sup> inst., the Britannia School held a very successful pic-nic in Gardner's bush. The day, being pleasant, a large attendance was the result. The teacher, Mr. Skelton, spared no pains in endeavouring to make everything pleasant and entertaining. The afternoon was spent in playing croquet, football, baseball, &c. The Meadowvale Band was also in attendance and rendered their services in a manner which contributed much to the vivacity of the day. Tea was served at 6 P.M., when the tables were bountifully spread by the ladies. After tea the company became seated to await an interesting programme. Mr. J. Forster occupied the chair, and the evening's entertainment was opened by the singing of an anthem by the Meadowvale and Britannia choirs. The remainder of the programme consisted of singing, readings, and recitations, with band music at intervals; quartets were given by F. Forster, N. Forster, Miss Evans, and Miss Clerk, expressing good musical talent and taste. Mr. Skelton, F. Forster, and W.J. Charlton rendered a trio very efficiently; also, a duet was very nicely sung by N. Forster and Miss Evans; the Britannia Glee Club rendered several very interesting and amusing pieces of music; readings were given by Messrs. R. Brown, Charlton, F. Brown, Skelton, Jarden, Winter and Richardson, and also by Miss M. Rogers and Miss L. Todd, all of whom showed good taste in their selections, and were deservedly applauded. After the program was concluded the fireworks began, which lasted about half an hour, after which the pleasure seekers returned home, apparently highly delighted and satisfied.

**Echoes of the Past**  
**The Rural One Room Schools of Peel County**

This book documents the history of all the one room schools that existed in Peel. It covers the period from the early 1800's until the mid-1960's. There are old photos of most of the schools and photos of what the sites look like today. Timelines trace the history of the schools and an interesting—sometimes humorous- "historical gem" is included for each one. This book is a great gift for a teacher or anyone interested in the history of education. Written and published by The Friends of the Schoolhouse. Soft cover, full colour, 208 pages.

\$30 plus \$10 shipping

Available at schoolhouse events and from any member of Friends of the Schoolhouse

**Book Talks**

Illustrated talks are available to historical societies and other interested groups. We tailor each presentation to suit the audience and the one room schools that were in their local area. If your group would be interested in having a presentation, please contact Shirley Hoad [shoad@bell.net](mailto:shoad@bell.net) for further information.

**Springtime**  
Margaret Storey



always look forward to Spring- warmer weather and longer days, of course, but also spring bulbs popping up, trees budding, the return of yellow finches and hummingbirds and fiddleheads.

Yes, FIDDLEHEADS- those funny looking unfurled fronds of a young Ostrich fern. These are perennials and grow in many areas of Canada. In New Brunswick they are referred to as the provincial vegetable and are also seen as a provincial symbol.

Tide Head, in New Brunswick, is known as the "Fiddlehead Capital of the World".

The Indigenous people of Eastern Canada traditionally harvested fiddleheads at this time of year. They would often use the symbol of a fiddlehead on their clothing, canoes or wigwams as they held the plant in such great esteem. They also showed the Acadians how to use them in their diet in the 18th century and later to the United Empire Loyalists who arrived in Eastern Canada after the American Revolutionary War. The Fiddleheads, unknown to the early settlers, helped in their survival in their first few years. The settlers also thought they resembled the tuning end of a fiddle or violin thus the name fiddleheads.

Fiddleheads are very healthy as well. They are high in iron, and contain amounts of potassium, niacin, riboflavin, magnesium, phosphorus as well as Vitamins A and C. Some say their taste is a cross between asparagus, spinach and broccoli with a hint of nuttiness.

Fiddleheads need to be cleaned thoroughly to remove their papery brown husks! Rinsing several times with cold water helps this process. Health Canada recommends that fiddleheads be boiled for 12-15 minutes in a small amount of water until tender or they can be steamed for 10-12 minutes! Fiddleheads should not be eaten raw! Once cooked, they can be used many ways! We like them just sautéed with butter and garlic, a little bit of lemon juice and the zest of a lemon squeezed over top when ready. They could also be sprinkled with Parmesan cheese. A rich cheese sauce or a wee bit of Hollandaise sauce would also be tasty to top the fiddleheads. Cooked fiddleheads could be added to any salad, are delicious in omelettes, stir fries or quiche or added to a casserole. The choice is yours!

They are definitely a spring time vegetable and are only available for a short period of time in your favourite food market. One brand that we have bought this year is Forage Girl. This is a part of the parent company, Norcliff Farms, established in 1973 in New Brunswick. Nick Secord, the owner, grew up in Saint John, New Brunswick. He began foraging for fiddleheads, could see their potential and was soon supplying various stores in his area. The company just grew and grew! In 2008, he and his wife transplanted millions of fiddleheads and the first fiddlehead farm in North America began in Port Colbourne, Ontario. They take this business very seriously and only forage the fiddleheads by hand! They sell in bulk boxes or in individual trays. Both are recyclable or biodegradable. Hopefully by the end of 2023 all of their packaging will be plant based.

Remember, If you do decide to forage for fiddleheads on your own, do so responsibly and ethically. Make sure you are harvesting the proper type of Ostrich fern and obeying all municipal and/or provincial by-laws.

So, if you haven't tried the first of nature's bounty, now is your chance. Try something new, I think you will agree they are delicious!

## The Maypole

Daryl Cook

At one time there was a tall pole in the schoolyard at the Britannia Schoolhouse. What was this used for?

In the Victorian era of the schoolhouse, May Day was a community festivity that signaled the beginning of summer and the growing season. We have found no records of how this was celebrated in Britannia, but in many communities around the world May Day festivities included parades and dancing.

It is thought the tradition goes back to Roman times about 2000 years ago. Roman soldiers would decorate a tree in honour of the god Flora. It was a ritual to ensure a good crop. In medieval times a tree trunk was decorated with long coloured ribbons and people, usually children, would hold onto a ribbon and dance around the tree until the trunk was completely covered with ribbons. This was known as the Maypole dance.

The maypole dance sometimes had a pattern of steps. Children would stand around the pole, each holding a ribbon. When the music began they would take four steps toward the pole, four steps back and walk four steps in a circle around the pole. This pattern was repeated until the pole was completely covered with coloured ribbons.

The pole in the schoolyard was erected for a special occasion and used only once though it remained in place for several years. Eva Ardiel, former schoolmistress, remembers teaching a group of children the routine for winding the ribbons around the pole. Here are her memories.

*If I remember correctly I think we "sort of" trained some kids to do the Maypole. Hugh had the pole put in and I made the ribbons out of yards of broadcloth. I don't think it was especially successful as there was not a chance to train the kids properly. It is actually quite hard to do it successfully. However, we did do a maypole type of number at several Christmas Concerts. One child held the pole with a star on top with yellow and white crepe paper streamers. It took a lot of practice! You hold your breath that somebody doesn't go under when they should have gone over. If it works right you wind it all up and then reverse and unwind it.*

The dance Eva taught the children must have been much more complicated than the one described above. At the Christmas concert the child holding the pole would have been wound up with the streamers. It must have been quite a sight and lots of fun.

Today the Britannia Schoolhouse Maypole has gone and few people are aware of the ancient tradition that is still a part of May festivities in other parts of the world.



**Spring 2023**

**Monarchs: Butterflies and Others**

Daryl Cook



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**Tweet Tweet!**

Follow us on Twitter, @PDSBBritanniaSH. Get the latest on Open Sundays, events and other news. We also post pictures of the school, grounds and gardens. If you visit the schoolhouse be sure to tweet a picture or message so we know you were there. Tweet you later!



**E-mailed Newsletters**

If you are not already doing so, why not consider receiving your newsletters by email. This helps us save the cost of paper, printing and postage and also is kinder to the environment. Contact [dlcook@rogers.com](mailto:dlcook@rogers.com) and put "Emailed Newsletter" in the subject box to make this arrangement.

**Thank You**

Friends of the Schoolhouse is a non-profit organization of concerned citizens dedicated to assisting the Peel District School Board in the support of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse and its programs. Your donations are much appreciated.

**Check our website often for the latest information.  
[www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org](http://www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org)**

## **Monarchs: Butterflies and Others**

Daryl Cook

The Monarch butterfly is one of the most amazing creatures on earth. It is easily recognized by its bright orange, black and white colouring. A Monarch that we see in early summer in our gardens and the schoolyard is the second or third generation of the butterfly that flew thousands of miles from North America to Mexico last fall. How did it know where to go? The butterfly that made a non-stop flight to Mexico in September had never been there. How did it know that this was the safe place to spend the winter? Scientists have been studying this puzzle for years and still do not have an answer. It all seems to be one of nature's miracles.

During the era of the Britannia schoolhouse, children would see many Monarchs. Their farms and gardens would be excellent places for the butterflies to live. They need milkweed plants to lay their eggs and for food for the larva. There was plenty of milkweed in the fields, although farmers would rather not have it. The adult butterflies need nectar and there were always lots of wildflowers and garden plants to feed on. No one worried that the Monarch would some day become endangered. Then the milkweed plants began to disappear.

Farmers found better ways of eradicating them from their fields. As suburbs expanded and people had gardens, the milkweed was declared a noxious weed and municipalities passed bylaws that mandated its removal from properties. The Monarch's habitat was seriously affected, leading to a decline in the population. This was easy to document by counting the number of butterflies that made it to Mexico each year. Eventually alarm bells began to ring and bylaws declaring milkweed a noxious weed were changed. People were actually encouraged to plant it in their gardens.

Today, the schoolhouse has a dedicated butterfly garden. On the land around the schoolhouse milkweed is allowed to grow freely. It is still a thrill to see a monarch, especially since it is a much rarer occurrence than it once was.

This May we've been thinking of other monarchs, the human kind. In a lavish ritual that has remained little changed for centuries, King Charles III was officially crowned monarch. Like the butterfly, there have been threats over the centuries to get rid of the monarch. Cromwell actually accomplished this for a short while, getting rid of all the royal regalia and melting down the gold in the crowns. Eventually the monarchy was restored and has survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, almost a thousand years since the first king. Children who visit the Old Britannia Schoolhouse will have known only one monarch, Queen Elizabeth the Second. They will also learn about Queen Victoria who reigned during the first years of the schoolhouse. Her portrait hangs at the front of the classroom. Both of these Queens reigned for many years. Both experienced significant changes during their reigns. Queen Victoria lived through the change from an agricultural society to an industrial age. Queen Elizabeth experienced the change to a digital world, eventually embracing television by allowing her coronation to be televised, by broadcasting Christmas messages on TV instead of radio and in her last few years embracing social media.

After more than seventy years, a new era has begun with King Charles III. Once again there are rumblings of whether there should be a monarchy. Several countries, members of the old realm, have done away with the king as their head of state. Others are considering this as well. The British monarchy has survived these threats in the past, just as the monarch butterfly so far seems to be managing to survive the threats to its environment.