



Photo by Dillan Cools

The cast of the St. Thomas' Anglican Church 2014 Graveyard Tour from left to right: Bernadette Hymus, Josh Beale, Sandra Kennerley, Caroll Hennessey, Mike Hall, Evelyn Hennessey, John Mark Robertson, Ken Hennessey, Phil Allison, Ruth Blamire, Mike Blamire, Linda Matchim and David Smith.

St. Thomas' graveyard tour kicks off church's bicentennial

By Dillan Cools

Members of the St. Thomas' Anglican Church in downtown Belleville, alongside people from the community with a curiosity for history, came out for the church's first-ever Graveyard Tour on Sunday, Oct. 26.

Despite the brisk weather, a group of 60 congregated in the church's parking lot at 2:30 p.m. in anticipation of the tour. The large, all-ages crowd stepped through the yard visiting the graves of the prominent people who once called Belleville home.

"It's a chance to get acquainted with some of the founding members of St. Thomas' Church," said Evelyn Hennessey, treasurer of the church and organizer of the event.

Hennessey, along with 12 other members of the church who had dressed up in dated attire appropriate for their roles, were stationed throughout the yard. As the crowd arrived, the cast gave informative presentations detailing the lives of the deceased and re-enacting old stories.

Hennessey came up with the idea after taking part in a similar event organized by Gary Foster at the Glenwood Cemetery in Picton.

"I thought, 'Well, we've got all these ancient people, stones and everything here. Why not do our own graveyard tour?'" she added.

The graveyard tour was well timed as it kick starts the church's initiative to celebrate and raise awareness for the upcoming bicentennial in 2018.

"That seems like a long way away, but we've started doing some things to let people know," said David Smith, who sits on the bicentennial committee.

Smith became involved with the church shortly after moving to Belleville in the 1970s and became interested in the significance of the cemetery during the building of the Parish Centre that opened in 1990. "It was a fascinating thing to watch that process and then they had the dig...to remove the bones and you know, there were all kinds of relics, belt buckles, buttons, all of that kind of stuff. There is a lot of history because it is really the first cemetery in Belleville," said Smith.

"I heard about this (graveyard tour) and I thought that maybe they needed somebody that could move people from station to station, so I volunteered," said Smith.

Fitting with the familiarized duties of a tour guide, Smith played the

role of George Tickle, an affluent funeral home director who operated on North Front Street and was responsible for overseeing the graveyard. "It was purely volunteer," said Hennessey. "What I did was write up the basic scripts and then people did research and added to it." Hennessey, who is interested in genealogy and history, is no stranger to research as she previously worked as title searcher for the land registry's office.

"They did all their own costumes," said Hennessey, while dressed as Catherine Covert, widow of John Covert. John Covert (1792-1846) was a hard-working property owner in Belleville who lived a prosperous and comfortable life with his wife Catherine and four children, John, Rachel, Catherine and Henry.

Hennessey also doubled up as an Irish man named William Stinson (1824-1871) who fell into some tough luck while running a lumber mill on the Moira River. Stinson was fined a considerable amount of money for dumping sawdust into the river but having just been robbed by a group of thugs the month before, he struggled to come up with the money. The stress became too much for Stinson and he died on May 31, 1871, leaving be-

hind a wife and three children.

John Mark Robertson also gave an impressive performance as he eloquently recited the story of James Hunter Samson, Belleville's first lawyer and an accomplished politician. The youngest cast member, 11-year-old Josh Beale, told the story of William Henry Alford, who drowned at the age of 15.

"I was really surprised by a particular number that had been pulled out of the historical information," said Smith.

"Twenty-three per cent (of the deceased in the original graves) had drowned, and mostly because they were fishing," he added.

Among the visitors were Belleville residents Joe Fee and his son Caleb, who attends the Junior Choir and St. Thomas' Church.

"My son is very interested in history and so am I, so I thought it would be a good idea to come and check it out," said Fee. "We've lived here about 10 years now ... It's nice to get to know a bit of the history of Belleville and the area we live in," added Fee.

The final stop on the tour took the crowd to the grave of Diana Hennessey where her two great-great-grandchildren Caroll and Ken Hennessey re-enacted the bizarre moments that lead to her death.

One night Diana noticed that her husband, James Hennessey, was butchering a pig without cleaning it and let him know how she felt about it.

James, who had been drinking a bit at the time, spun around and accidentally slashed her abdomen. He realized what he had done but despite calling for help right away, she died two days later of a stomach infection.

"The fact that the two of them are the descendants of the couple that was involved in the story made it all the more interesting," said Elizabeth Mitchell, who is also on the bi-centennial committee.

As the final performance commenced, the cast gathered for a bow and invited the audience inside for some warm apple cider. "It happened to work out that it was time for another roast beef supper so we rolled it all into one," said Hennessey.

The large group, which had doubled in size, sat in the warm church eating their classic roast beef supper while the surprising finale resonated through their conversations.

"So far everybody's been happy," said Hennessey. "We've been requested to do it again in the summer on a warm evening...So I expect we probably will...Just come again and look for us in August."

Parents connect and tots have fun at Momstown

By Sarra Lalonde

"Like most mothers, I needed to keep my toddler busy while I kept the new baby busy. I also wanted to connect more with other mothers," said Leanne Ballard.

Ballard was a registered veterinarian tech before she decided to open her own business. When she was maternally leave, she said the opportunity join the organization. She started Momstown

in Guelph before moving to Belleville where she opened a new outlet here.

"I was not sure if I wanted to return to work full-time and place my kids in day-care, so I decided instead to



Leanne Ballard

start my own business."

She has been running Momstown in Belleville for seven years. The national program operates mostly in Alberta and Ontario, but they are expanding to the east coast in the next couple weeks and British Columbia just opened an outlet.

Momstown offers over 30 programs for children and their caregivers. They offer daytime and evening programs, from Tales for Tots to Little Chefs. Fees

are \$85 yearly per family. There are at least two programs a day that tots and parents can participate in.

Momstown programs are based off the eight pillars: art, music, literacy, nutrition, science and discovery, fitness and adventure, play and social and prenatal. A Momstown program pass offers unlimited usage throughout the year for adventures with your child or children as well as a chance to connect with other parents in the community.

Momstown is not just for moms. Dads, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and any other caregivers are more than welcome to come to the adventures Momstown offers.

Momstown is also a business advertised program. Local businesses advertise for the organization. For more information on the programs and activities, you can reach Ballard by email or phone, 519-827-5643, or Leanne.ballard@momstown.ca.

Honouring a Prince Edward County militiaman

By David Fransky

Residents of Quinte West paid their respects to a soldier of the Prince Edward Militia on Sunday.

The militiaman's name was John Johnson and he was a soldier from the Prince Edward County Flank Company who served in the War of 1812.

In recognition of the War of 1812, some men dressed up in the uniform used by Johnson. One was the descendent Peter Johnson and another one was Clinton McGinnis. To show that it was a Canadian uniform, there was yellow on the collar and sleeves.

Peter spoke about the fact that his ancestor did not receive the Victoria Cross.

"He did not receive the Victoria Cross...He was just a regular citizen who did his duty for his country."

Attending the event were dignitaries MPP Lou Rinaldi, MP Rick Norlock, the new mayor of Quinte West, Jim Harrison, president of the Trenton Historical Society, Shawn Ellis, and Rev. Norman Long.

"It is important, as you all know, to remember our past," said Norlock, who said he attended to show respect and to be a representative for the people of the area.

"I was invited to come and celebrate some of the important aspects of the War of 1812. We were able to keep our country a country. Otherwise we would be the United States of America."

Rinaldi said, "This is history today. Thank you to the federal government for



Photo by David Fransky

Peter Johnson (right), descendant of War of 1812 militiaman John Johnson, and Shawn Ellis, president of the Trenton Historical Society, were among the attendees Sunday in recognition of Johnson's war efforts.

this form of recognition so that we remember."

Harrison said his grandfather was in the First World War, who was wounded during the war. The mayor said he was also there to show support for the Trenton Historical Society for all that they have done.

"I just want to say that I live in the best city in the best province in the best country. Thanks to John for his efforts, Peter, and the historical society...and to remember our past," Harrison said.

"We all go back to our roots, also to support the Trenton Historical Society." "This is phenomenal. It takes time to preserve our history," said Ellis.

The president of the historical society also noted that he was there to give flowers to the fallen to show respect to Johnson and Johnson's relatives.

The final person to speak was Rev. Long who said he was there at a friend's request.

"I am here to do the dedication at the cemetery. Peter and Angela requested this for their ancestor because they are into that."

This was the first plaque in the Quinte West area to be dedicated to the War of 1812 for a soldier from the area.

Looking around to all of the people there, it is apparent that there were many ages who came out to represent the people in the Quinte West area that showed their respect for a fallen soldier from our past.