




April Meeting Details

Rideau Township Historical Society
 Presents

HISTORY as STORY
An exploration of historical fiction from the storyteller's perspective
 with Ian McKercher
Ian McKercher
 Author



"LOVED this series! A modern historical setting in Ottawa, Canada. Local landmarks were easily identifiable to me, and there were even personal connections to some. The growth of the main character throughout the series is impressive. Going from a grade 11 student to a woman running a government department to a would-be spy for her country. Interesting and exciting. Easily read in a couple of sittings. Hooray for Ian McKercher, former teacher at Glebe Collegiate."
(Goodreads review (2020))

This is the fourth segment in our exploration of the question, "what is history?" To date we've enjoyed the perspectives of a visual artist, a musician and a historiographer, and this month author Ian McKercher joins us to share his thoughts on how history influences his art form ~ historical fiction.
 Born and raised in London, Ontario, Ian McKercher cut his teeth on the mystery genre at age ten with the Hardy Boys, Perry Mason and Sherlock Holmes. Receiving a degree in English and History from Queen's University, he moved to Ottawa in 1969 to teach English. His first book, "The Underling" was published in 2012, followed by "The Incrementalist" in 2016, and "Carbon Copy" in 2019.

Join Us Via ZOOM
 April 20th, 7:30 p.m.

To register, or for more information visit:
www.rideautwphistory.org

Ottawa
 Preserving and Promoting Local History for the former Rideau Township

To be COVID safe: Individuals will be responsible for their own transportation. Please wear a mask while indoors!

Can't wait to see you there – Rain or Shine!

More details to follow at the April meeting and in future editions of this newsletter.

RTHS Remembers Brian Sawyer



Brian Sawyer, past president of the Rideau Township Historical Society passed away on March 23, 2022 at the age of 87. Brian was born in Llanelli, Wales. In 1958 he married Dorothy "Corky" Ness in Arvida, Quebec. They became the parents of Lynn, Owen and Lorne.

Brian graduated from Leeds University in 1956 with a degree in metallurgy. On graduation he received a prestigious international scholarship which allowed him to choose any mining or metallurgical company operating in the Commonwealth to spend one year as a scholar in residence. He chose the Aluminium Company of Canada (Alcan), in Arvida, Quebec.

Interestingly, he went on to work for his whole career with Alcan. In addition to Arvida, he worked in Montreal, Kitimat, BC., Australia, and Northumberland in the UK (1978-1988).

In preparation for retirement, in 1988 the Sawyers purchased a home on Long Island in Manotick backing onto Mahogany Harbour. Brian soon joined the historical society, becoming its president in 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Coming Events

Save the date!

June 26th 1-5pm

A Day Out in Burritts Rapids!



Location: Burritts Rapids Community Centre & Picnic Ground (23 Grenville St, Burritts Rapids)

We are so excited to be meeting again in person!

The RTHS gratefully acknowledges the financial support received from the City of Ottawa.

While RTHS president he frequently held meetings of the executive and the Dickinson House committee at his residence. He was a thoughtful host, always having snacks on the table. To brighten up a meeting he commonly brought out some antique gismo, asking his guests to identify the artifact.

Brian enjoyed showing guests around his home while sharing thoughts about his art and antique collection. He delighted in identifying trophies associated with competitive plowing; apparently Alcan sponsored plowing classes or plowing matches put on by the British Plowing Association in Cumberland, UK. Corky presented the trophies.

Brian enthusiastically displayed parts of his antique and tool collection in the Dickinson House Museum. He was often in the museum to describe and talk about the items he had on display.

In retirement Brian found pleasure in walking and cycling. He became president of the Probus Club in Manotick, and was a member of the Manotick Horticultural Society. In 2020 he became a resident at the “Ravines” in Nepean, where he lived until his passing.

Membership Matters

From our Membership Director Owen Cooke:

At present we have 52 active members:

- 28 life members
- 9 family memberships
- 7 single memberships
- 8 honorary memberships for 2022

Two e-mail calls will go out this month: one to last year's members calling for their renewals, and one to those whose memberships lapsed in 2020 indicating that their names will be removed from the membership list if they do not renew.

Report on February's RTHS Event

What is History?

*A participating exploration
of how personal values & contexts
influence the interpretation of historical events
with Dr. Daniel Woolf*

The past doesn't change, but does history? And if it does, so what?

Those were the central questions Dr. Daniel Woolf led us through at our meeting of March 16th.

Employing an interactive format, and taking advantage of the best of Zoom technology, members were treated to about 90 minutes of stimulating discussion about what history really is, and about how we as community historians interact with that “thing” we call history.



Luckily, we also ended up with some ideas about what WE could be thinking of as we do our own history.

Setting the tone with a discussion of the three key questions noted below, the group pretty quickly came to consensus that history and the past just aren't the same thing.

1. Is history the same as the past?
2. Is the past directly accessible to us? If so, in what form?
3. Is history “what happened” or what we *believe* happened based on our best good faith assessment of the fragmentary traces of the past?

With that consensus as the basis for our understanding, we then went on to explore notions of how we access the past, and how we interpret relevant information - Margot Belanger said it best when she said: “history is in the eye and the mindset of the beholder.” If that is the truth, then is anything sacred? According to Dr. Woolf, historians will change their minds about past events based on several criteria, including, but not only: new evidence, new interpretations of old evidence, different approaches (e.g. asking a different question about an artefact), and of course the bias and contextual understanding of the historian at the time they are doing their research.

For *this* writer, the idea that history depends as much on the historian as the “facts” that the historian chooses to see and try to understand, contributes to a vague sense of disequilibrium - which of course is the basis of openness to learning, the place where historians begin, with a question.

This disequilibrium extends to the idea of the “causal chain”. According to Dr. Woolf, the more complex an event, the more difficult it is to pinpoint an actual cause or series of causes, hence the idea of the “causal chain.” What *caused* an event is often subject to spirited discussion, and never completely resolved! Few things are absolute, in this interpretation of history.

In an interesting interrogation of the relationship of history to memory, Dr. Woolf had us think about events

How to Connect with RTHS



<https://rideautwphistory.org/>



www.facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory



rideautwphistory@gmail.com



<https://twitter.com/RideauTpHS>

How to Connect Dickinson House Museum



<https://dickinsonhouse.org/>



www.facebook.com/Dickinsonhousemuseum



dickinsonhousemuseum@gmail.com

Note to RTHS Members: Beginning with our March speaker event, RTHS has discontinued the practice of preceding the formal presentation with a short business meeting. Accordingly, there are no Minutes included in the newsletter. However, beginning with the May newsletter, we will have a new feature, "President's Report" in which our RTHS president will provide an update on current Society activities.

Sign me up as a member of RTHS



Members of the Society enjoy:

- Monthly meetings featuring engaging presentations, followed by refreshments
- Group excursions to historical points of interest in Eastern ON
- Local books published by the Society, and a monthly newsletter
- Opportunities to participate and contribute as volunteers

For more information visit <https://rideautwphistory.org> and facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory.

Please mail this form with a cheque for membership dues payable to: Rideau Township Historical Society, Box 56, North Gower, ON, KOA 2T0, OR pay by e-transfer to rideautwphistory@gmail.com and email a scanned copy of the form to the same email address.

Name:

Address:

City & Postal Code:

Telephone:

Email:

Date:

Are you a new RTHS member?

Yes _____ No _____

Individual Membership \$15 _____

Life Membership \$100 _____

Family Membership (2 adults & school-age children) \$20 _____

Donation \$50 _____

Other Donation \$ _____

Receipts for paid memberships will be issued when we are able to meet face-to-face, but tax receipts for donations will be issued at the end of the year.

Thank you for supporting RTHS!

