



The Rideau Trail NEWSLETTER

Published by The Rideau Trail Association

WINTER 74-75

Issue No.14



TRAIL REROUTING IN KINGSTON

In Kingston a most interesting and enjoyable section of about one and a quarter miles of trail has just been opened. This will replace one and a half miles of rather uninteresting and even unattractive trail which lay mostly along Portsmouth Road and Counter Street.

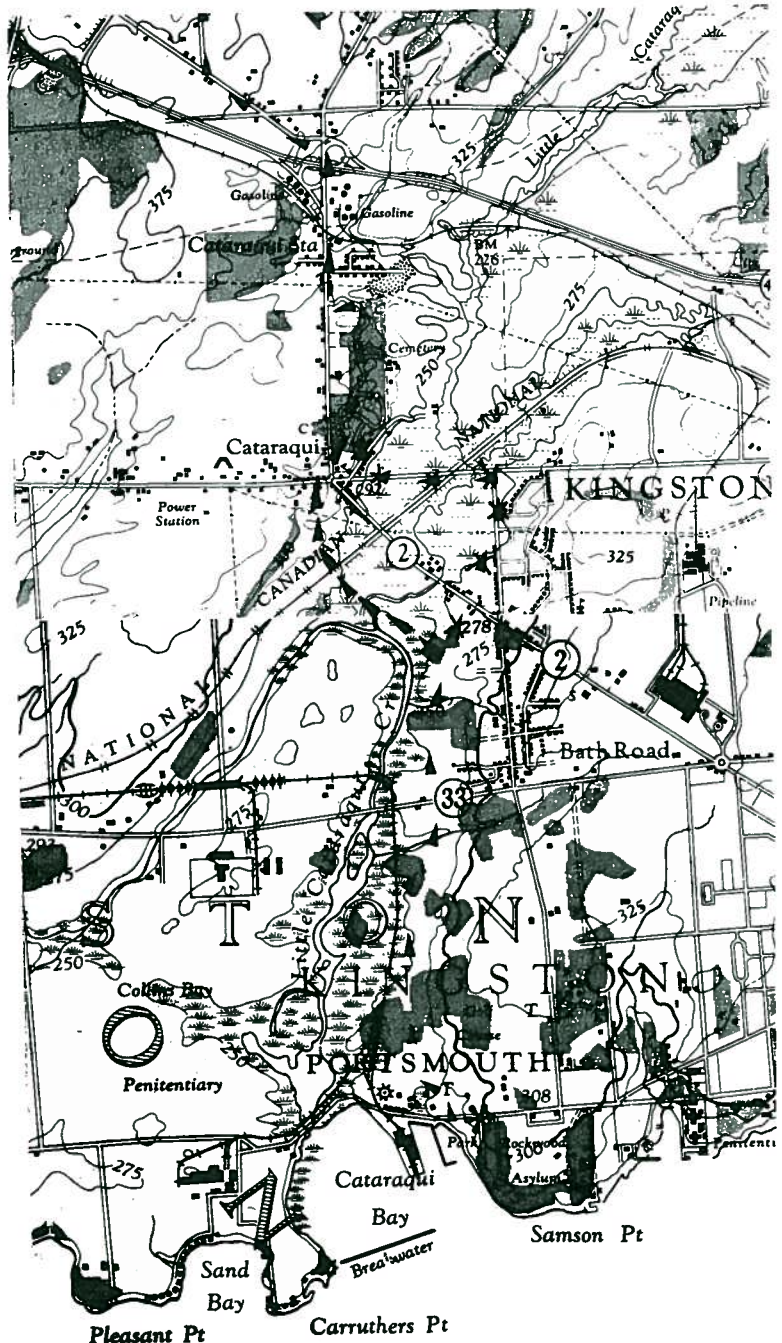
The route of the new section is indicated on the excerpt from Map 12 which is shown to the right. Members are advised to alter their own copies of Map 12 accordingly.

As the map shows, this new section proceeds for about 2,000 feet across the large marsh south of Highway #2, crosses the main branch of the Little Cataraqui Creek and continues about another 2,000 feet in a north-westerly direction across the C.N. tracks and then swings northward for about 1,500 feet to the Village of Cataraqui.

To cross the marsh, about 900 feet of catwalk have been constructed altogether. At the eastern end, three short sections of about 100 feet "hop" from one small island to the next, and then finally to the one large island. From the western side of this island, another 600 feet of catwalk brings one to our 100 foot bridge over the creek. On the western side of the creek the ground is scrub bush to the C.N. tracks. West of the tracks the land is open meadow for about 600 feet which brings one to a north-south hedgerow of trees. The trail then turns northward and proceeds along the western side of this hedgerow, passing over an ancient collapsed dam and finally meeting Highway #2 about 100 yards west of Sydenham Road.

Some Highlights

Like any marsh, this one is a treasure trove of wildlife. At any time of day many types of bird life are obvious, but in the early morning or at dusk even the non-bird-watcher cannot help but be impressed.



Some of the most obvious species are ducks, herons, terns, plovers, yellow legs, red-winged blackbirds and snipes. One bird which I have yet to see or identify introduced itself all during August by its strange, exotic cry, but the bird was always hidden by cattails.



Loading the rock for the gabions
Oh my aching back!

The marsh is also alive with muskrats. They can easily be seen in the early morning or at dusk gnawing on a reed or swimming in the creek. Their homes are everywhere and consist of piles of cattail leaves one to three feet high and from two to five feet in diameter.

Between the creek and the C.N. tracks the brush is home to numerous cottontail rabbits and no doubt many ground hogs and small rodents.

On the western bank of the creek is the tower of an old windmill. From twenty feet up one can get an excellent view of the whole marsh and creek, and in June and July you also

get the excitement of being "buzzed" by excited terns. These birds will dive at you, whistling shrilly, until about 8 to 10 feet away when they suddenly veer off.

"Who Done It?"

The construction of 900 feet of catwalk and a 100 foot bridge was the most ambitious construction project ever undertaken by volunteer members of the Rideau Trail Association. Bill Cotton was foreman of the bridge construction and Doug. Knapp was responsible for the catwalk. The bridge required five full days work for 10 to 12 people each day, and the catwalk took about the same. About 40 individuals volunteered their help, some more often than others of course. This project would have been impossible without all the willing helpers and to all of them goes our sincerest appreciation.

We should also mention the contribution of Mr. Melo, the owner and manager of the Ambassador Motel on Highway #2 beside the Cataraqui Creek. The Motel was our base of construction and saw the loading



Transporting rock for the bridge gabions
Dick Henrikson just about to go under.

and unloading of logs, lumber and rocks. In addition, Mr. Melo very kindly donated the use of his four rowboats which he rents to his guests for their enjoyment on the creek. These were used on six different days and were an invaluable contribution.



Building the catwalk
Four-sixths of Doug Knapp's
family



Filling the bridge gabions
Bill Cotton (foreman) cracking
the whip

Official Opening

On October 26th an organized hike, led by Wally Schlegel, took place from the Bath Road (Hwy. #33) up to the creek and back. This hike was intended to show off the whole new section but unfortunately the bridge was not yet completed. Anyway, the day was bright and sunny and the twenty people who came out to enjoy the abbreviated hike were duly impressed.

The new trail section was officially opened on Sunday, November 17th, when a second unveiling was held, this time for the whole length including the new bridge.

Those who have worked so long and hard agree enthusiastically that the effort was worthwhile. Why not plan now to get out and see it?

Doug. Knapp

Photographs by Norm. McLeod

CLUB OUTINGS

The Ottawa Trail Club is about to try a new tactic in organizing club outings. Participation in the end-of-summer activities was so low that a newspaper and broadcast campaign was undertaken as a test to ascertain whether the lack of interest was due to a lack of advance promotion and publicity. Not so. There was still only a turnout of a few "old faithfuls". As a consequence, a new scheme will be tried: As will be noted below, only two specified activities are being planned for this winter. However, the Ottawa Trail Club is geared to respond to any interest, expressed by anyone, by organizing one-day hikes or overnight camping trips, if enough demand is forthcoming. If you have a recommendation, please telephone Social Convenor Trix Geary at 722-2736.

- SUNDAY, JAN. 26 Day outing. Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing on stretch of Trail to be selected. Bring lunch. Rendezvous at Bell's Corners Arena at 9 a.m.
- ONE FEB WEEKEND An overnight camping and hiking event. Actual date to be decided only when weather is relatively warm for overnight camping. For this reason, anyone interested should telephone Trix Geary, leaving his or her name, to be called at short notice when favorable weather occurs.
- EARLY IN MARCH Tentative. A "surprise package" outing being contemplated. In idea stage only. Plans not firm at publication date, but special notice will be sent to Ottawa members, if ideas become reality. If you are intrigued, please get in touch with Trix Geary.

KINGSTON TRAIL CLUB

- Thursday Dec. 12th - Evening session on cross-country skiing including a guest speaker and a slide show presentation. Meet in Theatre D, Stirling Hall (Physics Building), Queen's University at 8.00 p.m.
- Sunday, January 12th- Cross-country ski in the Gould Lake Conservation Area. Snowshoers welcome. Meet at the barn at 1.30 p.m. In case of rain, postpone until Jan 19. For further information contact Wally Schlegel, 548-3211 or Norm McLeod, 546-9440

OTHER ONTARIO TRAILS - PART IV

In Issues 11 and 12 of the R.T.A. newsletter five Ontario hiking trail associations were described. These were:

Grand Valley Trail Assn.
Ganaraska Trail Assn.
Thames Valley Trail Assn.
The Bruce Trail Assn., and the
Guelph Trail Club.

Two more hiking trail associations are described in this issue.

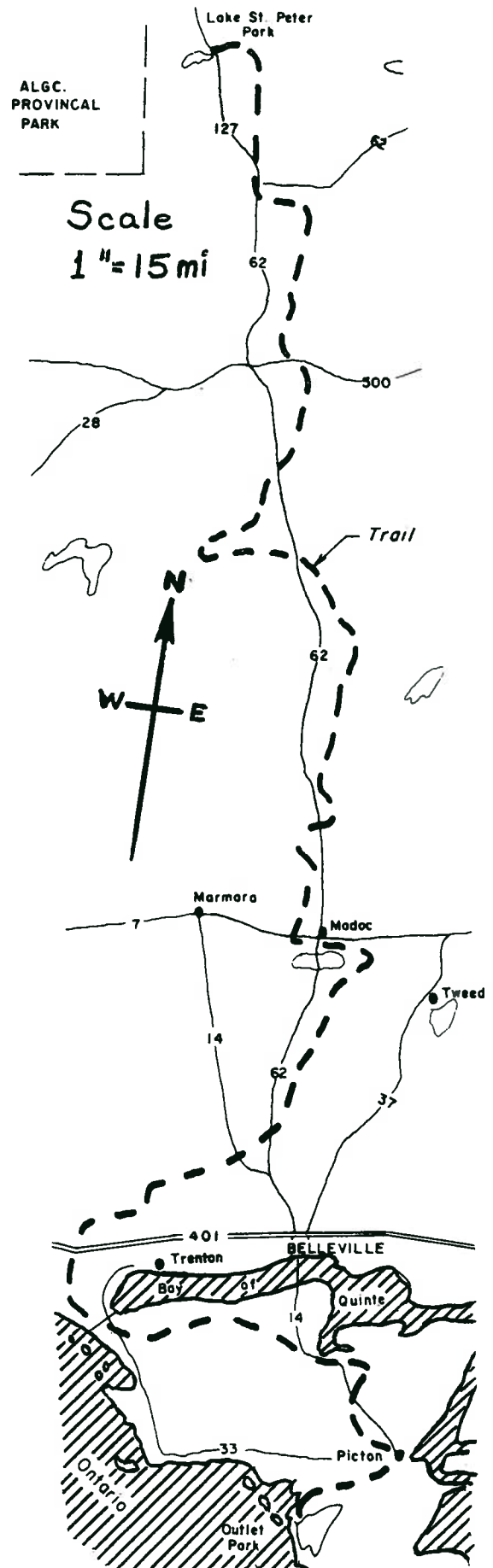
THE QUINTE-HASTINGS RECREATIONAL TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Strictly speaking, the Quinte Trail is not exactly a hiking trail. It was developed during 1971 and 1972 as a multi-purpose trail for hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, trail biking and horseback riding.

The Trail is approximately 250 miles in length, and offers a varied panorama of scenery from the sand beaches of Lake Ontario in Prince Edward County to the pine forests and hills of the Canadian Shield east of Algonquin Park.

To obtain additional information, contact:

Quinte-Hasting Recreational Trail Assn.,
14 Bridge Street West,
Belleville, Ontario.



THE CREDIT VALLEY FOOTPATH CLUB

The Credit Valley Footpath is still partly a gleam in the originators' eyes, but when completed will span from Lake Ontario at Port Credit to link up with the Bruce Trail at Terra Cotta. The trail will follow the Credit River very closely, and will lie almost entirely on private lands. Any of our readers familiar with this area will know that it has many beautiful and wild areas, as well as being the location of Southern Ontario's most well known white water canoe race each spring.

The trail is blazed on trees with a patch of paint about 2 inches wide and 6 inches high at frequent intervals. Access to the trail will be only from the places where the trail crosses public roads. At such places the club symbol will be secured to private property signs so that club members will know that permission has been obtained to cross this land. Very definite obstacles to eliminate motorized vehicles of any sort on the trail will be obvious.

For further information, contact:

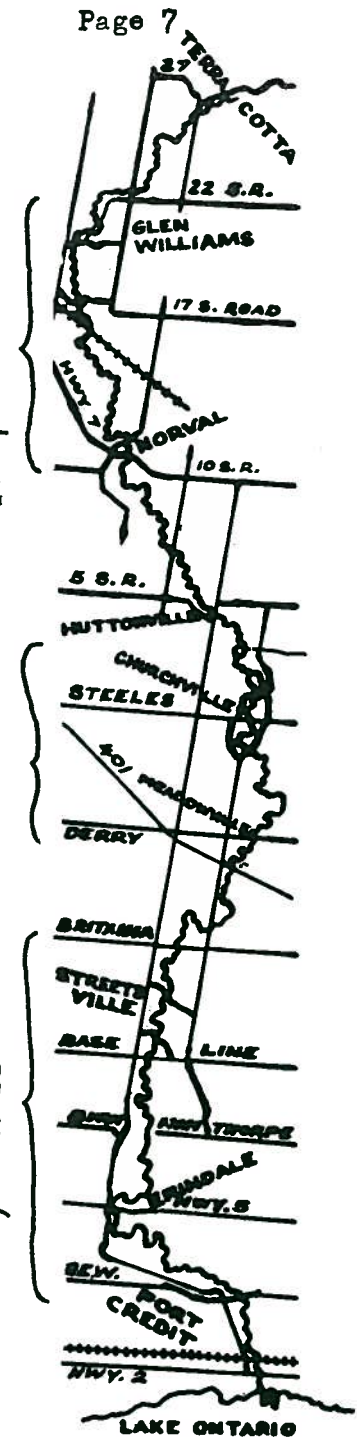
Mr. Ray Burge, President,
67 Wanita Road,
Port Credit.



complete and marked

complete but
not yet marked

incomplete
permissions



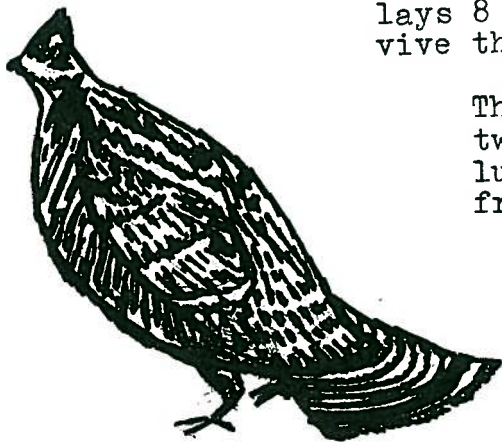
Friends We Meet on The Trail: THE RUFFED GROUSE

You're quite likely to see this chicken-like bird on the Rideau Trail when you least expect it. Sometimes commonly but inaccurately called "partridge" and "pheasant", you usually come across it in the bushy woods of the Trail when, suddenly, it sets you back on your heels.

It's such a well-camouflaged bird that you're not likely to see it on the ground at rest. What happens is that your encounter with it causes your heart to leap to your mouth as the Ruffed Grouse with a great rush and a whirring of wings rises from its cover and flies straight off through a maze of tree trunks--in the opposite direction from you, of course.

By the time you recover your composure, you may not have noticed that the Ruffed Grouse has a distinctive fan-like tail and a broad black band near its tip. It gets its name from the "ruff" or collar of glossy black feathers; at least, the male has glossy black feathers.

The Ruffed Grouse builds its nest on the ground, often beside or under a fallen log. The female lays 8 to 14 pale-buff eggs, but only a few survive their natural enemies and reach maturity.



The mother is known to cover the chicks with twigs and leaves in times of danger and then lure predators--including human hunters--away from the site.

The Ruffed Grouse feeds mostly on such vegetable matter as acorns and other seeds, on leaves and buds of poplar, birch, willow, dandelion and clover. It also lunches on berries, including poison ivy and rose hips. Young birds eat mainly animal food, such as cutworms, spiders, ants, beetles and other insects.

In the spring, the male Ruffed Grouse performs a drumming ritual to attract females and warn away other males. The bird will station himself on a stump or log and carry out a remarkable, accelerating, tympanic sound, simply by flapping its wings. To the uninitiated, the sound could be mistaken for the starting up of an outboard motor.

CHANGE OF TRAIL ROUTING

The section of the Trail which runs between Smiths Falls and Merrickville has been changed from the South side of the Rideau River to the North. This change will affect Trail Maps 5 and 6.

At the centre of this Newsletter will be found a map showing the change in route and it will be noted that a very small portion of this change affects Map No. 6. As a result, a new Map No. 5 only will be issued and members are urged to amend their copies of Map No. 6 to show where the Trail now leaves Smiths Falls on its way to Merrickville. Members should retain the enclosed map until a new map No. 5 is issued.

The Trail enters Smiths Falls as before on Highway 43, from ~~Perth~~. It turns right at St. Francis Hospital and follows a route through the residential area of the town. After a short distance it makes a left turn up Chambers Street, under a subway and then emerges into the open country.

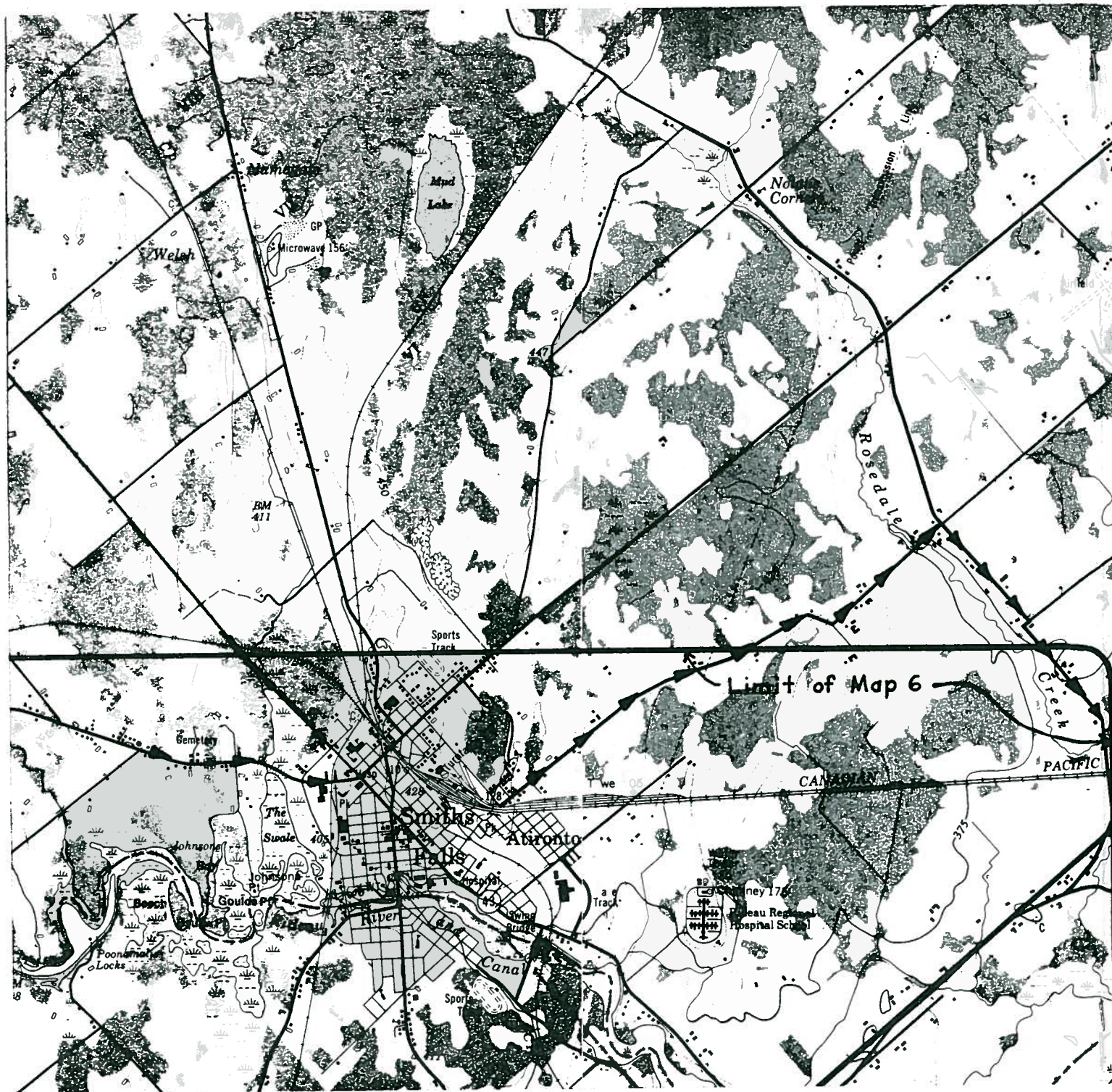
In Smiths Falls of course there is everything that one could want in the way of shopping facilities and there is a Camp Ground in Victoria Park on the Canal a short distance off the Trail.

After leaving Smiths Falls the Trail follows the old pioneer McCrea Trail to Merrickville (see the article in this issue entitled "Through the Long Bush") which includes one of the most attractive stretches of bush trail that one could wish for.

On arrival at Merrickville the Trail crosses the Rideau River on the dam originally constructed by William Merrick to provide power for his mills when he founded the village in 1794. The mills are on the East side of the dam. After crossing the bridge over the locks the Trail passes the Blockhouse, turns right and skirts the Lions Club camp-ground where there are toilet facilities and water. In the village of Merrickville there are two hotels and some shops.

At Merrickville the Trail connects up with the existing one to Burritt's Rapids and Kemptville.

Duncan Douglas.





THROUGH THE LONG BUSH

Today we walk the byways of the Rideau Trail for pleasure - to enjoy what we have left of our natural heritage. Our ancestors walked these highways and byways from necessity. There was no other means of communication when they headed north from the St. Lawrence. It was a fearsome and rough walk through the virgin forest and it took brave hearts and sturdy bodies to face the ordeal. The first to come were the Loyalists. Already they had walked the established roads and trails of the thirteen colonies. Once across the St. Lawrence they made their own roads and trails in the new British Colony. Up the North Augusta road they came in the 1790's, to establish on the banks of the river the Rideau Settlement.

William Merrick, as we all know, was the first man to penetrate back from the 'front', as the St. Lawrence shore line was then called. He walked up the primitive trail laid out in John Stegman's survey of Lanark County. This survey, begun in 1774 and completed in 1797, shows the concessions and lots much as they appear in the county maps today. Merrick decided the site by the rapids on the river suited his purpose. There he staked his claim, brought his family from Elizabeth Town and built his saw mill. So Merrick's Mills was born. That was in 1794.

Hard on his heels came Samuel McCrea with his four sturdy sons, Edward, Charles, Thomas and John. They eventually owned most of the land on the north shore of the Rideau and, for decades were a power in the community. They left as a legacy a cluster of lovely stone houses built in the 1820's, a decade before John By built his canal.

It is John McCrea who interests us. He settled on Lot 13, Concession 1 in the township of Montague where his stone house still stands. It is along his trail that the present Rideau Trail has been located. This trail runs from Merrickville, through the Long Bush to the present Rosedale road. From there it goes north to Franktown and Perth. John was a man of mighty strength. He was once credited with carrying on his back from Brockville a bag of flour from one bushel of wheat, one broad axe, one set of drag teeth and one log chain. In 1816 when a settlement was begun on Pike Creek (River Tay) and later when Scottish settlers came to Franktown, a trail was needed to bring them from Merrick's Mills to their holdings. According to local history, it was the mighty John McCrea who was hired to conduct emigrants inland from Maitland on the St. Lawrence.

The road to Merrick's Mills was by then a well travelled route; but to the west was virgin forest becoming as it spread northwards a great impenetrable swamp. So straight west from his holding, McCrea's new trail went through the Long Bush to join the Rosedale road. From there it was pushed through the bush north and west to Franktown and Perth. For many years this road through the Long Bush vied with the road closer to the Rideau River as the main road to Perth and after 1826 to Smiths Falls. This latter road was called the Devil's Elbow because of a peculiar irregularity which can be seen on old maps. When the Devil's Elbow was paved, the 'elbow' disappeared and the Long Bush road fell into disuse. There it still is, three miles of it, grassy and quiet, meandering through the Long Bush, with mossy split rail fences and wild uncultivated vistas, looking much as they did during some of the time John McCrea conducted his pioneers along its rough way. It is a gift to us from those who walked it over a century ago. We must be glad in our hearts that it was spared the bulldozer and the steam shovel which have destroyed so much of our past. May we have the will and determination to preserve it for those who may walk the Long Bush Trail tomorrow.

Margaret Moxley



"HOW LUCKY CAN WE BE?"

These were the words repeated many times on October fifth and sixth when six members from the Ottawa Trail Club backpacked around Slide Lake.

In the midst of many days of cold, wet weather emerged two sunny warm days with temperatures sixty to seventy degrees. This was a repeat of conditions last year in October when we hiked around Gould Lake.

At nine thirty we left Bear Lake and took the trail on the east side of Slide Lake where we walked along a ridge of land looking down at Slide Lake on the west and Buck Lake on the east.

We continued around the north end of the lake and past a small waterfall where we had a refreshing drink in the company of some very large bull frogs.

Interest was added to our lunch by some tasty samples of Indian cucumber and meadow mushrooms along with a visit from a colourful little salamander.

After reaching the junction of trails on the west side of Slide Lake, we headed north to Mink Lake where we made camp about four p.m. At this point we met some ambitious hikers who intended to continue south through Frontenac Park and reach the south end of Gould Lake by the next afternoon.

The country around Mink Lake was very colourful and inviting so some of us hiked around the lake Sunday morning before donning our packs for the return journey.

We retraced our steps south to the junction and returned to the cars on the trail west of Slide Lake.

The trail in this area is very rugged and beautiful. Rarely is there a flat piece of ground. Time after time we climbed a rocky height to look down on yet another lake or swamp nestled in the hills.

The abundance of plants along the trail offered many welcome diversions. We were delighted to see for the first time, the Eastern Milk Snake. He was very co-operative and allowed us to gather around and study him for a positive identification and then posed for pictures.

The weekend left us with many happy memories and thoughts of next October.

Can we be this lucky again?

Trix Geary and Shirley Simpson

WEATHER FORECASTING

Everyone knows what a poor record the weatherman has in predicting the weather. Now you can do this yourself, thanks to a small pamphlet put out by the Greb Shoe Company.

Weather generally obeys basic rules. Air continually moves between hot and cold areas, trying to cancel them out. Clouds - the result of warm moist air meeting cold dry air - make the whole system visible. Prolonged periods of unsettled weather are typical of spring and fall due to the greater instability created by the advancing or retreating sun.

There clues to weather forecasting available to the casual hiker and which fit into general weather patterns. For example, if the night-time temperature remains unusually high, watch for foul weather. A drop in barometric pressure warns of bad weather - the more rapid the drop, the more severe the storm - and increase in temperature. Barometric rise signals the arrival of a cold front, fair weather, cold temperature with strong northwest winds.

Campsite location may depend on anticipated weather. A campfire should be shielded from strong winds, for example. In fair weather, the tent should be shaded from the sun. But following rainy weather, sunshine will be needed to dry out clothing and equipment. If a storm is expected, check the camp area for dead or weak trees that might be brown down. Prolonged rain can cause a rapid rise in rivers and small lakes, so keep camps well back from the water's edge.

Weather, according to one authority, is the biggest show on earth. One thunderstorm releases more energy than a hundred hydrogen bombs. Weather makes water out of thin air, and caught in the right mood, the sky becomes the biggest ice-machine imaginable.

It's a fact that even bad weather can be enjoyable the better you understand it!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DONATIONS

The Rideau Trail Association is grateful to the following for their donations and support:

Dr. R.J. Avery	Mr. W. B. Lewis
Mr. G. E. Brian	Mr. B.G. Lipsey
Mr. William B. Cobb	Mr. Roy A. Matthews
Mr. Joseph A. Curtin	Mr. Robert Muir
Mr. Larry Erion	Mrs. Robert Rosewarne
Miss Adelaide Fleming	Mr. Stephen Rys
Miss Katherine L. Gunn	Mr. William Sattlegger
Mr. & Mrs. Z. Hanczyk	Mr. C. Leonard St. Amand
Mr. Gregory C. Harshman	Mr. R.J. St. Croix
Mr. Gord Keates	Mr. Stephen Simkovits
Mr. R. F. Legget	Mr. Brian J. Young

Along the trail:

On November 3rd, while walking the Beaver Pond Loop on Foley Mountain, Don, Elizabeth, Bob, Julia and I made two unusual discoveries - what appeared to be, a scrub Maple in full bud with tiny leaves bursting forth and apples growing from a Pine tree! Don spotted them first, the leaves had all blown from the apple branches leaving only the apples suspended from, what appeared to be, Pine boughs. On further examination, we discovered the trunk of the Pine had encircled the young Apple tree and it was indeed growing from the same trunk! The fruit looked appetizing so we all partook and agreed that these were the best "Pine" Apples we'd ever eaten!

Rita Burtch

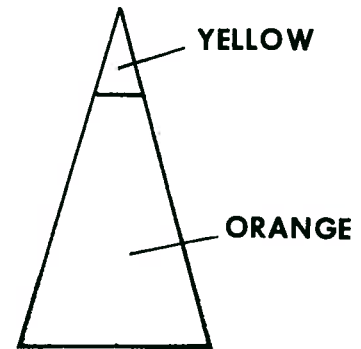
UNIDIRECTIONAL TRAIL MARKERS

As some members have found, there are areas on the Trail where it is possible to get oneself heading in the wrong direction by picking out the wrong marker.

It has been pointed out that this could be avoided if we had a distinguishing mark on one set of trail markers.

Your Executive has agreed that markers indicating the direction Ottawa to Kingston will have a small yellow triangle superimposed on the tip of the existing trail marker to do this. Markers indicating the opposite direction will remain as before.

A pilot project is underway in the Ottawa section (map 4) to establish the easiest and most reliable way to do this and still have a reasonably weather-resistant job. Some markers have already been done with spray paint, with mixed success, in Concession V, Marlborough Township. Very soon we hope to have others using plastic tape in Concessions VI and VII. It is hoped that come spring we will have the answer so that we can get the remainder of the Trail marked in similar fashion as soon as possible.



To misquote an often used phrase, "Just another example of how your Executive aims to serve you".

R. B. Blighan

Please Note Change of Addresses:

Ottawa Trail Club - P.O. Box 9233,
Ottawa, Ontario.
KOA OC3.

Ganaraska Hiking Trail - Box 1136, Barrie, Ontario.
L4M 5E2.

On October 27th, three of us, my husband Duncan, Jack Watkins and myself started out on a two-day hike on the Rideau Trail. There was a cool wind blowing as we started off to Sydenham and the road that leads to Frontenac Park, just north of Gould Lake.

Jack was the only one with any real hiking experience so we really didn't know what to expect. After a mile or so, we all began to have "pack" problems - our loads were shifting and also putting quite a strain on our backs. We were finding the terrain very rough, quite heavy forest area with many steep hills to climb.

At one o'clock, we stopped at Doe Lake for lunch and a half-hour rest. We were starting to realize how rough the going was and we had only covered one or, at the most, two miles in three hours! We were still hoping to get to Camel Lake, our half-way point, to make camp. It looked as though we would have to increase our pace.

From lunch on, we travelled over unbelievably barren terrain - the area looked like a forest fire had destroyed most of the trees - there were many rock outcroppings - we must have crossed twenty Beaver Dams - truly a remarkable landscape! I found it hard to believe I was within ten miles of Kingston and its limestone plain.

Finally, after many stops and nearing exhaustion, we reached Camel Lake. By the time we had our tents set up and our supper cooked it was dark. We sat up 'til about nine o'clock and watched the marvellously star-studded sky - the temperature, mild for October, never dropped below 40 so presented no problem for sleeping.

We were up and underway next morning, in bright sunshine, over the same barren terrain, dotted by innumerable small lakes and Beaver Ponds. Leading into Slide Lake, we followed a plateau, running for miles along the swamp about 300 feet below! We spent most of the day scurrying up and down sheer rock cliffs. Once we reached Slide Lake, it seemed to be all down hill, through thickly-forested valleys.

As dusk descended, we ended our journey at Danby's, just off the Perth Road. I think we learned a lot about hiking in these two days - we were carrying too much weight (about 25 lbs. each) - our packs were not properly balanced and, consequently, were pulling on our backs. We also learned what twenty miles can be like in two days when one is inexperienced - we set a very hectic pace for ourselves!

continued next page

The next time we hike, we will realize the time factor and, perhaps, choose a shorter, less arduous journey, where you can take time to enjoy the scenery.

Meantime, we look forward to some cross-country skiing on the Trail, at a leisurely pace, enjoying all the beauty of nature in winter.

Kathy Grant

* * * * *

On behalf of the Rideau Trail Association I would like to extend a very special thanks to all the "working" members, who have given so generously of their time and efforts to develop, improve and maintain the Rideau Trail and to wish everyone

A Merry Christmas

&
A Bright & Happy New Year.

The Editor.



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and send to:

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