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The View from Belfountain

July 2005

The View from Here

So you're in Belfountain, breathing clean air, living in a breathtaking UNESCO World Heritage Biosphere. You're just 55 minutes from the heart of the hot Toronto real estate market where desperate home-seekers bid tens of thousands over asking price for semi-detached homes with cracking walls and 16-foot frontage.

Your Belfountain homestead must be a plum waiting to be plucked. You're getting richer by the brick, right?

Apparently not. Local agents and media reports all suggest that rural prices are flattening out and sales are much harder to nail down.

We looked at four properties—two on Belfountain's Bush Street and two on Caledon Mt. Dr. just outside the village. They've all been listed for months. All four have reduced price. Here's what they're currently asking:

- 40 Caledon Mt. Dr. (McMichaels') \$795,000
- 4 Caledon Mt. Dr. \$639,900
- 715 Bush St. (Gingerbread Cottage) \$549,000
- 601-599 Bush St. (income triplex) \$415,000

"It's a beautiful property, but it has been a tough sell," said Monica Wright of Re/Max, Realty who represents 4 Caledon Mt. Dr.

"In the downtown market, if you're not buying condos, there are not many homes to buy, so prices go up—it's a question of supply and demand. Whereas up there, estate sub-divisions are popping up all over the place."

The boom is really an influx of first-time buyers, but the number of people buying expensive older homes are "a lot fewer," added Ms. Wright.

Ian Amos, Re/Max agent for 601-599 Bush St. seconded that motion. "It's a balanced market right now, not favouring buyer or seller," he said. "But only eight percent of real estate purchases happen in excess of \$400,000."

"There's a lot on the market right now. The buyer is listening to reports that the bubble is about to burst," said Marcia Reid, the Royal LePage agent for 4 Caledon Mt. Dr. "Countryside properties tend to be the first to suffer. And we agents are pricing the properties too high to begin with."

The so-called property boom, she said, is really "a sub-division market". The Belfountain properties require "special buyers", she said. It takes a special buyer to relish the McMichael home perched on the edge of the Niagara escarpment. "It doesn't suit for people with children," said Ms. Reid. "They might drop off the cliff."

David Kendall

Calling All Green Thumbs

Starting August, the weeds may breathe easy in the four raised flower beds at the intersection of Bush and Old Main Sts.

"I'm out of here as of August 1," says Frank Schenk of River Road, who has tended the beds for the last twenty years.

A meeting of the BCPO decided to pass the chore on to some volunteer with more time to spare.

"I'd be happy to help if there's a group to do it together," says Kathy Yankovich, a Belfountain gardener. "But not me, not me alone. There was never a discussion to have me do it alone."

She estimates that a volunteer group could weed and water the beds in an hour every three weeks or so. "Frank has planted very carefully so there's little need to weed and water."

Complaints had been raised that the gardens were "looking seedy and tacky," said Ms. Yankovich.

But the gardens have no water tap and Mr. Schenk has always operated the gardens on a yearly grant of \$100 from the BCPO for both plants and upkeep.

"A hundred dollars doesn't go very far," said Ms. Yankovich. "We owe a great debt of gratitude to Frank."



Cha, Cha, Cha

Oh, those daring belles of Belfountain. From whence cometh their winsome ways?

Aware of our readers' keen interest, The View's highly paid staff fanned out across the county and tracked the women down in the stunning environs of the Riverdale Fitness Mill in Inglewood.

There in the 1871 stone mill, where sweating men once strained over wool-making contraptions, we found the Belfountain bevy—along with spirits blithe and lithe from Inglewood, Hillsburgh and Alton—prancing and gyrating under the choreographic guidance of the radiant Chelsey Peatling, 17, of Belfountain.

To the delight of local husbands and wannabes, the Exotic Dance classes have been one of the most popular exercise routines offered at the beautiful facility—the six-class course is free for members, \$60 for non-members.

Not that any men have signed up for the classes.

The closest that men have got is to discover that their favourite neckties have been put to unheralded use in the absence of poles at the gymnasium.

The View, armed with freshly minted press cards and a copy of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, secured entry to the exotic venue.

"I signed up because Nicky (Ross) wanted to go," explained exotic dance student Cheryl Mitchell, part of the Riverdale management team. "And I wanted to check it out."

It checked out nicely. "We started with a champagne reception and 30 people showed up," said Ms. Mitchell.

"It has been the new Hollywood craze," said choreographer Peatling, who has been dancing since age five, dances competitively with Deborah Thompson's School of Dance in Brampton, and started out teaching children's dance at the Riverdale gym. Practicing at home, she said: "I was nervous doing the routines by myself and with no one watching. I thought the women would be really timid about it, but I was extremely surprised."



Mississauga Rd. 'Almost Clean'

The View reported two months ago that local Re/Max agent Ian Amos has adopted the six kilometres of Mississauga Road south of Belfountain, promising to de-litter it at least twice during the summer.

"Helluva lot more work than you think," he said last week. "Especially when it hasn't been cleaned up for years."

Mr. Amos says he has been picking up trash along the road "for the last four or five weekends. Actually, on Mississauga Rd. we have a small section left to do. We got rained out."

The Salamander Rises Again



The BCPO is hard at work planning the 9th annual Salamander Festival for Saturday, Oct. 1.

We start with a scrumptious Pancake Breakfast sponsored by the Belfountain Church, then embark on a fun-filled day of activities for children and adults, culminating in a barbecue with good eats and loads of entertainment.

Some events we have planned are our popular bake sale, a pet parade, 'Giblin' the clown who is the 911 representative for the Toronto Police Service, and the Morris Dancers. There will be raffles, face-painting, temporary tattoos, crafts and games.

On the entertainment front we'll have a belly dancer, a mime performance and Caroline Butson will be performing a special tribute to 'Gaia' Mother Earth. This last will be in conjunction with her grand opening of Caroline's Creative Arts studio titled Tree of Life Centre for Creativity.

Funds raised on raffle ticket sales prior to the Festival and all fundraising events during the big day go to the Belfountain Public School for the much needed upgrading of the playground area. Raffle tickets will be available to sell at \$2.00 or three for \$5.00 as of August 1, so please call in for some.

We are seeking donations or sponsorships to help offset the costs of the day. And, of course, we cry out for volunteers and more volunteers.

With your help and co-operation, this can be the biggest and best Festival ever. We are still hatching plans, so there will be more exciting things to come. Please feel free to contact Madelon Stevenson at work (905) 671-3187 or at home (519) 927-9087 or by email at dccofficmgr@bellnet.ca

BCPO Update

The past few months have seen the BCPO busy on various fronts. Our involvement in the Region of Peel's Parking Working group has resulted in a pilot program that was instituted Simcoe Day weekend and will repeat Labour Day weekend, but with the parking restrictions reversed to the other side of Old Main and Bush Streets.

We have also been involved in discussions with various groups regarding the paving of Winston Churchill Boulevard from Bush Street south to Old Baseline. The BCPO supports surface treatment of Winston Churchill Blvd, as we believe that this will alleviate some of the traffic currently flowing through Belfountain. The town is to start paving next year.

Being paved this summer are the main streets in our hamlet: Bush St. and Old Main St. There was some concern, as the past few times they have paved these roads the pavement has been extended out over the shoulder. Our concerns were addressed during a walk-about with region staff. Wider paving will come only along Bush St, where the gravel shoulder is unsafe for bikes and strollers.

On the social scene, the BCPO has hosted a couple of events during the spring. On June 4, we held a pub night that was well attended. I would like to thank Charles Peyton and Theresa Kirby for their hard work organizing this event, and a special thanks to Jim Wallace for getting Wellington Brewery to donate a keg of beer for us.

Another event at the Community Hall was a movie afternoon for the kids. Children watched Monsters Inc, and dug into bags of popcorn. This event was also organized by Charles and Theresa.

David Burke



Our Lonely Library

She sits behind the desk, solitary as the Maytag service man—Sharon Viersen, branch supervisor of the Belfountain Public Library.

Between 4:30 and 5:15 when *The View* was there on July 26, not one library client walked in the door.

"It's just not worth keeping it open," says Ms. Viersen. "We're putting out ten, maybe zero, books a day. Nobody uses it."

The Caledon library system consists of seven branches. On July 26, the system loaned out 1,700 books, of which just 17 came from the Belfountain branch, said Caledon Libraries CEO Bill Manson.

"But we're not closing Belfountain," said Mr. Manson. "The Belfountain people are fiercely supportive of keeping it open. It serves as a public presence, a statement that Belfountain is a community, not just part of a bigger entity."

They protest, but they don't start reading, said Ms. Viersen.

She is mystified at the shunning of her library. Is it because husband and wife both work in most Belfountain homes and are too exhausted at day's end to read a book? Is it that the generally well-off Belfountain residents buy books rather than borrow?

Membership is free. They've tried holding workshops, hosting reading programs, inviting authors to speak, giving prizes to members who read more than five books.

Mr. Manson was unable to provide the cost of running the Belfountain branch.

The space is provided free, said Mr. Manson. "So it's not a really high cost operation. If we could get up to 50 books a day at Belfountain, I'd feel much better about it."

High Ol' Time at Hospital Hoe-down

Found the Royal Ambassador Banquet and Conference Centre a touch urban for the annual Headwaters Hospital dinner/auction/dance last May?

No worries. The Dinner/Auction Committee is shifting the fundraiser to a more down-farm location.

They've "tentatively reserved" the Orangeville Agricultural Centre for the rock-a-billy hoe-down next May 6, says co-chair Jennifer Rogers.

"The committee felt the Royal Ambassador was a bit too sophisticated and downtown," says Ms. Rogers. "We want to go with a more casual, country-themed venue."

Oysters and canapés in cowboy boots.

The only problem is that the Ag Centre is "so huge," said Ms. Rogers, perhaps double the size needed for the 500 guests the popular dance hopes to attract. Organizers plan to cordon off the space with straw bales.

Last May's up-market dance theme was Roman Holiday. In keeping with the new focus on rural roots, the committee voted last Thursday for next year's theme: Great Balls of Fire.

SPORTS

Vintage Tennis

The Belfountain Tennis team—formerly the Hoopers and now known as the Beaujolais—started the season playing like a bad wine. But they are maturing into a heady brew with three tennis meets to go. "The team is looking stronger every week," says team captain Mike Logue. "We're closing in on third place."

The View from Belfountain...

comes to you from the Belfountain Community Planning Organization. It is published irregularly as news and information warrant and time allows. It is circulated to all residents of Belfountain and its environs.

Submission Deadlines:

To submit articles or information, email or drop of discs/hard copies to David Kendall at 519-927-3204 / email inkarri28@yahoo.ca or co-editor Charles Peyton at 519-927-5055 / email at cpeyton@rogers.com.

Next deadline to submit articles is the 4th week of September; publication around October 7.



The Magic Lie

An Evening with W.O. Mitchell

"A writer looks for and finds bits of people and experience—a nose, an earlobe, fragments of youth and age, the way people walk or talk, eat, sleep, make love or make hate. And from these autobiographical bits of truth the writer creates his story. Every single bit is the truth, but the whole thing is a more meaningful and dramatic lie—a magic lie." *W.O. Mitchell*

On Monday, July 11 at CanStage Theatre in Toronto, Belfountain's James Douglas helped to perpetuate some of Mitchell's magic lies. In a workshop presentation of a full-length solo performance on which Douglas has been working for several years, Mitchell's work came sharply to life on a simply-set stage, the stories and characters filling the upstairs performance space.

The Magic Lie weaves together "autobiographical bits of truth" from Mitchell's life culled from interviews and other appearances, with excerpts from Mitchell's own writing, with dramatic counterpoint provided by Douglas' own interpretations of Mitchell's character. The result is a delightful series of vignettes, loosely structured around key themes in Mitchell's *oeuvre*: his childhood on the Prairies, his relationships with his wife, parents and grandmother, and his encounters with the many characters—and they are characters—who populated his life.

Douglas has had a long relationship with Mitchell's work, dating from childhood experiences of radio broadcasts of *Jake and the Kid* and later including directing and producing many of Mitchell's plays in different Canadian venues. *The Magic Lie* is clearly a labour of love, and bears the mark of Douglas' extensive research, in addition to a deep appreciation for Mitchell himself—a man who was, by many accounts, not always a loveable figure. Still, even some of Mitchell's more cantankerous qualities make for very good theatre, such as the fact that Pierre Berton once quipped that Mitchell's wife was properly named "F.C.S. Merna," the F.C.S. standing for the "For Christ's Sake" with which Mitchell invariably preceded the "Merna" in everyday use.

The most memorable moments of Douglas' performance were those in which he not only took on Mitchell's settings and characters, but really *extended*, through his own composition and characterization. Was there really a chunk of Limburger cheese in the Mitchell's family Christmas tree every year? Who knows? But it is a great story, and it tells us more than any biography possibly could about childhood, memory, and family.

And the next time you see James Douglas in the Village, ask him about selling lingerie in the whorehouse.

Cate Sandilands

Comings and Goings



Arrived: Melyssa and Eric Kerr on Main St. He is with the OPP and she's a teacher/rehabilitation officer. They *love* Belfountain already!

Birth: Genie Hayward, proud owner of the Ascot clothing store has her very own baby to dress—6 lb. 14 oz, Simon Charles, born July 24.

Moved: Signe McMichael, whose husband Bob died in 2003, has been moved to the Central Park Lodge long-term care facility in Thorncliffe Park, Toronto.

Married: Stacey Mortimer and Cate Sandilands tied the knot last year in B.C. followed by a big wedding celebration in Belfountain and now they're buying a home on Old Main St.

Deceased: Marilyn Southwood, wife of Jim, late of Pinnacle St. passed away early last month after a long illness.



Belfountain Heritage Society

A Wee Bit of History

The Belfountain Heritage Society is entering the 'final phase' of the restoration of the Melville White Church. The quaint little building with the beautifully restored stone wall sits on the west side of Mississauga Rd. midway between the Grange Sideroad and Olde Base Line. Ten years ago, the church was a sorry sight with boards missing and broken windows, which two local Belfountain residents would patch up, hoping some miracle might preserve the little building's life. The southeast corner of the church had sunk 14 inches, the walls inside were cracked and crumbling and about the only item intact within its walls was the wooden cross on the west wall.

A plan for demolition was thwarted by a dedicated band of local residents who formed the Belfountain Heritage Society. Enlisting the services of heritage architect Peter Stewart of Hillsburgh, who donated many hours of time and effort, they drew up a plan to save the church. This entailed the raising of considerable sums of money—at least \$190,000—through grants, donations and fundraising events.

They approached the Town of Caledon and, with the assistance of Heather Broadbent, the town heritage officer, negotiated the purchase of the property from the Credit Valley Conservation Authority. While the Town became the new owner, the BHS signed a long term agreement for the restoration, maintenance and management of the project. We anticipate that the restoration of the building itself will finish this year, right on schedule. The surrounding grounds and landscaping should be completed next year.

If you would like more information on the BHS or the Melville White Church, please contact BHS president Norm Wrycraft at 927-3298.

Norm Wrycraft

Letter to the Editor

I am appalled to learn from a review in that frivolous rag, *The View* from Belfountain, that the old stone mill in Inglewood is being desecrated by thinly clad women engaged in erotic dancing. This disgusting practice must stop. It is an insult to a heritage building where good men and true earned their daily bread. I'm all for good, clean fun, but teaching women to adopt lewd postures in the name of art and exercise is both immoral and dangerous. Why can't these so-called liberated women be happy playing frisbee or walking their dog? My husband, who works late evenings downtown, agrees with my sentiments.

Deeply Chagrined

To Dig or Not to Dig

Not. At least not this year.

The \$4 million surgery for the eroding surface and foundations of the Forks of Credit Road has been stalled until next summer, says the manager for the big local project.

The three-phase job funded by Peel Region and to be overseen by Town Consulting Engineers of Brampton would have needed all summer and fall to complete. But a local resident filed an objection contending the work along the Credit River bank could damage his property. A hearing followed early in July before the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the hearing officer reserved judgement for thirty days.

The time delay, plus the possibility of new conditions being imposed on the contract, mean "the project has been delayed to 2006," said Town project manager Hugh Nelson.

The worrisome sector of the job involves the shoring up of the wall and underpinnings of the road near and beneath the overhead railway trestle. A coffer dam will be required under the trestle that will jut four feet into the river during construction.

A community meeting at the Belfountain Public School June 6 heard that the road risks collapse without the repairs, which are complicated due to the steep terrain and the Credit River.

"No one can say when," Peel Region's project manager Randy Senko confirmed last week. "It could collapse any time. Spring is the risk time when we'll monitor it most closely."