

Rideau Myths

For years now I've been trying, with limited success, to beat down misconceptions about the building of the Rideau Canal. Certain erroneous beliefs are persistent. Many people still think that the malaria that affected the workers was brought to this area by British soldiers and that it was unique to the Rideau – that's incorrect on both counts. Many people think that workers who died were buried in unmarked graves – they weren't. Many people think that the Rideau construction camps were like a gulag with a callous disregard for the worker – they weren't. We'll look at a few examples.

The tale that malaria was brought here by British soldiers who had served in malaria-prone areas comes about from a non-understanding of what malaria is. Malaria is a parasite that needs two hosts, humans and mosquitoes (a particular type that bites more than once), with a minimum number of each infected to sustain the malarial cycle. There are five varieties of the malaria parasite, four of which are located in tropical areas where mosquitoes are present all year. There is also a temperate variety, Plasmodium Vivax, which survives in colder climates where mosquitoes are only present for part of the year. P. Vivax can do this since it has the ability to stay dormant in a human liver until the mosquitoes are out and biting again. This type of malaria dates back to the late 1700s in Upper Canada (it was originally imported into North America from Europe). It was already well established in Kingston and Perth by the time canal construction started. P. Vivax has a low mortality rate compared to the most common and much more virulent form of tropical malaria (P. Falciparum). On the Rideau, about 60% of the workforce caught the disease each year and about 2% died. Deaths were likely not due to the malaria alone, it interacted with common health issues of the day (dysentery, tuberculosis, etc.) and that increased mortality.

The unmarked graves myth is from a simple misunderstanding of burials and cemeteries. For the last 150 years or so, people in this area have been buried in established church/community cemeteries with most graves marked with a carved stone headstone. So that expectation, when looking at the older canal-era cemeteries where we see no markers, or only a few apparently scattered fieldstones, led to the erroneous conclusion that the original graves were unmarked, or only marked with a blank fieldstone. This myth continues to this day, a recent



Old Burying Ground at Jones Falls

Not much can be seen in this photo and that's the point – this is part of the old burying ground at Jones Falls. It saw continued use to about the 1850s and then was abandoned and forgotten until a gravel pit was opened up on this spot a century later (by workers unaware of this spot's former use). Work on the pit was stopped when skeletons were discovered (a story recounted in Tales of the Rideau).

Photo by Ken W. Watson

brochure about the newly re-named Royal Sappers and Miners Cemetery in Newboro, states "An unknown number of civilian workers are buried at the cemetery, with their grave sites originally marked by unidentified stones." That is incorrect. We know that funerals were held for those who died (we have a few descriptions of those). As would have been common in the era, a wooden marker was placed at the head of the grave, with the person's name on it. Also common in that era was to place a fieldstone to mark the foot of the grave. The wooden markers have long since rotted away, leaving only the footstones as evidence that a grave was there.

In tackling the concept that there was a callous disregard for the workers (the gulag concept) we have three issues; cultural bias in historical interpretation, evaluating actions in the past against the standards of today and, as noted above, a misinterpretation of how people were buried at canal burial sites. Rideau work camps were quite similar to the timber camps of the

Friends of the Rideau is a volunteer, non-profit organization, working to enhance and conserve the heritage and charm of the Rideau Canal.

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day. The contractor built log structures; cabins, cookhouses and bunkhouses, to house and feed the workers. We have several period paintings showing those. The workers at some sites also built their own cabins to house their families. Some worksites grew into small communities with taverns and schools. When a worker or family member died, a funeral was held and they were buried in marked graves. If a worker died by accident, an inquest was held, this was the law in Upper Canada (accidents were actually quite low for a project of the Rideau's magnitude). The workers were paid in cash (silver coins), that was a requirement of the British Commissariat. The work was hard but most of the deaths were by disease which included regular fevers, dysentery, tuberculosis, and complications of those interacting with malaria. We see Lt. Colonel By trying to mitigate the problems as best he could – no one wanted to see workers get sick or die. While we see those numbers as high (as many as 1,000 men, women and children over the 5 years of construction), they pale in comparison to deaths by disease in urban areas – Montreal for instance saw almost 2,000 deaths by cholera in 1832 and many additional deaths due to cholera in 1834.

We see some cultural groups (i.e. Irish) commemorated more than others (i.e. French Canadian). Everyone was in the same boat on the Rideau – disease

Site	Maximum Employed	Number Sick	Number Dying		
			Men	Women	Children
Isthmus					
R.E. Dept.	3	1	1	0	0
7th Company	59	32	1	4	3
R.E. Labourers	270	201	12	5	6
Davis Mills					
R.E. Dept.	5	5	0	0	0
Contractor's Labourers	40	26	1	0	2
Jones Falls					
R.E. Dept.	1	1	0	0	0
R.E. Labourers	10	9	0	0	0
Contractor's Labourers	250	130	2	0	0

Some 1830 Malaria Numbers

This compilation was done from Colonel By's "return of sick" for the period August 1 to September 30, 1830. Although malaria was noted by Dr. Christie in his medical report for the Rideau in 1827, the first big infection by malaria occurred in hot summer of 1828 (lots of Anopheles mosquitoes, particularly in the southern sections of the Rideau). It then re-occurred every summer to 1831. When the workforce left, so did most of the malaria since there were not enough humans to sustain the cycle. In 1834, John Redpath brought his family to Jones Falls to escape the cholera epidemic in Montreal (which had killed his wife), since Jones Falls was now a healthier place than Montreal.

Table from "Malaria on the Rideau Canal, 1826-32" by Dianne Patychuk, 1979. Numbers from Library and Archives Canada, MG12, WO44, Vol.18, p.482.

and death played no cultural favourites; the Royal Engineers, the contractors, the British soldiers, the tradesmen (multi-ethnic) the labourers (Irish and French-Canadian) and the women and children on the worksites, all got sick and had similar mortality rates, all were living and working in the same conditions. Contractor John Redpath at Jones Falls said in a letter written on December 31, 1831 in referencing malaria: "I caught the disease both the first and second year [1828 & 29] missed the third [1830] but this year had a severe attack of Lake Fever – which kept me to bed for two months and nearly two months more before I was fit for active service." Redpath noted that if he'd known what he was getting into, he wouldn't have taken the job "Nothing can compensate for the worse of health so no inducement whatever would stimulate one to a similar undertaking." It was tough for everyone.

When we measure Colonel By's actions against the norms of the day he comes out looking very good. He bucked a number of conventions and regulations in trying to help the workers. He was a man ahead of his time in many aspects, from engineering to human compassion. There was a human cost in building the Rideau Canal and we should never forget that. But we also shouldn't view the building of the Rideau Canal as a project that had a callous disregard for human life – that's simply not true. They did the best they could given the circumstances of the times.

- Ken Watson

2018 Boating Stats

Canal traffic in 2018 was down 11% compared to 2017 with a total of 61,048 vessel passages recorded through the locks, compared to 68,590 vessel passages in 2017.

The numbers are close to the 2016 numbers (59,301) with the caveat that the 2018 numbers now include vessel passages by Le Boat. If those are factored out, the number of other boat passages is actually close to the record low 2014 numbers.

Mooring was similar to 2017, down just 3.5% (11,232 in 2018 vs 11,637 in 2017).

In total during 2018, 67.8% of the boats were from Ontario, 21.9% from Québec, 9.3% from the United States and 1.1% "Other". In terms of overall numbers, Ontario boaters saw the greatest decrease (41,404 in 2018 vs 47,114 in 2017). This was expected since the greatest increase in 2017 were with local boaters taking advantage of the free lockage. Despite the great weather in 2018, those boaters didn't continue to use the locks when the fees were restored.

For the 2018 numbers for some of the individual lockstations see:

www.rideau-info.com/canal/statistics.html

2018 AGM

Friends of the Rideau's AGM took place on May 5 in the Rideau Canal Visitor Centre in Smiths Falls. Thank you to Parks Canada's Annie Laurie for making the space available.

Friends Chair, Hunter McGill, reviewed the past year's activities, starting with the support received from various partners, including Parks Canada whose building, The Depot, in Merrickville, serves as the base for Friends' Rideau Canal visitor and interpretation centre. The Village of Merrickville has for several years provided a grant to assist with operations of The Depot and has also made available space for the storage of our files and supplies. The Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport gives us a Heritage Organizations Development Grant which supports this newsletter and Friends' website costs. Finally, appreciation for the Canada Summer Jobs program grant from the federal Department of Employment and Social Development which enables us to engage two summer students to operate The Depot for three months during the Canal navigation season.

Hunter sadly noted the death of Dave Brett, long time director of Friends, owner of the English canal long boat The Iron Duke, and founder of The Depot in Merrickville. Dave's enthusiasm for all things to do with canals, especially the Rideau, was unmatched.

Hunter also expressed the sadness of the board of Friends at the untimely passing of Gord Brown, MP, a long-time supporter of the Friends and a passionate promoter of the Rideau Canal. We will miss him.

Hunter reported on Friends' participation in a meeting convened by Parks Canada in February which allowed stakeholders to raise issues and themes to be covered in the anticipated management plan for the Rideau Canal.

The minutes of the 2017 AGM and the 2017 financial report were reviewed and approved.

Elections for directors of Friends were held, with existing directors Chris Biber, Marcus Letourneau, Gillian Organ, Ken Watson and Hunter McGill elected for new two-year terms. Bruce Kemp, a new member from Merrickville, was also elected to the board. They join director Cheryl Gulseth, who was elected for a 2-year term in 2016.

We had an excellent roster of speakers. Susan Millar of Parks Canada, informed us about the management plan process; Lisa McLean, Marketing Manager of Le Boat, spoke about the launch of the company's first season on the Rideau; and Mayor Shawn Pankow of Smiths Falls provided us with a fascinating presentation on the plans for the revitalization of the town's waterfront.

After the meeting we were given a very interesting tour of Le Boat's new fleet which was moored below the Combined Lock.

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

The enjoyable 2018 season on the Rideau seems a long time ago – as I write we have already had one snowfall in Ottawa! I hope you enjoyed the summer and had a chance to spend many warm sunny days on and around the Rideau Canal system. It was a pleasure to meet quite a few of you as I did the usual travelling roadshow along the Canal, Smiths Falls for Paddlefest, Colonel By Day at the Ottawa Locks and with Ken Watson at the Classic Boat Show in Westport. Our conversations on these occasions, and when you drop in to The Depot in Merrickville, are helpful to inform us of your concerns and interests in the protection and promotion of the heritage and charm of the Rideau Canal.

The Depot was as popular as ever with visitors, serving both as an information point for the Rideau Canal and a visitor centre for the village of Merrickville. Friends thanks Emily Mackenzie and Lauren Frankovitch, our summer students, for their work. We were also pleased to make arrangements to open The Depot on September 23 to support the Ottawa MG Car Club and their successful car show in Blockhouse Park.

Parks Canada continues to implement the major physical infrastructure repair and renewal program initiated three years ago, very welcome, much needed, and much of it seriously overdue. The big infrastructure projects this winter are the rehabilitation work on the locks at Kingston Mills and at Jones Falls. What does not seem to be happening though is the preparation of the long-awaited management plan for the Rideau Canal. By our calculation this process is now at least one year behind the schedule we were told about in early 2017. The management plan is much more than just a bureaucratic document to be put on the shelf when it has gone through the approval process, including review by Parliament. It is a statement of the commitment of Parks Canada to heritage promotion and presentation, commemorative integrity and protection of the tangible and intangible elements that qualify the Rideau as a National Historic Site of Canada.

Members of the Friends of the Rideau board will continue to advocate for an open and meaningful management plan process for the Rideau Canal. If you share our concern for the issues I mention above, don't hesitate to communicate your views to the Minister, the Honourable Catherine McKenna, senior executives of Parks Canada and to your member of Parliament. They need to know of our wishes and expectations when it comes to protecting and preserving the Rideau Canal National Historic Site for current and future generations of Canadians.

- Hunter McGill

The On Again, Off Again, Rideau Canal Management Plan

The Rideau Canal National Historic Site has had, and continues to have, a rocky road when it comes to developing a new management plan. Our last plan was completed in 2005. We should have had a new plan back in 2010 when the management plan cycle (as legislated in the Parks Canada Agency Act) was five years. We should have had a new plan in 2012 when they changed the organizational structure of the Rideau Canal and dramatically shifted the policy direction of Parks Canada on the Rideau Canal. Those changes led to the abandonment of much of the 2005 plan and should have triggered the development of a new plan. In 2012, the government of the day changed the Parks Canada Agency Act to have plans done on a 10-year cycle. So, on that cycle, we should have had a new plan completed in 2015, but nothing happened. And now, here we are in late 2018, with no new plan and a new deadline approaching, the end of 2019 when all Parks Canada sites are supposed to have updated plans (so that the Minister can table them in Parliament no later than 2020).

Work on a new plan was started early in 2016 – some of you will remember the open houses held in June 2016. At that time it was stated that the plan would be completed in 2017. Then Canada 150 got in the way and the proposed completion of the plan was delayed until 2018. However, in May 2017, plans for pre-draft consultations were dropped and a new deadline of 2020 was set. In February 2018, some very good pre-draft consultations were held, but since then everything seems to have stopped. We assume that was likely in part due to the manager who was looking after the Management Plan, Associate Director John Festarini, leaving the Rideau Canal and not being replaced.

The Rideau is also under-resourced with one planner stretched too thin (only part-time on the Rideau) and we suspect there are some issues with indigenous consultations. We've now heard that public consultations will be held in 2019 – but no specifics as to how that will be done. We trust that these will be robust public consultations and include more than just a simple on-line feedback system.

The new plan will be a “high level” plan, a stripped down version of what management plans used to look like. We've seen a few examples of completed plans, such as those for the Lachine Canal and Fort Wellington, and they are good examples of what we don't want to see for the Rideau Canal NHS. Section 32 of the Parks Canada Agency Act quite clearly states that a management plan must include “commemorative and ecological integrity” (see the article in this newsletter about commemorative integrity). It's to be noted that neither the Lachine Canal nor the Fort Wellington plans

even include the words “commemorative integrity”. The plan is also supposed to present the public with a clear view of how Parks Canada will manage the Rideau Canal for the next decade, something that was less than clear in the early scoping document for the new plan.

The delay may work to our advantage since the new plan must now also incorporate the Minister's recent directive for “an emphasis on commemorative integrity at national historic sites” (see the “Let's Talk Parks, Canada” article). That commitment to commemorative integrity, including the resourcing of the Rideau Canal to be able to develop and implement robust education and interpretation programs (as directed in the Minister's report), must be front and centre in the new plan. We will be looking to see those details in the draft plan, whenever it becomes available for public review.

Infrastructure Program

The two largest infrastructure projects for the Rideau Canal, three year programs to rehabilitate the locks at Kingston Mills and at Jones Falls, will begin this fall. In addition, the long wooden bridge at Jones Falls is being replaced. Work will also continue on several other projects including the replacement of the Bobs Lake Dam.

The projects at Kingston Mills and Jones Falls are both scheduled for substantive completion by 2021, but, as with all rehabilitation work on old heritage structures, a few surprises will likely crop up.

Disappointing is that the monoliths at Jones Falls, which were done as non-heritage “short term” repairs in 2007, are not receiving a heritage appropriate replacement. They are structurally (though not heritage) sound and so they did not fall into the scope of the infrastructure program which was restricted to issues identified in Parks Canada's 2012 National Asset Review.

The wooden bridge at Jones Falls will be changed from the original, it will become a pier bridge (piers founded on bedrock) rather than a timber crib bridge. The upper decking will match the original and that decking will be restored to its original elevation. This will allow small craft to pass under the bridge into Jones Falls Bay as was possible in the past.

The work will take time, since, in addition to the heritage structure challenges, each year the contractor will have to restore the locks to operating condition prior to the navigation season. There are also restrictions to in-water work during fish spawning season.

We look forward to seeing the progress on getting this work done—it is long overdue.

Commemorative Integrity

Commemorative integrity is a term used by Parks Canada to define the health and wholeness of a National Historic Site such as the Rideau Canal. This nebulous term can be broken down into three components; 1) the state of the built heritage (are the heritage structures being maintained?); 2) the state of heritage landscapes (are the characteristics and features of the place, that allow people to understand why it is important, intact?) and; 3) the effectiveness of public education, that the heritage significance of the place (as defined by its National Historic Site designation) is well communicated to the public.

On the Rideau Canal we see that much (but not all) of the built heritage is being looked after by the infrastructure program. However, the Rideau still lacks a capital budget to fix the many built heritage issues that are not being addressed by the infrastructure program and to maintain the structures that are being dealt with by the infrastructure program.

We have a problem with heritage landscapes – both at lockstations and more broadly along the entire Rideau Canal. Parks Canada has not done a full evaluation of the heritage landscapes at the lockstations. In 2015, very cursory studies were done on 4 of the 24 lockstations. A look at these studies shows significant problems with the methodology and conclusions (the four lockstations studied were rated fair to good – but there is no documentation regarding how those ratings were assigned). We also have the 2006 UNESCO recommendation to define and protect the visual values of the Rideau Canal – neither of which has been done. A

2013 consultant's report to define the visual values is highly flawed and legal protection still does not exist.

There are significant problems with the third part of commemorative integrity, the public education component. You've to look no further than the "new" Parks Canada Rideau Canal website that went up in April 2017 to see a tangible example of that problem. As of this writing (a year and a half later) it still contains absolutely no information about the history, cultural heritage and heritage designations of the Rideau Canal. We also see very minimal effort on the part of Parks Canada to do any serious heritage interpretation, a major part of the problem is that there are no heritage staff at the Rideau Canal office (what little they had was purged in 2012) and Parks Canada presently has a corporate culture that does not give heritage any kind of priority.

We are expecting to see a significant change on the Rideau Canal given the Minister's directive in her *Let's Talk Parks, Canada* report (released to the public in April 2018) for: "An emphasis on commemorative integrity at national historic sites, together with the need to dedicate additional resources to education and interpretive programs." That has yet to happen on the Rideau Canal. Parks Canada must pay much more than simple lip service to the Minister's directive, there is an expectation of tangible results. The addition of heritage staff and a robust heritage education and interpretation program along the entire Rideau Canal are urgently required. Let's hope that we will see these changes for the 2019 operating season on the Rideau Canal.

Let's Talk Parks, Canada!



In January 2017, the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, Catherine McKenna, engaged with many partners and stakeholders, in a broad consultation called *Let's Talk Parks, Canada!* Friends of the Rideau participated in this process. Her public response on these consultations was released this spring. Directly relevant to the Rideau Canal National Historic Site was a call for commemorative

integrity to be the first priority in decision-making at national historic sites, something we have not seen on the Rideau Canal in recent years.

One of the Minister's explicitly stated priorities was for "an emphasis on commemorative integrity at national historic sites, together with the need to dedicate additional resources to education and interpretive programs." This applies directly to the Rideau Canal where heritage and public education have been in very short supply. This is due to the re-organization of the management of the Rideau Canal into a Parks Canada waterways unit and the brutal operating budget cuts of 2012 (which have yet to be restored on the Rideau Canal). Commemorative integrity, particularly with respect to heritage landscapes and public education, is not presently a priority in the management of the Rideau Canal.

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Let's Talk Parks, Canada continued ...

We hope that Minister McKenna is paying some attention to what is happening (or not happening) on the Rideau Canal National Historic Site and how her directives are being followed. Her response to the *Let's Talk Parks, Canada* consultations, in its directness and clarity, has raised expectations, certainly with Friends of the Rideau. As Parks Canada Rideau Canal managers consider their response to the Minister's directives, we hope Ms. McKenna's emphasis on commemorative integrity will be heeded. You can view the Minister's report at: letstalkparksCanada.ca.

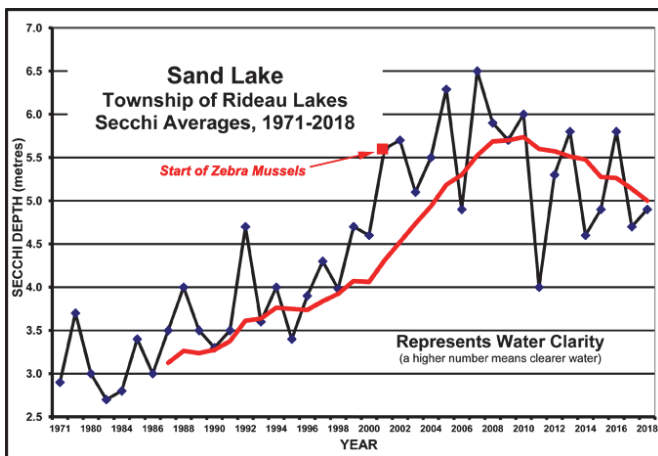
Zebras on the Rideau Canal

The zebra mussel invasion started on the Rideau Canal in 1990 in the Rideau River section of the canal. It spread to other sections, including invading several of the southern lakes, including Sand Lake, in 2001.

In the lakes section this has brought about some significant ecological changes. Rooted aquatic vegetation which used to be limited to about 8 feet in depth now extends to 12 feet in many areas due to the increased water clarity (deeper sunlight penetration). The south-central lakes (Sand, Opinicon, etc.) saw the "invasion of the blobs" as filamentous algae now lasted the entire summer season since their competition (single celled algae) was being eaten by zebra mussels.

Zebra mussel populations have been on the decline in some of the lakes since about 2010. You can see that reflected in the water clarity graph below, the trend line is slowly heading back to pre-zebra levels. We don't know what the future will bring, but likely more ecological changes are in store.

The Canadian Museum of Nature has just released a report on 26 years of studying the zebra mussels on the Rideau River. You'll find a link to that report on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/rideaufriends/



Great Canal Journeys

This summer, Channel 4 in the UK filmed an edition of their show, Great Canal Journeys, on the Rideau Canal. The show features Timothy West and Prunella Scales, both well known British actors (and a married couple). Friends of the Rideau assisted the production company in scoping out the Rideau – they were a bit overwhelmed by the breadth of stories relating to the Rideau, from its origin to present day use. They could see that it was going to be a challenge to whittle it down to a one hour show.

We haven't yet seen what they did – it is episode 6 in series 9 of the show. A video will be posted to the Channel 4 website in the near future (a video of episode 5 is on there as of this writing). Just Google "Great Canal Journeys" and go the episode guide on the Channel 4 website. The video of the show may be there by the time you read this.

Le Boat

By all accounts, Le Boat did very well in their first season on the Rideau Canal. So well in fact that they are opening up a satellite office in Seeley's Bay to be able to offer one way trips.

Top 200

The Institution of Civil Engineers (a group representing civil engineering worldwide) has chosen the Rideau Canal as one of 200 engineering projects that has helped to shape the world during the past 200 years. We've been included in their new (fall 2018) book, "Shaping the World, Two Hundred Years of the Institution of Civil Engineers." We show up in their section on connected communities as a triumph of adaptive engineering (which the Rideau Canal demonstrates in spades).

Their selection of the Rideau Canal shows how important the building of the canal is to the overall story of the development of engineering as a formalized discipline.

"Lockkeepers are the best we've encountered in several countries including France, England, Scotland, and Holland. They were helpful, knowledgeable, and extremely friendly"

- DJ (a Le Boat customer), Alexandria, Virginia, 2018.