

#### FLAMBOROUGH HERITAGE SOCIETY



October 2022

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Plus other local society websites & our contact info



# October's **Monthly Meeting**

The Flamborough Heritage Society will feature a presentation on The History of Lowville by Helen Callaway, Oct. 26th at 8:00PM, in person & Zoom at the Waterdown Legion.

Helen is a member of the Lowville, Nelson Township. She from McMaster graduated University with a B.A. and went on to have a varied career in industry, education, customer service and donor relations.

Please join Helen for a brief history of the Village

Kilbride Historical Society. She will take you through the decades of the 1800s and early 1900s. You will hear about some of the early settlers, highlights of their lives and the businesses they built in the village that contributed its early to prosperity.

# Heritage Paper #306

First in the series of "Conspiracy, Controversy, and Celebrity: A Rich History of Flamborough". The topic is on theme for the Hallowe'en season. Explore a 1920s murder with 'The Murder of Mike Jonash - Part 1.'

#### Found in the Fonds

Some pretty amazing stuff is unearthed in the Archives during research projects or when cataloguing items.

What's in the spotlight this month?

#### Membership & Donations

Explore how you can help our cause, whether it be through yearly membership dues or donation of monies or items of local historical interest.

# **HERITAGE PAPER**

# Flamborough Centre: The Murder of Mike Jonash - Part 1

Tess Moffat, Archives Summer Student

Over the next several issues we will be publishing papers under the theme "Conspiracy, Controversy, and Celebrity: A Rich History of Flamborough"

umanity has a morbid fascination with murder; people adore the mystery and intrigue of violent crimes and actively read or watch media concerning homicide, be it fiction or nonfiction. The people of the past were not so different. Local cases dominated the news and the public followed the cases closely. The interest in these events could stem from several concerns or interests, but a rather important question that always seems to come up when a tragedy occurs nearby is: do we really know our neighbours?

The 1928 murder of
Flamborough Centre farmer
Mike Jonash would give the
people of Flamborough an
opportunity to peer into the
lives of their neighbours. The
victim was known to be
industrious and hardworking by
members of the community. He
was believed to be ex-Russian
military and was described as a
tall and well-built man. The



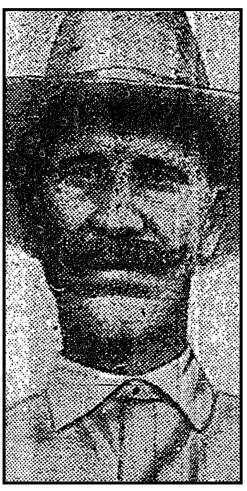
An enraged wife, incensed debtor, avian thieves or simply an accident - who killed Mike Jonash?

Jonash property on the sixth concession consisted of three separate households; Jonash, his wife Mary, and their four children occupied half of the house while his brother-in-law and his family had the other half. As well, a hired man lived in a room by the kitchen. The case was reported on by The Hamilton Spectator and was analyzed and followed closely by the public. However, the details of the case would remain murky throughout the investigation, building interest

in the impending trial.

On February 28th, 1928,
Doctor D.A. Hopper of
Waterdown was requested by
J. McWhurter to visit the Jonash
home. Mike Jonash had a
potentially fatal accident
according to his brother-in-law
and hired man and required
immediate assistance. At the
time, telephones were becoming
increasingly more popular in
households, but they were not a
fixture in every home yet,
leading to many relying on their
neighbours when they needed to

call someone. Doctor Hopper arrived at the farm around two in the morning. When he entered the kitchen to examine the patient, he was greeted by a nightmarish scene; Jonash was dead on the floor with a battered and almost unrecognizable face that was gouged and clawed and a caved-in chest. Immediately, Hopper communicated with Chief James Clark of the Wentworth police, who came to the farm accompanied by



MIKE JONASH

"Flamboro Center farmer who was so badly beaten at his home ... died of his injuries." - Hamilton Spectator, 1 Mar 1928

Sergeant Cox and Officer Smith of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). Considering the nature of the wounds, a simple drunken accident seemed highly improbable. Suspicion surrounded the hired man Jacob Sczepanek and Jonash's brotherin-law Joseph Deczuk. Sczepanek was scratched near the nose and had a tear in his shirt by his elbow. According to the police, Deczuk appeared ill at ease. While both men had witnessed a shocking event, there was something off about them and the entire situation. The men were placed under arrest after the police examined the property, and the duo were brought to the county police cells.

Sczepanek explained to the officers the events of that night. Jonash had gone to the city and returned in the evening. He had been drinking but was not drunk. After finishing the evening chores, Jonash invited his brother-in-law's family over for dinner and to share in a three-gallon keg of beer he had purchased during the day. After the beer was drunk and the meal was eaten, the party went their separate ways. However, Sczepanek overheard Jonash quarrelling with his wife, Mary, in the kitchen. Mrs. Jonash was angry about the money he had

spent on the beer. During the argument, Jonash struck his wife before storming out of the house through the back door. After some time, his wife went out to look for him and Sczepanek heard her shriek and scream that her husband had been killed. Jonash, according to the hired man, was lying near the back steps, barely breathing. Sczepanek believed Jonash fell down the stairs and bashed his head against the wagon at the bottom, which was completely covered in blood. After bringing Jonash into the kitchen, Deczuk and Sczepanek alerted the neighbour to what had, asking him to call a doctor as soon as possible.

"Jonash was dead on the floor with a battered and almost unrecognizable face."

While this might appear to be a convincing story, there were several issues. While falling headfirst into the wagon could account for the head wounds, the caved-in chest was believed to have required repeated and much more intense force. As well, when the police examined the scene that night, the wagon appeared to have been

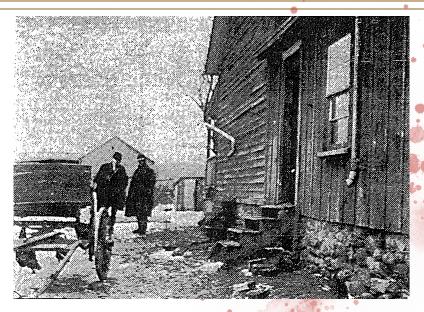


Photo featured in the Spectator of the steps from the summer kitchen and the wagon that had been smeared with blood.

purposefully smeared with blood and the police found a blood-soaked pine knot club. According to the police, there was far more to the story than what Sczepanek had confessed to. The men were taken to Central Station the following day where they had their fingerprints taken by expert William Pinch and were transported to the city jail while the investigation continued.

On March 1st, 1928, investigations on the property occurred with the discovery of a blood-stained hatchet and hammer in the nearby bloodied woodshed. The weapons were given to the city pathologist Doctor Deadman. As well as investigating the farm for any clues, the police were very interested in what role the wagon had played. The wagon

had several pools underneath it with blood smeared on the back wheel. Fingerprints could not be found on the wheel or the wagon. However, it was still determined by the police that the blood had been placed there to make the events of that night appear to be an accident. Mary Jonash was placed under arrest on March 1st after the funeral of her husband. The delay in her arrest was on the behalf of Chief Clark as he wanted to give the Jonash family enough time to make arrangements for the farm, which was going to be watched by Jonash's brother from Hamilton since the eldest child was only twelve. When she was interviewed and later arrested, it was noted by The Hamilton Spectator that Mrs. Jonash's face "was badly battered and

bruised." She told a very similar story about the party and the beer; however, there was something the hired man had failed to mention.

During the fateful evening, it was mentioned that Jonash owed his brother-in-law \$1000 on a mortgage. The victim became "greatly excited" as he demanded to know how he would find the money. After the party was over, Mary Jonash scolded her husband for making a scene. He then struck her, sending her sprawling into the stove; Jonash then left the house where he slipped and fell into the wagon. This addition to the story provided a potential monetary motive for Deczuk and his family. As well, Mary Jonash's interview represented the beginning of the story's breakdown through several discrepancies, such as the reason why she was arguing with her husband.

After the funeral, Mrs. Jonash was arrested and brought to the courthouse for questioning. She was held for killing and slaying and kept as a material witness. All her children, except for the youngest as she refused to leave her mother's side, were sent to the Children's Home. The only individual not to be arrested was Mrs. Deczuk.

When Mary Jonash reached

the courthouse, the only detail that was given to the papers the following day was that the story she told directly contradicted the one told by Sczepanek. She was held in the courthouse cells before being transferred to the Barton street jail with her child likely accompanying her. She would not be allowed bail due to the seriousness of the charge. The police continued to be doubtful about the 'accident.' For starters, Jonash's caved-in chest was believed to have been a result of someone standing on or jumping on his chest according to the coroner. Instead of a fatal slip and fall, the police theorized Jonash was attacked in the yard, dragged up into the house, and left to die on the kitchen floor. As well. another witness, who remained anonymous in the article, swore that all the adults present in the

house had left through the backdoor at some point after the party was done. Considering this evidence, the stories told by Sczepanek and Mary Jonash seemed to be verging on fictitious.

Henry, Jonash's eldest, believed his father's murderer could have been a result of chicken thieves. Three chickens were found with wrung necks the morning after the incident. In 1927, Jonash had allegedly caught a man in the chicken coop and scared him off by threatening him with calling the police. Henry believed his father could have caught the thieves and, after a struggle commenced, was murdered. Chief Clark dismissed the theory as "their yarn." To reject this lead indicated the police had enough evidence to place guilt

on Sczepanek and Deczuk.

These events occurred over a few days with Mrs. Jonash's life being completely upturned. While there was plenty to unfold within the newspapers, the public would have to wait till the end of the month to learn about the fate of the accused men and what happened to Mike Jonash.

The newspapers discussed certain pieces of evidence, such as the victim's wounds, extensively, but the complete lack of information regarding certain facts, such as the testimony of Mary Jonash, generated interest amongst the public with many becoming increasingly more curious about what occurred that night.

While the crime caught the attention of the public, it was at the trial where all the pieces would fall into place.

# FOUND IN THE FONDS

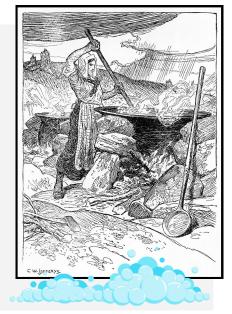
We received a donation from the Hamilton Public Library of a discarded book entitled "The Canadian Housewife: An Affectionate History." Written by Rosemary Neering, it highlights domestic life in Canada from the 17th century through until

the 1950s.

Women's work was often very physical, as shown by this illustration by C. W. Jeffreys. It depicts the making of potash in a giant cauldron. Potash, or lye, and animal fat were necessary ingredients in soap made by

housewives.

Laundry was difficult, dirty work, often taking a day to complete. The food to be eaten on laundry day would be prepped the day prior, as the hearth would be busy heating water and boiling clothes.



# **Current Projects**

All of our work is accomplished through our volunteers. You may wonder what exactly volunteers are doing - we're glad you asked!

We'd like to welcome our co-op student Samantha Hounsome to the Archives! Where Kim left off with the West Flamborough republication, Sam has adopted the project and taken it to near completion. It's looking like it'll be ready well in time for the Christmas season. Thanks to all of those involved - the publication has been on many "to buy" lists for a while!

The Archives is still as busy as ever - inquiries and research projects abound. Donations of photos, documents and items of interest continue to pass across the Archivist's desk. Lyn continues to catalogue and organize.

Consider volunteering with the Society—there's always something to do! With the active volunteers we have, we have been unable to continue events like our Haunted Heritage tours. We're hoping to remain active in the community as well as maintain our archives - if you think you can help, reach out.



# **VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**

Our volunteers' love of local history, time spent and dedication to helping the Society is always appreciated. Here we highlight just a small sampling of their work.





A promotional exhibit has been installed in the foyer of the Waterdown Library. It highlights upcoming meetings, a featured publication, and encourages patrons to visit the archives and become members of the Society.

A small display has also been installed on the ramp leading to the archives, featuring items not easily identifiable today. Visit today and see how many you can recognize!

We are participating in the Waterdown BIA's 6th Annual Scarecrow Walk as a community partner. Last year's edition was based off Merren Brown, where this year's is a bit more macabre with a fatal mill accident being portrayed. Jack Slater has been sawn in half those buzz saws were quite the hazard! In reality, Jack Slater was killed by a saw, but not to the extreme of our scarecrow display. Jack was pulled by his loose jacket into a saw at his lumber mill, leaving his wife

and several children behind. John Clifford (Jack) Slater (1871-1910) was only one of many mill fatalities in Flamborough, owing to either lack of safety or industrial accidents. We hope you enjoy all

of the 100+ scarecrows in the village from local merchants, community groups and residents. Be sure to vote for your favourite and participate in the Scavenger Hunt in order to win prizes - Jack would love it if you voted for him!

waterdownvillage.ca

Vote at



"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can." – **Arthur Ashe** 

#### **CONTRIBUTING TO OUR CAUSE**

# **MEMBERSHIP**

It takes a lot to preserve history, and your membership is a big part of that. Thanks to all our members!

Thanks to everyone who renewed their membership with us. Membership runs from September to August annually, and helps support

us by funding our operating costs. Members receive this newsletter as well as priority at our monthly meetings, back live in person after being held by Zoom for the last few years.

We think society membership is pretty amazing - we encourage all our current members to recruit more people, whether you gift a membership to someone special or just let your friends, family, and colleagues know about us.

- Members have priority, being sent the latest news first
- Your membership helps support Heritage Society projects
- Be part of one of the most active Heritage Societies in Ontario







# We receive a lot of donations of heritage documents, photographs, and items throughout the year. If you have something you think we may like, please let us know! You don't have to permanently donate an item - pieces can be on loan to the Archives for as long as you feel comfortable or copied and returned to you.

To be able to properly catalogue and store all these treasures takes not only an investment of time but also money. Acid free envelopes and boxes, sleeves to store negatives,

# **DONATIONS**

blank cards to use in the card catalogue are just a few of our expenses.

We're still raising funds for our shelf system update - space is currently at a premium in the Archives. While memberships, book sales and grants help us with our day-to-day expenditures, donations from members like you greatly support our mission.

Please help us preserve our local history by donating today. Tax receipts are issued for donations \$25 and up.

# **OUR PRESENCE ONLINE**

We encourage all of our members to follow, subscribe, share and overall enjoy our online activities. See you all online!

#### **OUR FOLLOWERS**



3,515



**510** 



66



**22** 

We're constantly posting new content - tap follow and drop a comment to say hi!



# **E-Commerce**

September was the month to renew memberships - we saw a boost in our online shop's activity with all of our members supporting us for another year. If you've forgotten you can still renew through our website's shop or in person at the Flamborough Archives.

Thanks to all for your support!

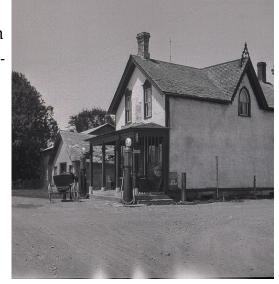
**The Wallace House**, which stands on Main St. N, from our most popular blog post in September.

Te continue to share images at first glance. We also shared an and information on our social media and our website. We also search the web for new information and the stories shared motive 103. Have you visited our about Flamborough's past.

Our recent popular posts included a 1930s photo of Oliver Dunn's store in Westover. We challenged our followers to look for details they may have missed

image of Aldershot High School in the 1960s, and Hamilton Conservation Authority's post about Loco-'Flamborough on Rails' exhibit in the Waterdown library? It won't be there for much longer!

Don't be a stranger - be sure to share with us or our content wherever we are online.









# Treasures from the Archives





Wentworth County Council, 1925

We're in the midst of a municipal election, and the archives has a number of group photographs of council members. Two photographs of the Wentworth Council, one taken in 1925 the other in 1933, contain many familiar last names. Council members included Vance, Tew, Crockett, Hyslop, Forth, Drummond, English, Stock and Cummings.

Of particular interest is one gentleman in both that appears not to want his photo

taken. He slouches down and looks away from the camera. The 1933 photo seems that he was added in afterward, as photo manipulation is as old as photography itself.

A brief search for some information on the man, John Edward Peart, didn't reveal too much. He served as the council Clerk. John married Susie Eveline Munn on June 17th, 1911, and they lived at 3 Hamilton Avenue in Hamilton.

Reid Studio. In 1969, the photo-

graphic studio closed because the

building was set to be demolished

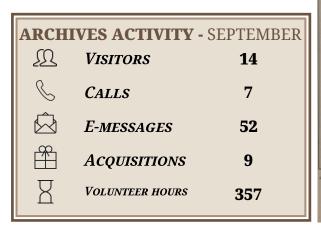
for a downtown urban renewal

Some of the group photographs were taken by A.M. Cunningham & Son in Hamilton. In 1886, Charles S. Cochran (1854-1933) opened a photographic studio in association with Alexander M. Cunningham (1863-1926). In 1902, Cochran left and the studio was renamed the A.M. Cunningham Studio. After his son Charles H. Cunningham joined the business the name changed to A.M. Cunningham & Son.

When Alexander died, Charles continued the business, which was known in later years as the Cunningham Studio. In 1955, Charles retired and sold his interest in the firm. From 1967 to 1968



project.



# THREADS THROUGH THE PAST

# Newspaper Clipping Scrapbooks

Lyn Lunsted, Archivist

It is amazing what a single query can lead to, and what a small newspaper clipping can reveal.

while ago the Archives received an email from a lady living in the UK searching for information about her uncle. She had recently connected with a family member who told her she had an uncle who had lived in Waterdown.

'His name was Arthur Randall Griffiths and he was married to Betty. They had two children (that I know of), James and Gerty who were both born in Canada. Arthur was sadly killed as a passenger in a car crash whilst returning home from working at, I believe, the Forestry Commission. Apparently the car was hit by a milk cart not far from home. Unfortunately I have no idea of even the year. I would guess the children were young still at that moment but have no other details other than their names. I am devastated to know that I have/had cousins, particularly when I was born in and have lived in Toronto at various times in my life and could so easily have contacted them. '

With this tiny bit of information the search began. We had no biographical information and no family file. Our local newspaper is not digitized and several issues are missing, in some cases entire years. The fact that there was a 'milk cart' involved seems indicate that the event happened many years ago, but was

it around 1920? 1950? Online hours later in St. Joseph's Hospi-City Directories don't seem to exist for Hamilton or Burlington (Waterdown was included in both of those, depending on the year) between the years of about 1930 to 1955 and we don't have THLY CASH SUMMARY, 1954 - RECEIPTS many hard copies in our collection. I was unable to find an obituary, or any information on the various genealogical sites.

In our collection we have several scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, donated by various people. Some contain birth, death and marriage announcements. Others have clippings of local, national or international events. Some have recipes and home help columns. Most of these have been indexed—and they are a goldmine of information. I found a reference in the collection of a local dentist. Local event clippings had been pasted in his old appointment books.

It was the person I was looking for. Arthur Griffiths, 38, of 44 Main Street North in Waterdown was a passenger in a car which had swerved to avoid a service vehicle exiting from a service station on Highway 5 near Tansley Bridge. He died four

tal in Hamilton.

Unfortunately the clip was not dated—a common problem with scrapbooks. The dates are cut off



of the clipping and not recorded as they are pasted into the scrapbook. But other clippings on the same page were from the late 1950s so this was a starting point.

In another section of this book, there was an obituary! We finally have a death date and information about his family.



I was able to send scans of these clippings to the researcher, along with a screen shot from Google of the house they lived in, as it still exists at 44 Main Street North.

The City Directory we have for 1957 listed him as a civil servant.



Further research provided a birth announcement for a son, Arthur James, born in 1950.

What I found interesting about this obituary is that he was cremated, which I would have thought was fairly rare in the 1950's. The researcher provided further information on this:

He was brought up in Heywood, Lancashire in the New Church faith of Emanuel Swedenborge.

That was a new one! A quick look at Wikipedia provided information about the New Church, but not really a reason for the cremation. 'Swedenborgian organisations acknowledge what they believe to be the universal nature of God's church: all who do good in accordance with the truth of their religion will be accepted

into heaven . Swedenborge published anonymously: his writings promoted one universal church based on love and charity, rather than multiple churches named after their founders and based on belief or doctrine.'

However another source (https://swedenborg.com/) states that 'In fact, it's not possible to be fully regenerated while we are still in our physical bodies, because no matter how much good we have at the core of our being, our human nature will always try to lead us astray'

The teachings spread to the United States in the early 1800s: 'New Church ideas were brought to the United States by missionaries, one of whom was John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed).

Emanuel Swedenborge was a theologian, scientist and a mystic and the names of many people who followed his teachings and theories are well known. Looking into this takes one down a rabbit hole—but not really the focus of this column.

Given that his children were born in the 1950's, there was not much more which could be found in official records due to the privacy laws.

Unfortunately our local newspaper collection is missing the entire year of 1959 so I was unable to search for further information. But I now had the name of his wife and as luck would have it, she had never remarried. Her obituary was quite detailed and she was well known in the community.



GRIFFITHS, Mary Elizabeth Jane (Betty)
In her 93rd year, Betty passed away
peacefully, after a brief illness, at Hamilton General Hospital March 11, 2016. Betty is survived by her children, Jim (Sigrid) and Gertha, grandchildren Sylvia, Michael. Morgan and Arran and three greatgrandchildren. A longtime resident of Waterdown, Betty retired in Betty retired in 1988. She loved gardening, music, painting, arts and crafts and creating her own distinctive style of pottery. For the past eighteen years, Betty was one of the primary volunteers at Animal Adoptions of Flamborough. She worked tirelessly with great dedication for pets in need. As a member of the Board of Directors, she answered the phones, handled intakes and adoptions. The Rainbow Bridge is very busy these past few days with Betty being greeted by all the pets she has owned over her lifetime along with all those she has helped find new "Forever Homes" For the past sixteen years, Betty was a Tele-Touch volunteer, providing reassurance calls to seniors and individuals with disabilities. We are forever grateful to General Hamilton Hospital Emergency and on 8 West for their compassionate care during her brief stay with them. As per Betty's wishes, Cremation has taken place. If desired, donations in Betty's memory to the Animal Adoptions of Flamborough, would be appreciated

With this information, I had one very happy researcher:

Please sign the Tribute Wall at www.kitchingsteepeandludwig.com

'Had to wait for some of the tears to clear! I cannot tell you how precious this information is and how it gives me a fighting chance to try and trace their family as I had no idea of proper names etc. I am also delighted to see what a full and apparently happy life Betty had after losing a much-loved husband so young.'

Gotta love those scrapbooks!

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

A utumn is in full swing and with it, the heritage society is as busy as ever. Our first inperson meeting held at the Waterdown Legion was a success, and this month's has had a great response with many people showing an interest.



Once again we are participating in the Waterdown

BIA's Scarecrow Walk as a community partner. We hope those that have visited the Waterdown Library recently haven't been too startled by the gruesome scene. The Scarecrow Walk is as popular as ever, with all sorts of scarecrows scattered throughout Waterdown.

Mentioned in September's newsletter, the Waterdown Memorial Hall 100 celebration is scheduled for the Remembrance Day weekend, November 11th through the 13th. Information will be shared on our website and social media, and there are lots of activities throughout that weekend to pique the interest of the community at large.

Many thanks to our volunteers who keep the society active and top of mind in the community. While we're always looking for new members and volunteers, we appreciate those that are investing their time and efforts.

Chris Rivait, President

\*Note: Our Summer issue was numbered incorrectly, as Vol 50 No. 9. It should have been Vol. 51 No. 1. This issue is No. 3—there is no Vol. 51 No. 2. Sorry!

#### AREA HERITAGE WEBSITES

The Ancaster Township Historical Society - <a href="www.ancasterhistory.ca">www.ancasterhistory.ca</a>
The Burlington Historical Society - <a href="www.burlingtonhistorical.ca">www.burlingtonhistorical.ca</a>.
The Dundas Valley Historical Society - <a href="www.dundashistory.ca">www.dundashistory.ca</a>
The Grimsby Historical Society - <a href="grimsby Historical Society">Grimsby Historical Society</a>.

The Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society- <a href="https://www.hamiltonheritage.ca">www.hamiltonheritage.ca</a>
The Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society -

Head of the Lake Historical Society

The United Empire Loyalists' Association of
Canada, Hamilton Branch - www.uel.com
The West Lincoln Historical Society - www.wlhs.info
Waterdown Mill Street Heritage -

www.waterdownmillstreetheritage.ca

# THE FLAMBOROUGH HERITAGE SOCIETY

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Twitter: @FlamboroHistory

**YouTube:** Flamborough Archives

& Heritage Society

#### **OFFICERS 2022—2023**

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Treasurer: Lyn Lunsted
Past President: Nathan Tidridge

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Kim Hirst Keri Raphael MaryAnn Slagter Garth Wetherall Lyn Lunsted, Archivist

