

Historical society learns more about Bruce Trail

By Bill Rea

The Bruce Trail is a work in progress, and things keep going.

That was one of the points made recently by Louise Carberry, publicity coordinator of the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club when she addressed the Caledon East and District Historical Society.

She said part of her job is to promote the trail.

‘It’s there,’ she said, observing a lot of people are not aware of it. ‘You just have to look west.’

She was also able to establish that most of her audience had heard of the trail, but none had walked its length.

Carberry said it all started in 1962, when four people decided to preserve a way of walking on the Niagara Escarpment.

Philip Gosling took a year off work to map the trail with Ray Lowes, Norman Pearson, and Robert McLaren. Carberry observed it was easy in those days to get permission from landowners to cross their properties.

The trail in Caledon crosses through a number of features, such as Forks of the Credit, Glen Haffy and the Badlands, which she pointed out has resulted in considerable controversy. Carberry said the trail has been shifted off the Badlands to help avoid erosion on the site.

The trail is about 900 kilometres in length, and it keeps growing. ‘They keep making it longer,’ Carberry observed.

Various clubs along the trail were founded between 1962 and ‘67, so much of the membership has been involved in marking 50th anniversaries. Caledon’s 50th was celebrated last year. As well, the Caledon club will be hosting the AGM in September. Carberry said they are expecting 150 people to attend. The event will be over three days, and will include speakers and hikes.

She also said there are a number of side trails, sometimes named after people who have been instrumental in the effort.

Carberry commented a study in 1968 was aimed at preserving the whole Escarpment, and that changed the way the trail functioned.

There was more of an effort to buy land. The result is about 10,000 acres has been bought, securing about 52 per cent of the trail.

She added buying the rest of the trail would cost about \$80 million.

All the clubs along the trail arrange hikes, and she said it’s not necessary to be a member to take part. Memberships are \$50 per year for families. ‘We’re a very friendly group of people,’ she declared.

The clubs are also involved in fundraising, as well as outreach to local schools. She said the Caledon club took about 50 students from Macville Public School to Forks of the Credit Provincial Park. Carberry said she was really impressed with what some of the kids remembered, and she expects a lot of them will be taking to the Trimble Trail in Belfountain with their fellows from Belfountain Public School this year.

There are a lot of advantages to hiking, Carberry observed.

‘Hiking in the woods is a very peaceful thing to do,’ she said, adding it’s good for health (both physical and mental) and it’s also used as a way to improve the immune system.

Carberry admitted Hiking the Caledon section is a little tedious, with a lot of it along roads. She added the open stretch along Escarpment Sideroad is a little hard to walk.

‘The rest of it is beautiful, of course,’ she said.

There are many sites to see along the trail. Carberry said deer have been seen in the trail in the Hockley area, but not many. Hikers tend to talk and make noise.

She also recalled hiking in the Bruce Peninsula. ‘I’ve never seen so many trillium,’ she said. ‘Just fields and fields of trillium.’

Weather doesn’t have to interfere with hiking. It can be done all year, including in winter. ‘Hiking keeps you warm,’ she said.

The weather doesn’t get in the way of planned hikes, as they go rain or shine. Carberry said if a hike is organized, there’s no way they call it off.

Carberry also spoke about the Bruce Trail Conservancy, a charitable organization and land trust.

She also said about 10 per cent of the trail has been donated, and tax receipts are available for such contributions.

