Many local place names come from various origins

 By Bill Rea

People travelling through just about any area might come upon the sign bearing the name of village or hamlet, and wonder how it got that name.

When it comes to place names in and around Caledon, some of those questions were recently answered in a talk hosted by the Belfountain Heritage Society.

Author and historian John McDonald had the origins of the names of many places in the area. He said it's a topic that's always interested him as he travelled about the countryside.

Many places in this area are named after towns or villages in Britain. Cheltenham, for example, is named after a town in Gloucestershire in England. It was named by Charles Haines, one of the original settlers in the area. McDonald also said that by 1914, the Brickworks were in full operation, and the hamlet was a workers' community.

Ballinafad, in nearby Halton Hills, was named after a village in County Sligo, Ireland.

?There was great loyalty to Britain and the British Isles,? he observed.

Some of the names have historic significance. Melville Church was named after Andrew Melville. McDonald said he was a big supporter of John Knox, a leader of the Reformation and considered the founder of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Melville ended up spending four years in the Tower of London.

The names of some places have changed over time. McDonald said Cataract was once known as Church's Falls, named after Richard Church, who established Cataract Electric Company.

Terra Cotta was once called Salmonville, and Hillsburgh was known as Nazareth Hill at one time.

McDonald said Bolton was named after James and George Bolton, and Huttonville was named after James Hutton. Cooksville was named after Jacob Cook.

Some of the names from history might be better know. Not surprisingly, Wellington County was named after the Duke of Wellington, who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. The Duke's real name was Arthur Wellesley, and McDonald said Authur, Ontario was named after him too.

There are places named in honour of Lord Nelson and his victory in the Battle of Trafalgar. Dufferin County was named after Lord Dufferin, and Peel was named after Sir Robert Peel, who set up the metropolitan police force that is known as the London Bobbies. McDonald said Peel also set up a police force in Dublin, called the Peelers.

Caledon, he said, is an old term for Scotland, and Erin is a similar term for Ireland.

Acton was named by the first postmaster in the area, who was born in Acton, Northumberland.

Campbellville was named after John Campbell.

Glen Williams was named for two brothers named Williams who set up knitting mills in the area.

He said Georgetown was named partly after George Kennedy and partly as a tribute to King George.

Milton was given its name by a family named Martin. They were admirers of the writing of John Milton.

Oakville got its name because the area supplied a lot of the oak tees that were shipped to England to build ships during the Napoleonic Wars.

The area known as Gore was named after Francis Gore, who was Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada early in the 19th century. Wentworth was named after his wife, Annabella Wentworth Gore. He also called his wife Belle, hence Belleville.

McDonald said he spent a lot of time researching William Halton, after whom the region is named.

He was born in 1769, and died rather young. He would have been a baron, but he died two years before his father. He never married and had no children.

McDonald said he joined the army and was a captain by 1803. He was brought to Upper Canada by Gore after a time in Bermuda. Gore was the governor there, and Halton was his private secretary and captain of the naval department.

?He (Gore) was not very well liked, where as Halton was very well liked,? McDonald observed.

The Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada died in August 1805, and Gore was asked to take on that position. It took him about a year to make the trip, and McDonald said it might have been because he didn't want to arrive in winter. Halton and Gore arrived in Toronto.

He also said Halton would have been granted some land. He owned about 1,200 acres, including land around Welland and St. Catharines, as well as property around Burlington Bay. He also owned about 400 acres along Dufferin Street, between Bloor Street and Eglinton Avenue, which was ?mostly bush? in those days.

They went back to England in the War of 1812. There were issues with the fact Gore's wife was an American. Sir Isaac Brock, ?the man who saved Canada,? Mcdonald said, took over for Gore.

Gore and Halton returned in 1815, but Halton went back to England the following year.

McDonald said Halton did a lot of work for the people of Upper Canada, including raising a lot of money to support widows and orphans from the War of 1812.

Halton's health started to fail in 1816, and he died in 1820 at 52. McDonald said it appears he bad case of gout, and it might have been the medicine he was taking that killed him.

Author and historian John McDonald spoke about the origins of various place names recently to the Belfountain Heritage Society.