In this issue:

We are pleased to announce an important new acquisition of papers pertaining to the Wallis and Forbes families of Peterborough and Santa Cruz, California. This new acquisition beautifully augments papers already in the Archives pertaining to one of the family members, the artist and sculptress Katherine E. Wallis of Peterborough. Janice Millard, Archives Curator, has been examining the 18th and 19th century papers with an eye to genealogy; we’ve published her findings in this issue.

Charles Bukowski, a prolific novelist, poet, and short story writer, is the focus of our “Trent Treasures” section. Bukowski, whose books were often published by small private presses, was considered to be “one of the most vivid commentators on the mean streets of America in the twentieth century.” (p.4) Several private press publications, including a number of titles by Bukowski, are located in Special Collections. These treasured items are available for research in the Archives Reading Room.

“And invest they did! Thanks to the insight and support of people and industries in the City of Peterborough and surrounding area, Trent University was born! As readers know, the University is gearing up to celebrate its 50th year. The Archives is a very active participant in these preparations! Our days are sometimes a whirl of activity filled with requests for information from across the University and the Peterborough community. Details about this, that, and the other thing are needed for a plethora of planned celebratory activities: plays, books, speeches, projects and papers, time capsules, reports, timelines, and exhibits. We’ve certainly been caught up in the excitement and are eagerly anticipating the upcoming events, especially knowing the hard work and enthusiasm that is going into it all!

The “University Site” insert pictured on the left is a concise compilation of facts about Trent University from the vantage of 1964. This image appeared 50 years ago in the first academic calendar.
Janice Millard, Curator, Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books and Gifts, has found intriguing detail of local interest in a new collection of papers acquired by Trent University Archives. The new acquisition, pertaining primarily to the Wallis family of Peterborough connections, is closely associated with the Peterborough-born sculptress Katherine E. Wallis, whose papers were donated to the Archives in 1969. Millard’s research is published in part in this issue of Archives News; the second and final part will appear in our next issue.

“Recently we received a new donation from Gail Corbett of three volumes of bound documents related to the Wallis family. Two were entitled: Papers of Louisa Charles John Mary and Adah Wallis 1854-1862 (Vol. I) and Papers of Louisa Charles John Mary and Adah Wallis 1863-1895 (Vol. II) and the third had the title Captain R.M. Forbes, R.N. 1774-1846 and Family.

The link between the Wallis and Forbes families is Louisa Forbes who became Mrs. James Wallis. Louisa was the mother of well-known Peterborough-born artist and sculptor Katherine Wallis and Louise’s father was Capt. Robert Miller/ Millar Forbes.

Capt. Robert Miller Forbes had a distinguished career in the British Navy. It was, however, marred by an incident in 1798. Robert caused his ship commander, Capt. Lord Henry Paulet, later Earl St. Vincent, to be court martialed. Paulet apparently struck the then Lieutenant Forbes while Forbes was on duty on their ship – the Thalia. Paulet lost the case - but soon after he was given clemency, re-instated, and in 1819 became a Vice-Admiral. Robert Miller did not fare as well. In a transcribed letter he says that ‘he became the object of the most cruel and vindictive persecution… that has proved a barrier to his professional progress thro’ the mis-representations of that distinguished officer.’

After the Napoleonic Wars Robert Forbes, along with a number of ex-British military personnel, took their families and settled in France. Robert’s first child, Louisa, was born in Avranches, France. There is a watercolour in our new donation of the Church where Louisa was christened. It is likely by Katherine Wallis. The Forbes family moved around in Europe and sons were born in St. Servan Sur Merin Brittany, France. Finally the family moved to Peterborough.

Robert Forbes had an even more well-known brother – Charles John Forbes. Charles was in both the British Navy and the British Army. While in the Navy, Charles was present at the Battle of the Nile (also called the Battle of Aboukir) where Nelson defeated the French Navy. Another person at Aboukir was Charles Rubidge. Perhaps Charles Forbes and Charles Rubidge reminisced together about old battles.

While in the British Army, Charles Forbes was present for the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. Our donation contains a letter written 29 Jan. 1815 on board H.M.S. Alceste, off Cat Island (near New Orleans), and sent to James Cobb, Secretary, East India Company (a cousin). In the letter Charles says that the information given to the Admiral was “fallacious” and that unlike what they had been led to believe, no “settlers of Louisiana and the Floridas” flocked to join the British cause and hence they had insufficient troops for the encounter with the Americans. It’s interesting to note that even by the end of January 1815, Charles did not know that a treaty to end the War had been signed.

Charles had two separate enlistment periods with the British Army. Like his brother, he retired when the Napoleonic Wars were over and lived in Europe, but a few years later he re-enlisted in the Army. In 1824 he worked for the Commissariat in Nova Scotia and in 1825 he went to Montreal and stayed for 8 years. He was then posted to Jamaica and, like many Europeans who lived in the tropics, became ill. He briefly went to England and then finally retired at half pay back in Quebec.

While posted in Quebec he acted as Commissary General for the Army and ensured there were supplies for the engineers and workers who were building canals in the Montreal region. While he was there he purchased land in the village of Canillon, on the Ottawa River just south of Lachute, Quebec, in what is now the Argenteuil Region of Quebec.

There he built a wonderful house called “Bellevue”. In our newly acquired scrapbook of Louisa Forbes there is a sketch of that house. Charles was known far and wide for his hospitality and many important people would visit him – including the Governors General.

Another well-known owner of land in the area was Sidney Robert Bellingham - nephew of Thomas A. Stewart. Sidney was very interested in politics and played a role in the 1837 rebellion – as did the British veteran Charles John Forbes.

There is amazing material in this recent donation and we thank Gail Corbett for bringing it to us.”

Janice Millard, Curator, Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books and Gifts

Several documents in the Wallis family fonds speak to the Peterborough connection.
Katherine E. Wallis (1860-1957)

Katherine E. Wallis, daughter of James Wallis and Louisa Forbes, was born in 1860 in Peterborough, Ontario. She studied art as a copyist at the National Gallery in Edinburgh, Scotland and later at the Royal College of Art in London, England. In London she discovered sculpting as her medium of expression and won the College's bronze medal and the Modellers' Free Scholarship for her work. After two years of study in London, she went to Paris to study under noted sculptor Oscar Waldmann and was soon invited to exhibit at the Exposition Universelle where she won honourable mention. In subsequent years, she exhibited frequently in the Spring Salon of the Artistes Français and later in the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts, as well as at numerous exhibits in London and elsewhere in the British Isles.

Wallis's career was interrupted by World War I while she served as a nurse in the Canadian Hospital in Paris, France. For her services she was decorated by the French and British governments. At the end of the war, she spent several years in Canada exhibiting her work and visiting her sister in Peterborough. Later she returned to Paris, and in 1929, she received her highest recognition as an artist when she was the first Canadian to be elected Sociétaire of the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts for her sculpture titled "La Lutte pour la Vie." She was forced to flee from France at the beginning of World War II and took up residence in Santa Cruz, California, where she lived until her death, December 14, 1957.

The watercolour below, by Katherine E. Wallis, was received with the Wallis family papers, loosely inserted inside the volume titled “Captain R.M. Forbes R.N., 1774-1846, and Family”.

Avranches Church
Where my Mother was baptized

Reverse: “Avranches, France, where Robert W. Forbes lived & where his daughter Louisa (Forbes) Wallis was born. Loving wishes from Katherine”

Further details about the Katherine E. Wallis fonds and the Wallis family fonds are available on the Trent University Archives website:

http://www.trentu.ca/library/archives/14-001.htm
Charles Bukowski (1920-1994) was one of the most vivid commentators on the mean streets of America in the twentieth century. Bukowski wrote plays, novels and poetry but it is the latter that most effectively conveys the fury and despair of the tortured, brilliant outsider. Black Sparrow Press was founded in 1966 in Santa Rosa, California. Much like Ferlinghetti at City Lights in San Francisco, Black Sparrow Press was committed to disaffected Beat poets who raged against conventional literary themes and forms. The Press was particularly devoted to Bukowski, agreeing with him when he wrote in Poems Written Before Jumping Out of an 8 Story Window (1968) that, “It appears that certain people think poetry should be a certain way. For these, there will be nothing but troubled years.”

Black Sparrow Press produced books beautiful to look at, as well as beautiful (if disquieting) to read. Trent Special Collections has a fine collection by various authors, as well as imprints of other small private presses of radical intent.

Here is an excerpt from The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hills (1969):

A poem is a city filled with streets and sewers, filled with saints, heroes, beggars, madmen, filled with banality and booze, filled with rain and thunder and periods of drought, a poem is a city at war...

No wandering through hosts of golden daffodils for Charles Bukowski.

The following excerpt about Charles Bukowski appears in his book The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hills, Black Sparrow Press, 1969:

“A major figure in contemporary American poetry, Charles Bukowski was born in Andernach, Germany, in 1920, and brought to the United States at the age of two. He was raised in Los Angeles where he continues to live. He began writing poetry when he was thirty-five and has now published fifteen books of poetry and prose. Hundreds of his poems and stories have appeared in magazines and newspapers. He remains one of the most vital, widely published and seriously read poets in America.”

Trent University’s numbered copy of Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hills was signed by the author. This copy is located in Special Collections.