

So, what's a piezometer?

An answer to the mystery of the Rideau River hitching posts

PETER CROAL

One obvious benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the virus has motivated Old Ottawa East residents to find creative ways to get outdoors and exercise safely.

With all the walks, and now cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, available to us in this community, you might have noticed some strange-looking objects along the Rideau River. A friend went skiing recently and had this conversation with his partner: "I think they are here to cordon off the x-country tracks from the rest of the trail." His partner replied: "I don't think so - they've always been here".

To some, they are reminiscent of hitching posts, but not so; they are neither a spot for hitching horses nor a deterrent to walking on ski trails.

These objects are in fact important scientific instruments with an exotic



PETER CROAL PHOTOS

Measuring the water table, and not hitching horses, is the reason why these piezometers line the cross-country ski trails along the Rideau River.

name - "piezometers". They are used to measure the depth to the water table and water pressure, and also to obtain water samples for chemical analysis. Scientists insert probes down the white plastic tube inside the protective casing to extract water to perform the required analyses.

The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority and the City of Ottawa use data from the piezometers to base their important forecasting of floods, and to facilitate construction planning needs.

Needless to say, piezometers should not be tampered with, as they are part of our collective flood management toolkit! With unpredictable weather systems due to climate change, we face the increasing possibility of floods, so instruments such as piezometers are now more important than ever, and they should be treated with care and respect.

The Ottawa Tennis & Lawn Bowling Club Restoring one of the City's architectural gems

JENNY MITCHELL

Nearly a century ago, a prominent Ottawa architect – John Albert Ewart (1872-1964) – built the Ottawa Civic Hospital in this neighbourhood. He is the same architect who stepped forward in 1922 to design a clubhouse for the Ottawa Tennis Club in Old Ottawa South. Ewart was a big deal in early-20th-century Ottawa. The son of Dominion architect, David Ewart, he designed many of Ottawa's finest civic buildings in his day. In recognition of that, Ottawa recently recognized the clubhouse in Ottawa South as a designated heritage building.

The Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club (OTLBC) is itself a national treasure. Especially now, with the closure of two other major clubs in Ottawa in the past three years, it remains the dean of Ottawa tennis clubs, with people coming from all over the city to play. At the same time, the club is recognized nationally for having more high-quality clay courts than any club in the country and has the capacity to hosts national and provincial tournaments.

When the City of Ottawa awarded the building a heritage designation in 2019, the honour recognized the clubhouse not only as an outstanding example of

an old-style sporting venue but also an important cultural landmark in the city of Ottawa.

The designation underscores the importance of the club to the city's heritage, both architectural and cultural. It also highlights the role of today's club as the steward of physical heritage. In that light, the club has for several years now been planning and fund-raising for restoration and renewal of the clubhouse.

In 2019, the OTLBC was honoured by a substantial federal heritage grant from Canadian Heritage, given in part to help restore the clubhouse and also to enhance its usefulness as a year-round facility where the community can host a variety of cultural events. The grant is for a maximum of \$375,000, depending on how much the club is able to provide in matching funds.

The City of Ottawa stands to benefit from this restoration and not only through the preservation of an architectural landmark. OTLBC has a vision to restore the club as a year-round facility and meeting place for the whole Ottawa community, and it has made great progress. The initial goal was to raise \$1 million by 2020. Donors have proven very generous, and to date the club has



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ABOVE: During restoration, the Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club (OTLBC) clubhouse will be restored to the original grandeur of 1923.

raised close to \$700,000. If it reaches its target, the first phase of the project will be launched as soon as 2021. A second phase of work will depend on the club's ability to raise another \$1.6 million

The OTLBC invites the community of Ottawa to come on board as partners in the exciting work of restoring a clubhouse that has local and national significance and opening it to new and broader kinds of use. As a tennis club and now, more and more, as a community meeting place, the OTLBC is planning, working and actively raising funds to ensure that it can go on helping people of Ottawa to live more satisfying and connected lives. Help the club to fulfil that mission.

[Jenny Mitchell, an Old Ottawa East (OOE) resident and President of the Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club (OTLBC), serves as Chair of the OTLBC's Fund-Raising Committee. The Club boasts many active members from OOE, including family members and seniors.]



To donate to the Clubhouse Restoration Project, please visit [OTLBC.com/donate](https://otlbc.com/donate) and click on the "Donate Here" button. Tax receipts can be issued.