



# IN THE TRENCHES

December 2010

*"Drainage Doesn't Cost - IT PAYS!"*

[www.drainage.org](http://www.drainage.org)

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## From the President's Desk

Fellow Members:

I have to apologize to all of you. For some reason I thought the September issue was my last installment to the newsletter. I was being reminded by my good wife Gwen, that she was sure there was a December issue which includes information on our January convention as well as a few comments on my part. Being busy I put the newsletter in the back of mind and carried on with business. When I got a call from John Johnston wondering if I had my letter for the December issue, I thought OH NO!! I needed to pay more attention to what my wife was telling me! (Guys your wife is always right - RIGHT!!)

December is reminding all of us that winter is definitely on the way. With some of the best crop results we have seen in a long time, we will all be assured that the next year will be a busy one.

Looking back on 2010, we did not have too many issues for our industry. Being quiet and having no controversy can make one quite complacent. But there are still issues out there which we all can get involved in.

Food Policy: Buy close to home if possible.

Environment: Promote our customers as good ambassadors of the soil, which is a renewable resource.

These are only 2 issues and there are many more.

The Convention starts on Wednesday, Jan. 19, but don't forget we have workshops that start on Tuesday. The Red Cross First Aid course is a very important part of any business. Saving someone's life is the best gift you could ever give. For anybody who is certified, we have a workshop on regulations regarding Trailers and Floats. I would recommend early registration to avoid disappointment since there are limited spaces. Franklin has a good line up of topics and also a great Thursday Tour. Gwen has a busy and interesting Wednesday planned for the Ladies.

In closing, let us all take a few days off and bring your employees to the 2011 Convention. Wishing all a Merry Christmas and a safe New Year!



## LICO Convention January 19 and 20, 2011

By now you should have received your package for the 2011 convention! If you have not, or is you know someone who would like information direct them the to LICO website where you can download registration forms. Remember to register early!

This year there will be no "Drink Tickets" as the Executive has opted for a full host bar. Don't forget that you get one Wednesday lunch ticket with your registration but if you need one for your better half, you need to order one with the registration package.

There are two seminars on January 19<sup>th</sup>. The first is the Red Cross Certification course starting at 8:30 with Vital Signs – one of the premier Red Cross training groups. There is also a session on Highway Traffic Act requirements for floats and securement. Did you know that you have to have an annual safety sticker on your dually truck? Or that you have to keep track of your hours of service as defined in the Highway Traffic Act? Come to the seminar and find out what other rules apply.

The ladies program has been moved to Wednesday so they have Thursday afternoon free. They will enjoy a tour of Nash Jewelers Mineral Museum and Covent Garden before lunch at Idelwyld Inn followed by a tour of Eldon House. Maybe they will join the rest of us in the tour of Labatts on Thursday.

In addition to an update on various regulatory issues there will be a presentation on the new Drainage Best Management Practices guide. This is an important addition to the information the contractors need to know in order to protect and grow their business. Wednesday afternoon contractors will share their experiences on "unique" installation jobs. Thursday hear the results on some research on tile flow and drain management for crop yield and water quality.

All in all a great convention program has been arranged. See you there!

### Drain Tile Still a Great Investment - (Excerpts Corn & Soybean Digest, Jan 1, 2009)

Excessive water can significantly reduce yields, increase soil erosion, cause nitrogen issues and inhibit other nutrient utilization. Besides delaying planting and harvesting, it can also cause compaction problems.

Having adequate drain tile really paid off last year.

The yields were 300 bu./acre over the tile lines and within several rods on either side the yield would drop 100 bu. Drainage pays. Or said another way. Lack of good drainage limits profit.



Instead of being a time of unusual behavior, Christmas is perhaps the only time in the year when people can obey their natural impulses and express their true sentiments without feeling self-conscious and, perhaps, foolish. Christmas, in short, is about the only chance a man has to be himself.  
*Francis C. Farley*

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If you have articles, events or notes of interest you wish to add to this newsletter, please send your submissions (not more than 225 words) to the following:

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15 Milson Crescent  
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## Lines from Lambton - Dean Hodgson

I noticed an article in the Oct. 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the Ontario Farmer that OFA directors were reviewing recommendations of the Drainage Task Force. Discussion centered on the problems farmers and municipalities face when dealing with all the new rules and regulations being established by Conservation Authorities. Luckily we still have the Drainage Act to protect the farmland that produces the food that keeps our country prosperous.

However, in the Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> issue we find some would like to change the “archaic” Drainage Act to better protect and expand Ontario’s wetlands. If these bureaucrats succeed in returning productive farmland to wetlands we hope they know where their food will be grown. Cattails and mosquitoes will not meet Canada’s food standards. It is past time the MNR bureaucrats were held responsible for the results of their recommendations.

When our ancestors arrived in Ontario in the 1800’s to harvest the timber to ship back to England, they discovered a huge swamp, which when drained, provided them with productive farmland. With the help of the Drainage Act these pioneers were able to build the prosperous agricultural industry which is still providing jobs for these bureaucrats.

When this Task Force is making changes to the Drainage Act, all involved must be held responsible for the consequences of their actions. The Drainage Act has been more than fair, allowing appeals which caused delay and increased cost to the rural taxpayers. These additional costs must become the responsibility of those making requests. If they persist on changing the Act that has stood the test of time, they must provide protection for agriculture, which is still the most important segment of our province. Whether the bureaucrats realize it or not, everyone must eat but not everyone enjoys wetlands.

Lambton County farmers are celebrating 2010 as the best cropping year in history. The weather was almost perfect from the beginning of the year right through to the end of the bumper harvest. Although there were a few areas in the County which suffered inadequate rainfall, most farms harvested above average crops. Harvesting conditions were nearly perfect and best of all, commodity prices are good. Not many can remember a crop year like this. The harvest started two to three weeks early and by the end of October most of the fall field work was completed and farmers were making their plans for next year.

Of course all this good weather, along with bumper crops and high prices, means all of our Lambton County tile drain contractors are booked solid. On a drive through Plympton and Bosanquet in mid-November, I saw several contractors in the midst of large installation projects. Although there have been a few rainy days, most field conditions have been favourable and tile contractors are full speed ahead since the wheat harvest. As a result of everyone being so busy there will be a lot of happy faces at the LICO Convention this winter. Many of the contractors have also been upgrading their equipment with several purchasing new GPS units to speed up operations and assist with their mapping.

All in all it has been a great summer and with the good fall weather continuing this could be one of the best years for the local tiling industry. With all this extra money in agriculture the whole of Lambton County benefits as rural people are noted for keeping the money circulating in their community.

Recently we visited with Roy and Florence Elliott of Enniskillen Township. Roy Elliott has been involved in tile drainage here in Lambton County since the 1940’s. Roy has lived and farmed on lot 2, con. 14 of Enniskillen Township all of his life. Roy’s father, Ken Elliott (1900-1962), bought this farm from his uncle in 1920. Ken married Ena Mae Dennis (1903-1996) and they had three children, Roy b. 1926, Doreen b. 1929 and Andrew b. 1936. Roy grew up working with his father on this mixed farming operation and they were always involved in tile drainage.

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## Lines from Lambton *(Cont'd. from page 3)*

Ken Elliott had worked on a tiling crew for "Big Bill" Thompson and learned the trade as a young man. Ken continued working with other local tilers on neighbouring farms through the 1930's and '40's. In 1945 Ken Elliott bought his own steam-powered Buckeye '0' tiling machine from the Gorman brothers at Oil City. They converted the '0' machine to a gas powered engine and Ken and Roy tiled their own land along with some neighbouring farms over the next several years. In 1947 Roy attended the drainage school at O.A.C. in Guelph where the teachers were Fred Ferguson and Percy Shorey. Among the other students were Charlie and Kelly Robinson from Ailsa Craig, the Martin Brothers from Elmira, Lew Forest and John Habgewachs, (better known as Johnny Rock) from Essex County.

In 1962 Roy Elliott married Florence McKay and they took over the Elliott family farm. Roy and Florence have two children, Sharon and Ken. Sharon married Andy Butt in 1993 and lives in Sarnia. Ken lives on the other farm across the road and works off the farm at Parkland Farms but is always available to help out when required. In 2008 Roy underwent a triple heart by-pass operation which slowed him down for that year. Ken brought the big Parkland Farms' equipment home and seeded the whole 200 acre farm in two days. This helped out considerably but with Roy back in harness again, he completed all the seeding and harvesting on his own this year. It's hard to keep a good man down.

By the 1960's the old Buckeye '0' had passed its prime and was parked in the orchard before being shipped off to Huron County. Some Huron County historians completely restored the old steam powered Buckeye to its original condition and it is still on display at the Huron County Museum in Goderich.

In 1969 Roy purchased his present Buckeye '302' tiling machine from Dean Hodgson of Sarnia Township and he was back in the business he loves. Through the 1970's and much of the 1980's Elliott Farm Drainage was kept busy tiling farms in the Four Corners area of Enniskillen, Sarnia, Moore and Plympton Townships. The whole family was involved in the business and although they hired some part-time help most of the work was completed by Roy, Florence and their two children. In 1972 Roy returned to drainage school and obtained his O.M.F.R.A. Class 'A' Drainage license. Roy has been a member of the O.F.D.A. and L.I.C.O. ever since and he and Florence never miss the L.I.C.O. Convention where they can get together with all the ditchers from across the province.

In 1972 Roy and Florence purchased a well used International TD9 dozer from Bucko in Chatham. Roy completely rebuilt this machine and they still use it for backfilling, stripping and leveling. They had their own equipment to handle clay tile back in the 1970's. When the 1980's came with all the dozer plows burying thousands of feet of plastic tile daily, Roy and Florence backed off for a few years. They expanded their cash crop farming operation, share-cropping their aunt's 160 acre farm down the road, along with their own 200 acres. They continued to tile drain these farms along with small jobs for some neighbours and so have continued to thrive. As agriculture suffered from low returns in the 1980's and 1990's many of the big tiling outfits left the farm drainage business for greener pastures. Roy started getting more and more calls for work. Roy and young Ken adjusted their equipment to handle plastic tile installations. Using a laser for grade control has made the field work easier and they have kept busy working at small jobs throughout their section of Lambton County.

Roy Elliott has been in the tile drainage business for more than sixty years and with young Ken now involved, Roy shows no intentions of quitting anytime soon. Like everyone else they were busy digging in November.

Perhaps they are not the biggest contractors in Lambton County but when you stop in for a visit with the Elliott family, you are always warmly welcomed and hard put to get away without staying for lunch.

## **OMAFRA Drainage Coordinator's Report – Sid Vander Veen**

### ***Licensing Update: Agricultural Tile Drainage Installation Act:***

Operator Licenses: Some operator licenses expire on December 31, 2010 while many others expire one or two years from now. Check your own operator's license and if it expires this December, a license renewal form should have been sent to your home address in mid-November. If you haven't received the renewal form, please contact Valerie Anderson at 519-826-3324 or [valerie.j.anderson@ontario.ca](mailto:valerie.j.anderson@ontario.ca).

Business Licenses: If your memory is like mine, you may have forgotten that last year's changes to the regulations under the *Agricultural Tile Drainage Installation Act* have changed the expiry date of the business license to March 31. Therefore, we will be sending business license renewal forms to you in mid-February. Please remember that if you do not submit your tile records along with the renewal form and fee (\$250), the license will not be renewed.

### ***THE DRAINAGE CONTRACTOR COURSES***

I've started a series of newsletter contributions on the *Agricultural Tile Drainage Installation Act*. In the September newsletter I wrote on (1) "The Operator License". In this edition, I will be writing on (2) "The Drainage Contractor Courses". Future editions will be written on (3) The Machine License; (4) The Business License; (5) The Inspector and (6) What We Don't Regulate or Inspect.

### **HISTORY OF THE COURSES**

The following information was summarized from the booklet entitled "Ontario Farm Drainage Association History" written by Ross Irwin.

#### ***Ontario Agricultural College:***

In November 1916, J. R. Spry of the Ontario Agricultural College wrote owners of ditching machines stating that a special short course on drainage and drainage surveying would be offered to remedy the faulty construction, carelessness and incompetence of machine owners. In January, 1917 W. H. Scott of the Ontario Agricultural College conducted the course in Guelph for trenching machine operators. A second course was held at Petrolia later that year. The purpose of the course was to upgrade contractors' workmanship and general knowledge of land drainage.

Two short courses were held in 1920 in Guelph and Chatham. At the Chatham course, 20 operators wrote exams to qualify for the new certificate. The Drainage Department of the College spent the summer inspecting these operators. By 1922 there had been 36 contractors write exams but only 23 had been certified.

The College continued to offer drainage short courses periodically until 1963.

#### ***Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs:***

The Engineering Services of the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs began teaching the drainage courses in 1964. That year, the courses were reorganized with a basic drainage course replacing the short course. An advanced course was offered to those who completed the basic course and/or had two years field experience. A two-hour exam, originally based on one used in Iowa was written at the end of the course.

Since 1977, over 1300 people have taken the Primary Drainage Course and over 700 have taken the Advanced.

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## **OMAFRA Drainage Coordinator's Report** *(Cont'd. from page 5)*

### **THE COURSES TODAY:**

The Primary and Advanced Drainage Courses are now a required component to upgrade the class of an operator's license (see September 2010 newsletter for more information). The content of the Primary and Advanced Drainage Courses are summarized as follows:

Primary Drainage Course: The goal is to provide participants with a basic understanding of how to establish drainage slopes, grade changes and depths, so that contractors' installation will comply with "The Drainage Guide for Ontario. The following concepts are taught in the primary drainage course:

- Basic surveying techniques using both level and laser equipment
- Main drain profiling
- One-Man Method (Grade Stakes)
- Laser Cut Cards
- Contouring

It is acknowledged that the laser and GPS is widely used to control grade for tile installation. This course's objective, however, is to teach the basic mathematical principles behind the technology.

Advanced Drainage Course: The goal is to provide participants with a basic understanding of tile drainage design, so that contractors' installation will comply with "The Drainage Guide for Ontario". The following concepts are taught in the advanced drainage course:

- Grid Method of Surveying
- Layout of laterals and main drains
- Grading
- Sizing Estimating amounts and costs
- Financing
- Drainage Law

The main focus of both the primary and advanced tile drainage courses is design. The advanced course, however, does include a general discussion on safety. Topics of discussion typically range from proper apparel to work near utilities. For other related safety issues, participants are directed to Regulation 213/91 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1990 for more information.

### **2011 DRAINAGE COURSES:**

The Primary Drainage Course is being offered from January 4 to 14, 2011 at the Marden Library just north of Guelph. Please note that course is being held before the LICO convention. The course instructor will be Andrew Jamieson.

The Advanced Drainage Course will be held February 1 to 11, 2011, also at the Marden Library. The course instructor will be Jim Myslik.

Course registration forms were mailed late November to licensed contractors in Ontario. Registration forms are also available from Mary Van den Borre (mary.vandenborre@ontario.ca or 519-826-3324) or from Valerie Anderson (valerie.j.anderson@ontario.ca or 519-826-3324)

## **Drains Aren't The Problem** - Don Lobb, Environmental Advocate

Nutrient contamination of our water courses is increasingly associated with cropland drainage. Most of the allegations are based on recent United States observations. Drainage and fertilizer management tends to be different in the corn belt than it is in Ontario.

The outcome of the nutrient issue has been hypoxia (nitrate accumulation) in the Gulf of Mexico and algae growth in the Great Lakes system, Lake Winnipeg and a general long-term high nutrient problem in Chesapeake Bay. Regardless of the location of the problem it is assumed that Ontario farmers cause the same problems. A few do.

The nutrient, particularly nitrate, association with drainage seems to be based on the observation that the most productive land, i.e. the Mississippi Basin, has the greatest amount of drainage. To suggest that drains are the cause of the nutrient problem is simple-minded at best. Drains do NOT create nutrient. If they could, then following drainage farmers could reduce fertilizer purchases. Drains only transport excess nutrient that crops have not used. The real issue is soil and nutrient management.

A long-time cropping trend (particularly in the US corn belt) has been to broadcast a fall application of N and P. In terms of plant use efficiency, this allows maximum potential for nutrient loss to surface and groundwater. Also, the proliferation of very large livestock facilities results in over application of manure on the land closest to barns. The efficiencies that are required for very large crop and livestock operations result in environmental sacrifices and a search for water quality scapegoats that won't inconvenience the problem perpetrators.

The bottom line is that we need cropland drainage if we are to minimize the land area needed for agriculture. Less land needed for crop allows more wetlands and wildlands.

As drainage contractors we can encourage shallow drainage with runs close together. The result is more uniform drying of the soil, and a moisture reserve within reach of crop roots (a benefit in dry weather), and most important, a minimum of soil from which nutrient, particularly N, could enter the drains. We need to be extremely diligent about avoiding any potential source of nutrient contamination during drain installation. At the end of the day, farmers must manage nutrient for environmental protection, not just for the convenience that allows them to plant another 1,000 acres or keep an extra 5,000 pigs in a single facility. We in the drainage industry must encourage responsible nutrient management at every opportunity. Clean drains are important because clean water is important – to everyone!

## **Words of Wisdom**

Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you get older, it will avoid you. *Winston Churchill*

By the time a man is old enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere. *Billy Crystal*

Money can't buy you happiness, but it does bring you a more pleasant form of misery. *Spike Milligan*

By all means marry. If you get a good wife, you will be happy. If you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher. *Soctrates*

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending, and to have the two as close together as possible. *George Burns*

And in keeping with the season.....Santa Claus has the right idea. Only visit people once a year. *Victor Borge*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 19 & 20, 2011  
LICO Conference  
Best Western Lamplighter Inn  
591 Wellington Rd.,  
London, Ontario N6C 4R3



## Dead Zone Traced To Tile Drain - (Excerpts, Ontario Farmer, November 16, 2010)

Farm drainage has been one of the major advances pushing crop production to higher yields. But in the U.S. Midwest, researchers say it's also an important factor in carrying fertilizer-rich runoff to the Gulf of Mexico, where it contributes to so-called dead zones.

Scientists compiled information on each county in the Mississippi River basin including crop acreage and yields, fertilizer inputs, atmospheric deposition, number of people and livestock to calculate all nitrogen inputs and outputs from 1997 to 2006. For 153 watersheds in the basin, they also used measurements of nitrate concentration and flow in streams.

The greatest nitrate loss to streams corresponded to the highly productive, time-drained corn belt from southwest Minnesota across Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

"Farmers are not to blame." says University of Illinois researcher Mark David. "They are using the same amount of nitrogen as they were 30 years ago and getting much higher corn yields, but we have created a very leaky agricultural system. This allows nitrate to move quickly from fields into ditches and on to the Gulf of Mexico. We need policies that reward farmers to help correct the problem."

***LICO would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family all the best for the holiday season and the year to come.***

