

## **Ottawa Home Base Just a Starting Point**

### **John Markham – Ottawa Chapter**

The Ottawa Chapter had a busy year of recruiting sessions, starting in January when four of our volunteers helped Mark Drake bring in eight new members and 11 renewals at a meeting in Hudson (QC), 150 km east of home base. Then, in March, a two-day drop-in at Ottawa's Carlingwood Mall yielded 28 recruits and even moved one lady from southern Ireland – ineligible for a UK pension, of course – to make a donation to the cause.

That same month, our Michael and Huguette Balchin travelled 450 km to help out at the CABP booth during the three days of the British Isles Show in Toronto, which captured some 200 new members and sparked 50 renewals – this in spite of Michael's failing health.

Later in the spring, with the assistance of former area councillor Chris Tyson, we offered another drop-in session at the township hall in rural Beckwith Township, some 55 km southwest of Ottawa. There, we succeeded in signing up 12 new members and one renewal, which helped compensate for the disappointment of our next event, the Veterans Memorial Highland Games in Spencerville, 65 km to the south of Ottawa, on June 17. Poor attendance – perhaps due to oppressively hot weather – and an even worse on-site location resulted in zero sign-ups that day.

Things improved greatly when we returned once again to Carlingwood Mall in July. This time, we chose a Friday and Saturday – a change from our usual weekdays-only sojourns there – in order to catch younger people who might come shopping with their family on the weekend. This proved to be a successful move, with 21 new sign-ups and one renewal. A week later found us 50 km west of Ottawa at Celtfest, an outdoors traditional music celebration in Almonte (ON), where we recruited four new members and distributed a lot of pamphlets to interested people. By August 5, we were 80 km east of the city at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville (ON) and richer by nine new recruits and two renewals.

At the time of writing, we are slowly regrouping following the sudden and much-regretted passing of our leader, Michael Balchin, in August, and are in the throes of planning another event at Carlingwood Mall. Many thanks to all my fellow Ottawa volunteers for their ideas, hard work and willingness to travel to spread the word – and not least for their support as I take over Michael's local duties.