

January, 2016



# British Home Child Group International

## Happy Hogmanay! By Christine Woodcock

For nearly 400 years, Christmas in Scotland was not celebrated. The reason for this stems from the Protestant Reformation. The Church of Scotland, which is Presbyterian, felt that Christmas was, by and large, a Catholic celebration and as such was frowned upon. To all intents and purposes, Christmas was a regular day. People went to work and carried on about their business in everyday fashion. This began in 1560 and really carried on through to the mid 1950s. Even then, it was a half day holiday. Gifts were small, often just one gift or a stocking with gifts rather than the multitude of gifts we see today.

New Years Day was a public holiday and New Years Eve was, and still is, a major celebration. The history behind both the celebration of and the name Hogmanay is up for debate. However, many feel that the celebration is carried on from Norse traditions which celebrated the arrival of the Winter Solstice. Indeed, many Hogmanay celebrations throughout Scotland actually involve fire festivals. Stonehaven near Aberdeen, the Torchlight procession in Edinburgh are two examples of this.



Hogmanay is steeped in tradition and ritual. Many Scots will take the time during the day on December 31 to clean the house and pay off all debts prior to the “ringing of the bells” at midnight. This ritual was known as redding (getting ready for the New Year). The reason for this was to clear out the remnants of the old year and welcome in a young, New Year with a clean slate. *Continued on page 4...*

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## From the Orphan Homes of Scotland Narrative of Facts:

January 1924

Long ere the first glimmering of daylight on New Year's morning, the young folks of our big family were wide awake for had the great day, long looked for, not come at last. To them it seemed that it would never come, yet how short its crowded hours have been. Ham and eggs for breakfast, turkey and plum pudding with all the usual 'trimmings' for dinner, and a Ne'er Day tea to follow surely constitute a day of feasting. Might not some of the good things be kept for another day, some may say, and indeed some of them were, but then there is a pleasure all its own of which those who 'fare sumptuously every day' know nothing in just having one day of feasting.

The Post Office and the office staffs have spent a busy morning as well as those responsible for preparing lunch for a large party from the City Home and every kitchen has been a hive of industry.

Today, the congregation has reached the church much earlier than their wont, the longer to gaze upon the great trees, loaded with dolls and toys, and books and sweets and things to wear. The very air is electric with hardly suppressed excitement and the usual respectful silence has given way to merry hum and chatter broken only momentarily by the hearty singing of the 'doxology' and the brief prayer of thanksgiving that alone precede the process of dismantling and distribution.

All day long there have been reunions of old boys and girls with fathers and mothers and chums, so that by evening together with local visitors, it is an augmented family that assembled in the church for the programme of music and motion pictures. The two thousand or thereby who have filled the building are by no means the number of those who have joined in our evening worship today, for a host of others have been transported in imagination to the old home and in heart have mingled their prayers with ours at the family altar.

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## Postcards by Karen Mahoney

You may have noticed the vintage postcards that we use in our email to send out our newsletter each month. The postcards are from my personal collection. When I was little I was lucky to grow up living beside my grandmother, the same house my mum grew up in and even my grandmother, in fact my great great grandparents purchased the house c1895. I heard lots of stories that took place in that house from my mother, but one always stuck in my mind. The house was a 2 storey and upstairs, before my dad put up that wonderful 1970's panelling on the walls, there were doors on either side of the walls that lead to the side attics. My mother would tell me that when she was little there were great big trunks behind the walls and the trunks were filled with dolls and old clothes. I constantly asked my grandma about the trunks, but she would tell me she got rid of them years ago. I never believed her. In 1985, when I was 15, my grandmother died. My parents decided to sell her house and for whatever reason, knowing that I wouldn't be able to go in there again freely, I came up with a plan. I needed



to know if those trunks were there, so with a hammer and flashlight in hand and while my parents were at work, I went into the house. I somehow got the panelling off of the walls and lo and behold, there were the doors, on either side! I slowly opened up the first one, inside it was full of old insulation, no trunk. I opened the 2nd door, again old insulation and no trunk but a big box. I took the box and inside were hundreds of postcards and about 100 old photographs. I cherish the postcards, they have helped me in my genealogy research as they give towns and some



names I didn't know. I love the ones my great great grandmother sent to my grandmother, Love Grandma B. The photos are a treasure as well. When my parents came home from work, I had to tell them what I had done, after all the house was sold at this point and I'm not sure if the new owners would appreciate the panelling down, so my dad had to fix it. I guess my grandma was telling the truth when she said she got rid of the trunks, but I'm happy just the same with my postcards and photos. My mum always chuckles when we talk about that day, she says I was destined to find them. I hope you enjoy viewing them.



*We have received confirmation that the British Home Child Group International will have a display in the Community Exhibits Program at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (Queen's Park) for the March-July 2016 session.*

*Available to the Public!*

## Lord Jeff by Sandra Joyce



In 1938, a film called *A Boy from Barnardo's* was released, starring Freddy Bartholomew and Mickey Rooney. In North America, it was entitled *Lord Jeff*, as it was thought Barnardo's meant little or nothing to the theatre-goers here. The film was inspired by Barnardo's Russell-Cotes Nautical School (RCNS). The opening of the film bears a dedication to the memory of Dr. Thomas John Barnardo, the School and his network of Homes for destitute children throughout Great Britain.

The RCNS, located in Dorset, England, trained boys for the Merchant Navy from 1919; boys for the Royal Navy went to Barnardo's Watts Naval Training School in Norfolk. Funds for the building of the RCNS were provided by two great philanthropists: Sir Merton and Lady Russel-Cotes, who also raised funds with another noted philanthropist of the time, Lord Shaftesbury.

Alongside their preparation for their lives at sea, some of the boys joined the RCNS school band (drum, bugle and fife), and performed in the district especially at parades during the war. The RCNS gymnastics team was as equally popular and produced spectacular displays of athletics among the



boys aged 10 to 14.

In the film, Freddie plays an orphan posing as a little English lord, but he is really an accomplice of two older crooks. Arrested and threatened with being sent to a reformatory, he is first directed to the Barnardo's Russel-Cotes Nautical School to try and get his life back on track. The picture details the life of the boys at the nautical training institution and includes athletics, mast-climbing contests, boat races and graduation to their places on the *Queen Mary*.

The inside scenes of the school were filmed on location at the RCNS in England. The outside scenes of the school were made at an extraordinary replica of the school constructed in Hollywood. The details were accurate – right down to the training mast which stood just inside the main entrance.

At the time of the filming, Mr. and Mrs. Hobday were invited to the west coast to act as consultants for the movie. The Hobdays were considered to be 'mother' and 'father' to the boys and girls who passed through the 538 Jarvis Street, Toronto branch of Barnardo's in Canada. Also, a Barnardo boy was given leave from his ship to help the producers accurately portray the English Barnardo boys.

While the Hobdays were in Hollywood, an MGM producer revealed to them that Wallace Ford, a Hollywood and Broadway star, was, in fact, a Barnardo boy. Wallace Ford, born Samuel Jones Grundy in Bolton, Lancashire, England, was placed by his uncle and aunt, at the age of three into Barnardo's. At the age of seven, he was shipped to Canada and ended up in Manitoba. He was ill-treated and became a serial runaway, and was resettled several times. At the age of 11, he joined a vaudeville traveling troupe touring Canada called 'The Winnipeg Kiddies', as a performer.

In 1914 at the age of 16, Samuel decided to ride the rails in the company of another boy to the United States. During the trip the

other youth was killed beneath the wheels of a train. Later Samuel adopted the name of his dead companion, Wallace Ford, as his stage name. Wallace went on to appear in movies with such notables as Jimmy Cagney, James Stewart and Joan Crawford.

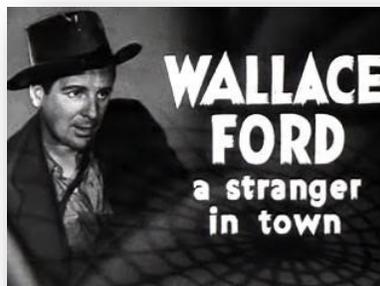


The Hobdays were significant in bringing children to Canada, crossing the Atlantic 65 times in 20 years. In a *Toronto Star* interview in 1942, they proudly spoke about 'their' 531 boys who lost their lives in the First World War. A bronze plaque immortalizing their names was placed in the Jarvis building.

They also proudly mentioned that at the time of the interview, six hundred boys from their Toronto 'family' were serving overseas. They also said that one of their boys was awarded the George medal for bravery, saving the lives of two London firemen during the blitz. Another received the D.F.C. – the Distinguished Flying Cross and yet another the D.C.M. – the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

By making the film, *The Boy from Barnardo's/Lord Jeff*, the producers demonstrated how Barnardo's and in specific, the RCNS, was instrumental in rehabilitating a young orphan

who had fallen in with the wrong company and was destined for a life of crime. In the end, the boys played by Freddy Bartholomew and Mickey Rooney take their coveted places aboard the *Queen Mary* and embark upon successful careers.



# Announcement



The British Home Child Group International is pleased to announce Carolyn Perkes as the new Secretary of the organization.

Originally from Hamilton, Ontario, Carolyn Perkes lives and works as a translator in Montréal, Quebec. A member of the Literary Translators' Association of Canada, she specializes in education, public and environmental affairs, the arts and children's literature. She also does family history, which is how she discovered the story of her BHC ancestor, her mother's paternal grandfather, Henry Saltmarsh, born September 7, 1855, in Bishop's Stortford, Essex, England. Interned at age 11 in the Hertfordshire Reformatory in 1867, Henry was 15 years old in 1871 when he was sent to work for a farmer in Pittsburgh Township, Ontario. He died December 27, 1925, as Harry Marshall, husband of Margaret Wilds, father of nine children and superintendent of city parks in Hamilton, Ontario.

## Happy Hogmanay *continued*

A few branches of the Rowan tree would be put above the door to bring luck. Inside was mistletoe to prevent illness to those who lived within. Pieces of holly placed around the house were thought to keep out mischievous fairies. And finally, pieces of hazel were gathered and placed around the home to protect the house and all who lived in it. Then all the doors of the home would be opened to bring in fresh air. Once this final piece of the ritual was completed, the house was then considered to be ready for the New Year. Immediately after midnight, it is traditional to sing "For Auld Lang Syne", in a circle of friends whose linked arms are crossed over one another as the clock strikes midnight for New Year's Day.

Perhaps the most important and revered Hogmanay custom is the practice of 'first-footing' which dates back to the Viking days. This involves the first person to cross the threshold once the New Year bells have been rung. Superstition states that the "first footer" should be a tall male with dark hair. The darker the man's complexion the better, since no one wanted a Viking (raider) turning up on their doorstep - that could only mean trouble! A man with a dark complexion represented luck for the rest of the year. In addition, the first-footer needs to enter the home carrying salt, coal, a coin, shortbread, and whisky. These gifts represent goodness and abundance for the New Year. The Coal for heat/warmth, the coin for financial prosperity, salt for flavour, shortbread for food and whiskey for good cheer. These gifts are then to be shared with the other guests so that the wishes for a good and prosperous year can then be spread around.

The traditions live on even today. The gifts are still presented by the first footers, although not necessarily to the extent that they once were. But most of all, the new year is rung in with a good old-fashioned Scots welcome and hospitality. And each and every one is wished "A guid New Year to ane an` a` and mony may ye see!"





# British Home Child Group International

Stay in touch!

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Follow Us!



Vice President Sandra Joyce will be in Calgary in May, speaking to the Canadian Federation of University Women and the Calgary Knights of the Round Table.

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