

December, 2017



British Home Child Group International

Design and Layout by Karen Mahoney

The Prince of Wales (POW) Fairbridge Farm School by Sandra Joyce

Christmas was the best time of the year at the POW Fairbridge Farm School in British Columbia. Each child had a sock hung at the end of their cot on Christmas Eve and in the morning, they would find it with a few nuts and sweets and a tangerine, recalls Roddy Mackay, former child migrant and Past President of the Fairbridge Canada Association.

In early December, the children at the Farm School were shown a catalogue and were allowed to choose a gift they would like for no more than \$1. They would then write to Santa for it and lo and behold, it would appear on Christmas Day. For most of the children that was the only present they would receive. It was always snowing at Christmas and Roddy remembers the glistening beauty of the trees around the farm. Christmas dinner was held in their big dining hall and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Unfortunately, times were not always good for Roddy and some of the British child migrants housed there. In a recent two-day interview with an Edinburgh-based lawyer for the Scottish segment of the UK's National inquiry into Child Abuse, Roddy told them about his ten-year 'sentence' at the Farm School. When talking about it to the lawyer, Roddy felt like he was talking about a nightmare that he'd had.

While most of the child migrants at the school were from the Newcastle area, Roddy was one of the few from Scotland. Roddy's journey started when his parents divorced and he, his three brothers and sister were abandoned in Edinburgh. The children were separated with Roddy and his sister sent to Middlemore Home in Birmingham. He was then separated again from his sister and sent to Canada on the SS Bayano in 1941. He doesn't remember much about the voyage, as he was only seven, but later found out that the convoy that their ship was in was attacked by Nazi submarines. One ship was sunk and another badly damaged. In recollecting, Roddy finds it incredible that the British and Canadian Governments would allow children to be shipped across the Atlantic during the war years. The year before Roddy's convoy sailed, 60 evacuee children lost their lives when the SS City of Benares was torpedoed and sunk.

Roddy lost touch with his three brothers and a sister. Two of them, he didn't even remember. He grew up thinking that his mother was dead, and his father was in the military. It wasn't until the late 1980's that he became aware that his 'files' were being held in the Birmingham Archives – and this information came from a fellow Fairbridgian. Roddy found out that at the time of his admittance to Middlemore; his parents had divorced, and his mother was living in London and father remarried. This vital family information, Roddy feels, should have automatically been provided for the children on leaving the school. *Continued on page 2.....*



Roddy Mackay with group of Fairbridge children in 1941

Prince of Wales (POW) Fairbridge Farm School continued

In the 2000s, the "Child Migrant Trust," helped him find his two younger brothers. He had found his older brother and sister in the 1970s. They had been separated for 60 years and finally reunited as a family in 2,000. The Child Migrant Trust was the only organization that offered any assistance in his search for his family.

Life at the Farm School was rough for some. Up to 1940, the school had been funded, and things had been better. When funding dried up during the Second World War, the staff changed. There were cases of physical and sexual abuse. In fact, the duties master of the school, responsible for discipline, was arrested and sentenced for child abuse and then rehired again after being apparently rehabilitated, only to be dismissed shortly thereafter for the same misconduct.



Photo courtesy Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives



Fairbridge Farm School Students 1945 - Photo courtesy Cowichan Valley Museum

Roddy was invited to attend the British Apology to the Child Migrants in the UK in 2010. A great, symbolic gesture yet the Canadian children were only briefly mentioned. The focus was on the Australian child migrants. Afterward, the Canadian High Commissioner received them and remarked that he wasn't aware of the Canadian involvement in the Child Migrant scheme in Canada. Roddy feels that it was ironic that the person representing the Canadian contingent was not prepared for his role.

According to Roddy, life in the school's cottages was very strict. Many of the children were abused by bullies and women who should never have been hired as cottage mothers. Some of the cottage mothers treated the children well, others did not.

Even though the majority of the Home Children in Canada were placed on individual farms and the Fairbridge farm school child migrants stayed in the school, their experience was similar. There are good stories and there are bad.

What still astounds Roddy is that even though child welfare had been sent to the school to check out reports of physical and sexual abuse in 1945, the British Columbian and Canadian governments did nothing.

Roddy also notes that the Australian Government were ready to step up to the plate and provided settlement and recourse to reunite families. The Canadian Government has not.



Fairbridge - Australia

The British Home Child Group International wish you a Merry Christmas and the very best of New Years.

We are proud to announce our British Home Child Day will be held at Niagara-on-the-Lake on September 28, 2018. The unveiling of a Maria Rye plaque will be at the Rye Heritage Park. This will be followed by a reception and gathering at the Niagara Museum. More details to follow.

Barnardo's Guild magazine has done a story on the unveiling of our plaque at the site of the building that formerly housed Annie MacPherson's Marchmont Homes. The story will be included in our January issue.

Our DNA database is gathering members. If you have your DNA results from FamilyTree DNA, you can join our group – British Home Children. If your results are with Ancestry, they can be uploaded to FamilyTree. The more members we have the better.

Also, please add your Home Child to our ever-growing database that we run and administrate on Rootschat.com. In doing this, you become the contact person for your BHC's records – there is no middleman. You can add to and edit your info as you discover more. Find out how to join by going to our website.

If you are getting our newsletter via our website, consider signing up to get the newsletter earlier.

Also, check out our YouTube videos, watch for our Tweets, Instagram pics, Pintrest. You can find all the icons in the upper right of on our website's Home Page: www.britishhomechild.com.

We will be adding to our display dates and events on an ongoing basis. Please check our website, our newsletter and our Families of British Home Children/Child Migrants Facebook page.

From Quarrier's Narratives of Facts. December 1928

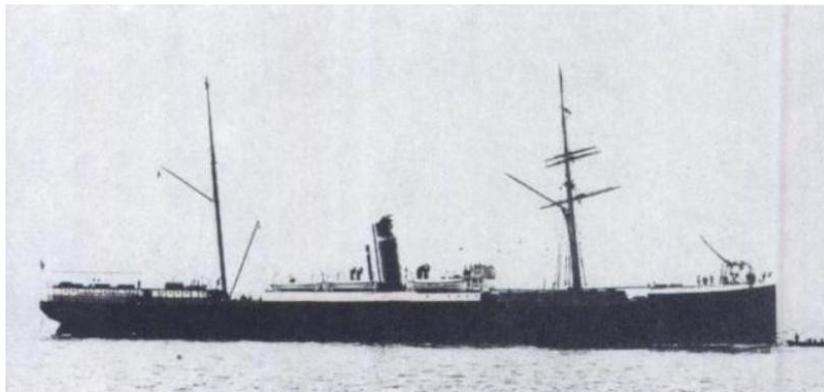
The Narrative of Facts was the annual newsletter that Quarrier's (formerly known as the Orphan Homes of Scotland) sent out to donors and former Home Boys and Girls. In it, they would impart news, list donations and share letters from former 'inmates' of the cottages at Bridge of Weir. At any one time, there were up to 1500 children staying in the Village.

"...from one of our former Ontario farmer boys we have the following: "It has been so long since I wrote, you will have likely forgotten me. It will be six years this coming February since I left the Orphan Homes, so I thought I would take the pleasure of writing to find out how you are getting along at Bridge of Weir. There will be a few changes since I left, and many children will have come and gone from the Homes. It is certainly a wonderful place. I suppose if Mr. Quarrier was to see the growth and number of children, that have been cared for, he would be surprised at the progress...Well I suppose you must be busy at present getting ready for New Year and the children will be looking forward to the day with great glee. It was a big day when I was there and made for lots of work getting ready for the occasion."

With all the donations coming from in the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and around the world: Singapore, Johannesburg, the US, Brazil, France and Sudan, the Narrative of Facts said that Christmas was 'saved' in 1928. "Thus we have been enabled to buy all the good cheer for the merry season, from the good things to fill the children's stockings on Christmas eve with its happy carol singers right through the closing week of the year with its heavily-laden store baskets, till all the parcels are ready to hang on the trees for the joyous New Year's Day."



S.S. Toronto by Sandra Joyce



S.S. TORONTO, 1880 Dominion Line
 Courtesy The Peabody Museum of Salem

The Toronto was built in 1879 by Charles Cornell & Co in Glasgow. Owned by the Dominion Line, she was created mainly to serve the burgeoning influx of emigrants. Her home port was Liverpool and she sailed mainly to Quebec or Montreal from 1880. In October 1894, she was sold to Italian owners and re-named Pina. Three years later she was scrapped.

There is not much more information on the SS Toronto except that she carried a total of 318 'Home Children' to Canada on her decks.

However, looking at the Library and Archives Home Child passenger lists brings up the question of the definition of a "Home Child". Many of the children listed on the Toronto were 18 and were travelling in small groups with no apparent link to any organization in the UK.

In 1893, there is a group of younger children travelling to Dr. Stephenson's Home in Hamilton, Ontario. In 1886 and 1887, there are children and adults of varying ages travelling with the Church Emigration Society. Some listed in 1887 are in their forties. In 1892 a group of 8 girls, ranging in age from 6 to 14 travelled with Reverend Wallace to the Marchmont Home in Belleville.

For the British Home Child Group International, the definition of a Home Child would be that they would be under the age of 18, and be travelling with an organization, specifically with the intent of them working as indentured farm labourers and domestics.



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