

April, 2017

Happy Easter!



British Home Child Group International

100th Anniversary of Vimy Ridge by Sandra Joyce

Design and Layout by Karen Mahoney

We Will Remember Them

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning,

We will remember them.



The all-important battle at Vimy Ridge that took place one hundred years ago from April 9th to 12th, saw Canada come of age as a country. Regiments from coast to coast fought side by side and their triumph created a strong sense of national identity and raised Canada's international status.

At the beginning of the First World War, Canada's external affairs were governed by the United Kingdom. This meant that once Britain declared war, Canada automatically followed. By the end of the war, our country's status as an independent entity was acknowledged by being one of the signatories on the Treaty of Versailles – which signalled the end of the war.

In the spring of 1917, Europe had been at war for two-and-a-half terrible years, with neither side being able to make a significant breakthrough. As part of an Allied offensive, a major attack was planned for April in the area of Arras, France. In this attack, the Canadians would be given the task of capturing Vimy Ridge.

Starting at 5:30 am on April 9, the assault began. Great casualties were suffered. Most of the heavily defended ridge was captured by noon. Hill 145, the main height on the ridge, was taken on the morning of April 10. Two days later, the Canadians took "the Pimple," as the other significant height on the ridge was nicknamed. The Germans were forced to withdraw three kilometres to the east and the Battle of Vimy Ridge was over. The Allies now commanded the heights overlooking the Douai Plain, which was still occupied by the enemy.



The Canadian Corps, together with the British Corps to the south, had captured more ground, prisoners and artillery pieces than any previous British offensive of the war.

During the First World War, many of our British Home Children voluntarily signed up – some to protect their new homeland and some out of loyalty to the mother country. Some found it a way to get back to Britain to see any family they might have there. Others signed up to get away from unhappy placements.

We remember and honour those British Home Children who served in the First World War.

Paula Mowforth-Morgan's great-grandfather, George Robert Mowforth was admitted to Barnardo's in London on July 29th, 1904, along with his two brothers, John Charles and Ernest. The boys, whose father had died and mother was in prison, were found in a state of neglect – starving and sleeping rough.

100th Anniversary of VIMY *continued*



Three months later, George and Ernest were sent to Canada. John Charles was emigrated the following year.

George was placed on a farm with a family near Tillsonburg, Ontario who treated him well. After his indenture was completed, he was employed by The New Steel Works in Tillsonburg. In January of 1916, he enlisted with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force as a Private in the 2nd Battalion, Canadian Infantry - Eastern Ontario Regiment. He married Edith Elizabeth Ball on March 15, 1916 in Tillsonburg, Ontario.

Just 4 months shy of his 25th Birthday, George Mowforth was killed in action on April 11, 1917, at Vimy Ridge. He never met his son, George Anderson Mowforth born in October, 1916.

Paula treasures the various awards her great-grandfather received: Barnardo's Silver Good Conduct Medal, the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the Silver Memorial Cross. She also has her great-grandfather's death penny.



George Mowforth Good Conduct Medal

His body was exhumed from the Pas de Calais cemetery and moved to Bois Carre Cemetery in Thelus. France. In June of 2016, Paula's aunt, Sue Kilmer, her children and grandchildren, travelled to Vimy and brought home 'sacred soil'. This was placed in an opening in the memorial wall of the new Canadian Forces' Base Borden's monument during a ceremony celebrating the Base's 100th anniversary on June 9th, 2016.

The monument is a nine-metre polished black and white granite wall along with a bronze statue of a bugler nearby. It forms the ceremonial northern entrance to Base Borden near, Barrie, Ont.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said at the ceremony, "The reason the world pays heed to Canada is because we fought like lions in the trenches of World War I...We showed our ability to stand for our values, and fight and sacrifice for them in faraway places." He went on to say, "Nearly a century after their loss, Canada remembers and continues to mourn."



George Mowforth Silver Cross



George Mowforth Death Penny

SS Mongolian by Sandra Joyce

The S.S. *Mongolian* was built in 1890 in Glasgow by D & W Henderson Limited for the Allan Line with the intent to carry those immigrants fleeing poverty in Britain to the 'New World'. She also carried cargo and the Royal Mail.

Built during the time when ships were transitioning from sail to steam, she was fitted out with two 100 foot masts to raise sails should the need arise to supplement her engines.

The S.S. *Mongolian* was first launched on November 13 of 1890 and three months later, she made her maiden voyage from Liverpool to Halifax and Portland.

Between April 1891 and 1913, 1507 British Home Children were sent to Canada on her decks according to the Canadian Library and Archives database.

In 1915, the SS *Mongolian* was purchased by the British Admiralty and was armed defensively.

Like many other ships during the wars, even though she was a civilian ship, she was torpedoed and sunk on the 21st July 1918. She was carrying a load of coal. some five miles off Filey Brigg, a long narrow peninsula situated about a mile north of Filey, North Yorkshire.

The German submarine was laying mines at enemy ports along the coast when she spotted the big, slow Mongolian. A torpedo was let loose and ripped into the side of the ship and sea water rushed into the hole near the boiler room. The engines stopped and the call to abandon ship was given. Thirty-six of her crew members drowned.

Some of those crew members' names are on the monument at the Memorial at Tower Hill in London, England. The Tower Hill Memorial commemorates men and women of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets who died in

both World Wars and who have no known grave. It stands on the south side of the garden of Trinity Square, London, close to The Tower of London.

In the First World War, the civilian navy's duty was to be the supply service of the Royal Navy. Troops, supplies, raw materials and food were transported by them. Losses of vessels were high from the outset, but peaked in 1917 when the German government announced the adoption of "unrestricted submarine warfare". The subsequent preventative measures introduced by the Ministry of Shipping - including the setting up of the convoy system where warships were used to escort merchant vessels - led to a decrease in losses. but by the end of the war, 3,305 merchant ships had been lost with a total of 17,000 lives including those who died on the SS *Mongolian*.



SS Mongolian



The TOWER HILL MEMORIAL, London

John James Rowley by Sandra Joyce



Gilles Duceppe with his grandfather and siblings, Claude, Pierre and Louise - photo courtesy Gilles Duceppe

Gilles Duceppe's grandfather, John James Rowley, was a British Home Child. The former leader of the Bloc Québécois as well as former Leader of the Opposition of Canada's Parliament, remembers his grandfather vividly as his family lived with him for ten years.

"My father (Jean Duceppe) was an actor, and he wasn't very rich back then," Duceppe recalled in a recent Montreal Gazette interview. "We were living in a four and a half room apartment with my parents, grandparents, an uncle, an aunt, me and my two brothers."

"I had no idea about what my grandfather had gone through back then. He never said a word," Duceppe continued.

John James Rowley was born in England to Irish parents. He was orphaned when his mother committed suicide due to alleged spousal abuse and his father fell into the Thames and drowned after binge drinking.

Rowley was taken in by the Poplar workhouse in London. However, he was emigrated to Canada in 1906 by the Catholic Emigration Association at the age of 16.

Rowley arrived at the St. George's Receiving Home in Ottawa but as Catholic organizations wanted the children they brought to Canada to remain Catholics, most were sent to farms in Quebec. Rowley was indentured with a family in St-Benoît-du-Lac. Although Duceppe says his grandfather was lucky and ended up with a good family, he experienced extreme loneliness as he could speak no French and the family he was placed with spoke little English. He would often visit the First Nations Reserve nearby, just to speak his native language.

Duceppe only found out about his grandfather's past in 1991, after he was elected to Parliament. Many Canadian across the country spoke about the Home Children to him and it was then, that he began to think that his grandfather was one of them.

Duceppe was quick to discover that thousands of British Home Children were sent to Quebec and the rest of Canada. "It is estimated that perhaps between 10 to 12 per cent of the current population of the country could have roots that go back to the Home Children. There was and is still a lot of shame and survivors' guilt."

In 2009, Duceppe supported a motion introduced by MP Phil McColeman, whose uncle was a Home Child, to declare 2010 British Home Child Year in Canada. He felt there should be more. He wanted the House of Commons to apologize.

It wasn't until Duceppe met with Sandra Joyce, Karen Mahoney and Carolyn Perkes of the British Home Child Group International that he was absolutely sure his grandfather was a Home Child. Joyce was in Montreal to deliver a presentation at the Atwater library and during a CTV interview, was introduced to Duceppe. After the interview, BHCGL's Karen Mahoney presented a detailed dossier to Duceppe and his sisters Louise and Monique.

The need for an Apology was discussed at length and the Duceppe family were told of the BHCGL's efforts to obtain one: emailing information sheets to all MPs, phoning their offices and asking for support. Thousands of written signatures and email signatures had been collected by the group and others. Duceppe and his sisters, signed an epetition started by BHCGL. Duceppe's interest in obtaining an Apology was reawakened.

Duceppe was already intent on preserving the history of the British Home Children by showing a play, *Ne m'oubliez pas - Forget Me Not* - based on the ordeal of a British Child Migrant who ended up in Australia, which played at the theatre his famous father Jean, started: Théâtre Duceppe.

Just before its opening, he began lobbying the political parties in Parliament, even making personal phone calls to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. After some negotiation, a compromise was reached on Feb. 16 and in a motion unanimously passed by members of the House of Commons, Bloc Québécois MP Luc Thériault prevailed on the House to recognize the injustice, abuse and suffering endured by the British Home Children as well as the contributions of these children and their descendants within Canada. The motion was seconded by Liberal MP Judy Sgro, NDP MP Jenny Kwan, Conservative MP Mark Strahl and Green Party MP Elizabeth May. The full Apology may be seen on our [Youtube](#) channel and on our [website](#).

Upcoming Events

Unveiling of BHC Quilt, Presentation & Q&A

April 1st - 12:00 pm

Old Town Hall, Newmarket, ON

York Region OGS

April 12th 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Richmond Hill Library

Richmond Hill, ON

Riverdale Historical Society

April 25th 7:00pm - 9:00pm

St. Matthew's Club Riverdale East

Toronto, ON

Stanstead historical Society, Quebec

May 6th 10:00am - 1:00pm

Colby-Curtis Museum

Standstead, Quebec

Brampton Historical Society

May 18th 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Heart Lake Presbyterian Church

Brampton, ON

Lambton County OGS & Sarnia Historical Society

April 11th 7:00pm - 9:00pm - Sarnia Library Theatre

Sarnia, ON

Lindsay Little Theatre

April 21st - 29th

After panel discussion April 22nd and April 29th

Belleville Probus Club

April 27th 10:00am - 12:00pm

Pentecostal Church, Belleville, ON

Private Screening of Forgotten

May 16th Screening Time 7:00pm

Amsterdam Brewery, Toronto, ON

For Tickets Contact sandrajoyce@rogers.com

Beaver Valley Probus Club

May 23rd 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Beaver Valley Community Centre

Thornbury, ON

Unveiling of BHCGI's Quilt and Extensive Two Week Exhibit

To celebrate Canada's 150th Birthday, we are pleased to announce an extensive two week exhibit of British Home Child artifacts at the newly renovated Newmarket Old Town Hall. The exhibit will be opened on April 1st at noon with a presentation and the unveiling of the Canada's 150th British Home Child 2017 Memorial Quilt. We are honoured to be invited to have our exhibit in Newmarket's most treasured and historical cultural landmark. The exhibit will be open everyday from noon to 8pm.







45 Esandra Drive
Toronto, Ontario



British Home Child Group International





Join Us May 16th
Doors Open 6:30pm
Screening at 7:00pm
Panel Discussion After
Tickets \$10.00



British Home Child Group International

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