

May, 2017



British Home Child Group International

Exhibit in Newmarket and Connections by Sandra Joyce

Design and Layout by Karen Mahoney



At all our exhibits and presentations, British Home Child connections are made. Some of the associations made at our recent Newmarket exhibit were especially poignant.

Whenever I go into St. John's Norway Cemetery in Toronto to see my parent's niche on the exterior wall of the Chapel, one inscription strikes me: "Canada's Own Fifi the Clown' dedicated to John O'Mahony by his loving family. O'Mahony was 99 when he died in 2002. I have often wondered who this was.

During the exhibit, we were told that Fifi the Clown was a Home Child by a descendant who had dropped by. Richard (John) O'Mahony came to Canada in 1920 at the age

of 15 on the SS Minnedosa as part of a group of 37 children. They were being sent by the Catholic Emigration Association to St. Georges' Home in Ottawa. Most children in his group were under the age of 14. Three of them were just six.

According to an October 2016 article in the Toronto Historist, "(Fifi was) Born in Ireland during the first decade of the 20th century, and he was placed in an orphanage at age five. He was sent to Canada...where he performed farm work and was abused at school. He ran away to join a circus in his teens."

Over the years, Fifi performed at church picnics, country fairs, clubs, the CNE, the Royal Winter Fair, and the Rameses Shrine Circus at Maple Leaf Gardens. During the Second World War, he enlisted in the RCAF and spent three years entertaining airmen across North America.

Every so often, I think about whether the career choice of my BHC dad, Robert Joyce, as a supervisor at Seaton House, Toronto's largest men's homeless shelter, was shaped by his youth. According to the same Toronto Historist article, "(Fifi's) soft spot, likely based on his time in the orphanage, was performing for homeless and ill children, leading to appearances at Sick Kids Hospital."



Exhibit in Newmarket and Connections *continued*



Alan and Phyl Wright made another startling connection in Newmarket. While manning the exhibit, in which pieces of their British Home Child artifact collection were displayed, they were approached by Mrs. Ann Schappert, who told Alan and Phyl that her father was a British Home Child. Ann had found out after his passing and was having difficulty getting any details.

She did know two things: he was from Crowland in Lincolnshire and he was at Barnardo's with his brother.

Both Alan and Phyl perked up because Phyl's uncle was a Barnardo boy and the family farm where Phyl was born was two kilometers from Crowland. While Ann continued

to look at the artifacts, Alan found Ann's father and uncle online: Samuel Courts and his brother George Courts. They were sent to Canada in 1920 as part of a group of 143 Barnardo Boys. Samuel was 9 and George was 11. They arrived in Canada in Quebec and travelled by train to the Barnardo's Receiving Home at 50-52 Peter Street in Toronto. George was placed with Alfred Perryman, a former Barnardo 'old' Boy. Samuel was placed in Huntsville, and then in Dufferin County.

Ann is now in contact with Valerie Smith at Barnardo's in the UK to get the whole file on both brothers.

During the exhibit, Newmarket's Deputy Mayor John Taylor dropped by. He had been told by his father, former Mayor Tom Taylor, that John's grandfather was a Home Boy. We are still researching Mr. Taylor's grandfather and will report back as we get more news. Our YouTube video interviewing him is available on our website: www.britishhomechild.com.

Also, BHC descendant, Dave Moore, came all the way from Whistler, B.C. to see the unveiling of the our Canada Sesquicentennial British Home Child 2017 quilt. A

square is dedicated to his father, Thomas Moore. Other descendants visited the exhibit to look at their BHC squares, like Julia Walkley Sherman and Christopher Sibbert.



Ruth Haines, the grand-daughter of Walter Haines, a farmer in the Newmarket area who had Home Boys Herbert Blackall and Arthur Deave on his farm, contributed some artifacts. Herbert Blackall's heart-breaking letters and beautifully hand-embroidered postcards from the First World War front in France are proof of the wonderful personal relationship that Herbert had with the Haines' family. Sadly, Herbert was killed at the Battle of Passchendaele. Ruth also brought Home Boy Arthur Deave's books and bible to our exhibit.

Exhibit in Newmarket and Connections *continued*



The flag quilt was supplied by Ron Alldred, whose grandparents took in Home Boy George Collins at the request of a minister in Lindsay, Ontario. The boy was being treated improperly. Private George Collins brought a British flag back to Ron's mother as a souvenir which he'd acquired on Armistice Day in London, England. It was made into a quilt. The reverse side features a pattern of cloth soldier dolls which were usually cut out, stuffed with rags by members of the Women's Institute and sold for charity. Ron says that George was like a brother to his mother.

Gail Collins' Ontario 2010 British Home Child quilt received lots of admiring looks. More info on the making of this quilt can be found on our website.

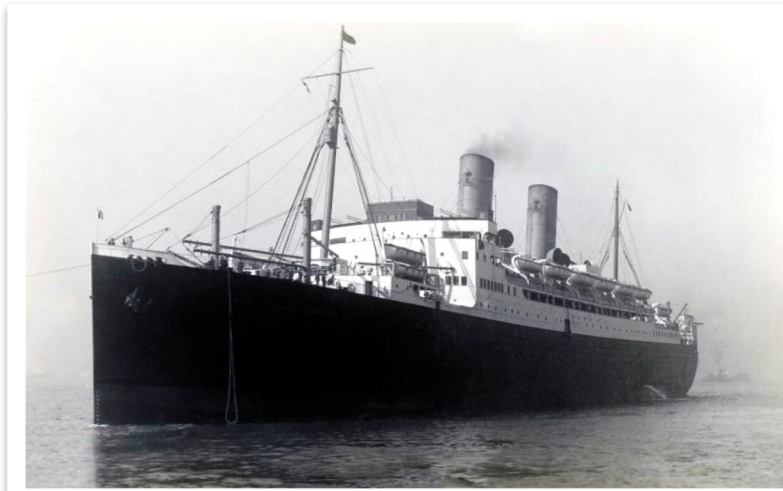
We were also extremely pleased that Pat Maloney who came to Canada in 1937 through the Fegan Homes in Toronto, was able to join us for the unveiling of our Quilt, as well as doing an interview for our [YouTube channel](#). Pat also told us he was a teacher and a Principle of many Toronto schools, including Morse Street Public School in Toronto, which my granddaughter now attends.

The Exhibit was a great success and thanks goes out to the staff of the Newmarket Old Town Hall, the Museum and volunteers from the Newmarket Historical Society. Special thanks to photographer Greg King who photographed the exhibit and recorded the two YouTube videos for our channel.





The Duchess of Richmond by Sandra Joyce



The Duchess of Richmond, the third of Canadian Pacific's 'Duchess Ships' brought 606 British Home Children to Canada, according to Library and Archives Canada.

Built and launched in 1928 by John Brown & Co. of Glasgow, her passenger capacity was 580-cabin, 480-tourist and 510-3rd class passengers. Her first trip was a trial cruise to the Canary Islands in January of 1929. Among her passengers was Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts and his family who were attending Scout rallies at ports along the way, including Mallorca, Tenerife, Monte Carlo and Lisbon.

The Duchess began her transatlantic career in March of that year and sailed from Liverpool to St. John, New Brunswick. During the summer, her destination was Montreal.

On 27 April 1929, she ran aground at Saint John. Her passengers were taken off, and she was refloated the next day and resumed her service.

During the Second World War, *the Duchess* was requisitioned as a troopship. She played a role in the Tizard Mission, which brought secret military equipment and designs such as the cavity magnetron from Britain to Canada and the United States. The magnetron is a vacuum tube, that works as a microwave oscillator. This is used to produce a high-power output required in radar equipment.

The Duchess also transported troops to North Africa.

At the beginning of the war, she also brought evacuee children from Britain to Canada. Here is a first hand account from one of the members of the website *Ships Nostalgia*: "I sailed with my two brothers on the *Duchess of Richmond* from the Gladstone Dock in Liverpool on June 30th, 1940 as a twelve year old evacuee to Canada. The *Arandora Star* sailed on the same day and we had the destroyer *Wanderer* escorting us until we reached the Atlantic. Then we were on our own and close to the *Arandora Star* when she was torpedoed by Gunther Prien in *U-Boat 47*. Some time later the *City of Benares* was sunk with the loss of many children and the Government stopped the programme of evacuating children to Canada."

In May 1946 *Duchess of Richmond* arrived at the Govan yard of Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering for her overhaul and refit. Upon completion, she was renamed *Empress of Canada* on July 12, 1947 and sailed on Canadian Pacific's first post-war Liverpool-Montreal route four days later.

After 186 roundtrips, the career of *Empress of Canada* came to a sudden end when she caught fire, heeled over and sank at Liverpool's Gladstone Dock on 25 January 1953. After extensive work, she was refloated in March 1954, and left Liverpool in tow on 1 September, and was scrapped at the shipbreakers in Spezia, Italy.

The *Duchess of Richmond*/*Empress of Canada* sister ships were the *Duchess of Bedford*/*Empress of France II*; the *Duchess of Atholl*; and the *Duchess of York*.

Upcoming Events

Stanstead historical Society, Quebec

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

Colby-Curtis Museum

Standstead, Quebec

Private Screening of Forgotten

May 16th Screening Time 7:00pm

Amsterdam Brewery, Toronto, ON

For Tickets Contact sandrajoyce@rogers.com

Brampton Historical Society

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

Heart Lake Presbyterian Church

Brampton, ON

Beaver Valley Probus Club

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

Beaver Valley Community Centre

Thornbury, ON

Niagara Historical Society & Museum

June 15th 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Niagara Historical Museum

Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON




AMSTERDAM
Brewery
TORONTO'S ORIGINAL

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



The British Home Child Group International and Amsterdam Breweries present the acclaimed documentary 'Forgotten' directed and produced by Eleanor McGrath in the Brewery's event room on May 16th, 2017 at 7 pm. Doors open at 6:30 pm. Free parking. Location: 45 Esandar Dr, Toronto, ON M4G 4C5. Advance tickets may be made by etransfer to: sandrajoyce@rogers.com or making a cheque out to British Home Child Group International, 97 Dagmar Avenue, Toronto M4M 1V9.

There will be a panel discussion after the screening with Eleanor with special guests.

Forgotten is about the yearning to know one's history – what began with a fire at 295 George Street in Toronto became the catalyst to share the story of over 100,000 children who were sent to Canada from Great Britain to work as indentured farm labourers and domestics. This is the forgotten heritage of many Canadians, both of the children themselves and their descendants.

Eleanor McGrath's third documentary, *Forgotten* about the British Home Children and their descendants, has been receiving great attention on the film festival circuit. In Canada, one in ten people are descended from the children who came to Canada through the child migration scheme, which operated, from 1860s to 1939.

Matt Galloway host of CBC's Metro Morning radio programme interviewed Eleanor McGrath on March 3rd, 2016. Within seconds of the interview's start, Matt Galloway shared his own personal connection to the story - his grandfather was a Barnardo child. There are many other famous personalities who are descendants of Home Children, for example: Don Cherry, Gilles Duceppe, Ontario's Minister of Health Eric Hoskins.

Forgotten has been selected to be shown at nine festivals including the Toronto Short Film Festival and has had screenings in London, England and in the United States.

For tickets, please contact: Sandra Joyce at sandrajoyce@rogers.com.



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