

November, 2017



British Home Child Group International

Design and Layout by Karen Mahoney

Dedication & Ribbon Cutting - Fuller Heights Park, Bradford, ON by Susan Fuller



Susan Fuller & her daughters

My grandfather William Alexander Fuller was born in London, England in 1901. He was one of nine children to a widowed mother Louisa. Louisa was unable to collect on her widows pension from the British Military and was made to make the extremely difficult decision to place her children in the care of the "Doctor Barnardo Homes" for impoverished children.

At age 11 he was sent to Canada on a boat full of other British Home Children, some as young as 5 or 6 to work as indentured domestic servants.

I can still recall him telling me the story of arriving at the McCann farm here in Bradford. It was a particularly damp and cold day. Arriving at the train station in town with no one there to meet him. Walking through Bradford making inquiries as to where the farm was he said he felt very lonesome, scared and sad as when he arrived at the farm no one was home to greet him but a mean dog that tried to bite him! He wondered if he had arrived at the end of the world and proceeded to sit down in a ditch and cry. Luckily the McCann family were kind and caring people as it was not often the fate of British Home Children to end up in suitable homes.

He worked as a farm hand until his emancipation at age 18. He then married my grandmother Mae and had two sons, Wallace and my father Thomas. Grandfather went on to work in many local businesses, referee baseball leagues, serve as Police Commissioner as well as start a produce company "W.A. Fuller & Sons".

They grew a variety of vegetables and worked alongside Professor Day to clear the marsh lands and develop the canal systems in use today.

Bill lived to the ripe old age of 97 and was a testament to the Canadian Spirit of hardwork, faith, hope and charity.

If he was alive today to see what a bustling, busy and successful town Bradford has become, I believe he would be quite amazed and proud to think that a little orphan boy from the East side of London had a hand in it!



Fuller Family with Mayor Keffer, Members of Council & friends

The SS Numidian, First World War and Scapa Flow by Sandra Joyce

The SS Numidian that brought 1686 British Home Children to Canada had a peculiar fate in store for her. Launched in 1891 in Glasgow by D & W Henderson Ltd., her maiden voyage from Liverpool to Montreal and Quebec was in August of that same year. She was owned by the Allan Trans-Atlantic Line and could carry 1180 passengers (100 in first class, 80 in second class, and 1000 in third class).

At least 120 Boys were sent by Dr. Barnardo on that maiden voyage. In October, another 42 children from the Salford Catholic Protection and Rescue Society arrived in Canada on her decks.



In total, 1686 Home Children from various agencies emigrated to Canada on the Numidian till she was sold to the British Admiralty in 1914. Her career as a passenger ship ended and she was scuttled. However, her usefulness did not end there.

In the early 1900s, Britain decided to create a northern base to control the entrances to the North Sea. Different locations were considered as the build-up of the German fleet was nervously noted by the British admiralty. However, when the First World War broke out, there was still no fortified site.

As Scapa Flow had been used during naval exercises for some years before the war, it was chosen quickly as the main base. Scapa Flow is a body of water in the Orkney Islands, Scotland and is sheltered by the islands of Mainland, Graemsay, Burray, South Ronaldsay and Hoy.

The Admiral of the British Grand Fleet, John Rushworth Jellicoe, decided that this base needed to be reinforced and this led to the sinking of sixty block ships of which the Numidian was one. The ships were sunk at various entrance channels between the southern islands. The SS Numidian was sunk in Kirk Sound. Nets and booms were combined with artillery, minefields and concrete barriers to further fortify the area. During the duration of the war, all subsequent submarine attacks were unsuccessful.

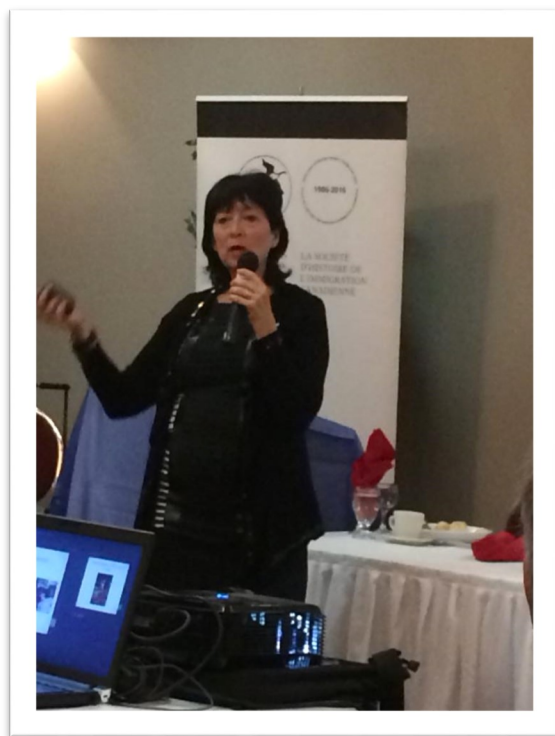
At the end of the war, Kirk Sound was reopened. In 1923, the remains of the Numidian were turned and she now lies parallel to Holm Shore with the stern towards what is now Churchill Barrier.

She sits on a rock and mud bottom in three to seven metres of water. The bow is more preserved than the stern, and although the remains are well broken down, divers visiting the area can see the remnants in detail.



A number of other ships including seven German ships sunk by the German navy can be visited. At the end of the First World War, 74 German ships were interred in Scapa Flow, waiting the decision of their fate while the Versailles Peace Treaty was being discussed. On 21 June 1919, after seven months of waiting, Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter, gave the order to scuttle these ships so that the ships would not fall into the hands of the British navy. The bulk of the British navy was away on exercises and although the Royal Navy attempted to stop the sinkings, 54 of the German ships also lie in the waters of Scapa Flow.

Canadian Immigration Historical Society by Sandra Joyce



I was delighted to be asked to give a presentation on the Home Children at the Canadian Immigration Historical Society's Annual General Meeting in October. It was indeed an honour, as guest speakers in the past have included sitting Immigration Ministers, like Jason Kenney.

The audience, in which former federal Immigration officials and officers and former Canadian Intelligence Officers were present, said they 'were enthralled with the presentation'. Many had heard of the British Home Children but were not familiar with details. There was some confusion with Guest Children – the children who were evacuated from the UK during the Second World War.

The evening started with a short talk about a book the CIHS has released called 'Running On Empty' – it is a non-fiction account of the operations and policy underlying the movement of the Vietnamese "boat people" to Canada. There was also a University of Carlton slide presentation concerning archived material and a new website on the Ugandan-Asian crisis of 1972, which saw established Asian families in Uganda flee for their lives under Idi Amin's iron fist. Wealthy businessmen and their families arrived in Canada with just the clothes on their backs.

I had a great conversation with their annual Gunn award winner for his university paper on the first settlements in Newfoundland and their relationship to the cod fishery. Our conversation ended with Iain's questioning his own background and thinking that perhaps he might be related to a Home Child.

The CIHS has been a great supporter of the British Home Child Group International. They have made sure that the successfully adopted and official Motion to Apologize in the House of Commons received mention in their bulletin.

After my presentation on the British Home Children, there were many questions and comments – shock that such young children were sent (as young as four) and the extent of the child migrant scheme (over 100,000 children). All in all, it was a successful evening and the members of the CIHS expressed their thanks at this little mentioned part of history being brought to the forefront.

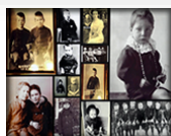
Our Annual Remembrance Wreath Laying at Queen Park by Sandra Joyce

The British Home Child Group International will again place a wreath at the Ontario Provincial Parliament buildings, Queen's Park, during the annual Remembrance Day Ceremony on November 11. This year, we will be especially honouring those British Home Boys who perished at Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele and Dunkirk.

Karen Mahoney, President of the BHCGI, will once more be wreath bearer as she especially remembers Private Herbert George Blackall who was a British Home Boy on her husband's grandfather's farm. Herbert was treated well and stayed there until he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1915.

Private Blackall enlisted in Niagara, Ontario, on May 26, 1915 and was sent to France in July 1915 as a member

of the 48th Highlanders. During the Battle of Passchendaele, Herbert was serving as a stretcher-bearer when he suffered gunshot wounds that penetrated his chest. He succumbed to those wounds the next day, at the age of 24. We will remember them.



British Home Child Group International

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