



Merry

Christmas



Veterans Affairs Canada

Resulting from the outstanding efforts of the BHCARA, VAC will now formally recognize the service of our BHC in the Wars.

See page 4 For details

British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association

Winter 2017/2018 Newsletter

Articles from Our Andrew Simpson and Lori Oschefska. Guest writers:
John Fielding, Maggie Wheeler and part two of Ann Griffin's Middlemore Story.



DISCOVERING THE STORY OF FATHER

By John Fielding - Retired Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Canadian and World Studies Curriculum

Most children learn about their parents through stories told by their parents. That was true for the Fielding children, of which I was eighth-born of twelve. What was different about the story of our father, Leslie Henry Baden Fielding, the youngest child of Herbert Henry Fielding and Eliza Smith Fielding, however, was its vagueness and strange words: "home children" and "Barnardo." Father was one of almost 100,000 children sent to Canada from the United Kingdom between 1867 and 1939. Most of these children were referred to as "Barnardo children," but only about 30,000 of home children actually were. As many as 50 UK agencies sent children to Canada, many without the knowledge or permission of their parents, a move made legal by the British Parliament. The idea was conceived in 1826 by Robert Chambers, an obscure police magistrate who proposed his plan to British Parliament that "children who cluttered the streets of London could be gathered up and shipped to Canada." My dad and mom with their twelve offspring have made a significant contribution to the estimated three million or 11.5 percent of Canada's population made up of home children and their descendants.

Dad's stories included his being abandoned by his red-haired mother after they entered the Hackney Workhouse. She had promised to return for him, but after a year he was given the choice of being sent to Australia, where he would see kangaroos, and Canada, where he would see cowboys and Indians. He chose cowboys and Indians. He did not think he had any brothers or sisters. He never spoke of his childhood, except to say that he was bullied in the orphanage.

After arriving in Canada, he was sent to [Stratford](#), and from there was sent to work on a farm near Mitchell. He remembered that at this first placement he was not sent to school and had to live in the barn with the animals. He also told the story of how on Christmas Day the neighbours, the Peppers, (it was only Mr. Pepper who was the sheriff) saw a light in the barn, and since the people who owned the barn were away, they came to explore, only to find my dad, all alone, huddled near a lantern to keep warm. They took him to their farm, and that is

where he spent the rest of his teenage years as a farm hand. Somewhere along the line, he learned to read and write and took some business courses. He was very proud of his penmanship. In his twenties he became a Jacquard textile mechanic and continued to do that until the 1950s, when he became a full-time Fuller Brush sales man.

Although my dad wrote a number of letters to England to find out about his mother and her whereabouts, he did not obtain any information. In fact, he was discouraged from pursuing the matter or even attempting to return to England. After my Dad passed away in 1973, my youngest brother David, who had just graduated in Civil Engineering from the University of Waterloo, travelled to Europe and England. There he discovered some important documents, including the birth certificate of Leslie Henry Baden Powell Fielding. Now we had the names of Leslie's mother and father. But why didn't he know anything about his father?

A short time after that, my wife, Dianne, and I discovered a booklet titled *The Camera and Dr. Barnardo*. We read that Barnardo took photos of all the children who came into his care. With this in mind, we wrote to the Barnardo Homes to ask if they had a photograph of Leslie Fielding. Of course, none of us had ever seen a picture of Dad as a child – maybe he hadn't either, and perhaps such a thing never existed. From the reply we learned a lot more.



Leslie Henry Baden Fielding

Continued on page 2

DISCOVERING THE STORY OF FATHER....continued from pg 1

We learned that Dad was not a Barnardo child but was sent to Canada as an "Annie Macpherson home child." We now knew exactly when he went into the workhouse and the orphanage and when he was shipped to Canada. What we didn't know was how he and his mother were brought to this unfortunate state.

Some years ago my brother-in-law, Peter Fuller, who lives in Kelowna, B.C., posted a family tree on his website. Mark Montgomery, an Australian cousin who we did not know existed, happened also to be working on his family tree when he came across our Fielding family tree. After some brilliant sleuthing using the 1901 British census, Mark made a connection that we would never have suspected. Mark's grandfather on his mother's side was Leslie Henry Baden Powell Fielding's older brother, Herbert Henry Fielding Junior. Mark contacted Peter and asked why he didn't have any siblings listed for Leslie. We have now learned that Leslie had six siblings and that he was the baby of the family of Eliza and Herbert Henry Fielding.

But now the big question was: why didn't Leslie know about his brothers and sisters? And why didn't they know about him?

Contact with England

Through Mark Montgomery, we made contact with a British cousin, Eileen, the daughter of Hilda, Dad's oldest sister. Eileen is 90 years old but in amazingly good health and sharp as a tack. We also made contact with her daughter Linda who, through email, sent us our first photo of our grandfather Herbert Henry Fielding and photos of some of Dad's siblings. We decided that we had to travel to England to meet these long-lost relatives. My brother Bob, his wife Ann, myself, and Dianne made the trip. While in Britain we met not only cousin Eileen and her family but also cousin Ruth, the daughter of Dad's brother John. So it turns out I had an Uncle John, as Ruth reminded me when I introduced myself at her door as John Fielding: "Yes, but you are not the original."

Eileen told us, and the story was confirmed by Ruth, how their and my grandmother, Eliza, whom they had never met, was an alcoholic. She would send her eldest daughters out to get beer from the pub, and her husband, Herbert Henry, would not tolerate this. As a result, he left Eliza with six children and pregnant with a seventh.

We have subsequently learned through Cousin Mark's research using the 1901 British Census that Grandfather Herbert Henry left his family and went to live with his younger



Herbert Henry Fielding

brother in London, while Eliza was living in the family home in Southwick, Sussex, with three of her children, Violet, Lucy, and two-week-old Leslie (who did not have a name at this point). Two children, Hilda and Herbert Henry Jr., were living with their Grandfather Thomas Fielding. That leaves two children, Daisy and John, then unaccounted for. Perhaps they were placed in an orphanage. Eliza at some point placed Violet and Lucy in an orphanage and took youngest child, Leslie, and left to go live with a relative. It seems that none of the children had any memory of Leslie, and he was never mentioned to the children of Leslie's siblings.

How Eliza and Leslie lived between 1901 and 27th December 1912 when they entered the Hackney Workhouse is difficult to image. Although we know they shifted from "pillar to post," what Leslie's early childhood must have been like we can only speculate. We know he spent little if any time in school. He told

me that the last few days before they went into the workhouse were spent on the street and sleeping in a culvert. He also said his mother had a very bad cold. Undoubtedly conditions must have been terrible for them to enter a workhouse two days after Christmas Day.

Conclusion

Although my father must have felt some pride in the achievements of his many children, never, to my knowledge, was he able to express that. Nor, as with most men of that generation, was he effusive in showing his love. However, in discussions with some of my brothers and sisters, it was easy to recall many happy times. Our dad had enjoyed singing, family get-togethers, and times of celebration, such as Christmas. He did suffer bouts of depression throughout his life, and in his mid-fifties went to work only infrequently. It was a sad state for a man whose whole life had been a struggle, first in childhood and then as

an adult, trying to provide for such a large family. Was his childhood so horrific that it caused his depression in adulthood? Would he have been better off if he had not been sent to Canada? Would he have felt differently if he had known about his brothers and sisters and been able to share some filial bond with them? If he had learned what we know now, would it have made a difference?

These are unanswerable questions, but by discovering our Dad's past, we are better able to understand him and perhaps ourselves.



Leslie Henry Baden Fielding and his family c1968



The Centennial of the Halifax Explosion

A British Home Child Connection

By Lori Oschefski

The Halifax Harbour, located on the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia Canada, is one of the deepest ice free harbours in North America. Many British Home Children arrived in Canada through the Pier 2 immigration shed. Pier 21 replaced Pier 2 as Canada's immigration shed in 1928.

In 1917, the population of Halifax had swollen to over 60,000 people, partially due to a transient population resulting from the War. Pier 2 was a busy war time port through which thousands of troops passed, either on their way to war or on their way home. Over ten thousand British Home Children served in the Canadian Army, many going to war through the same port they had arrived at as children.

Comprising about 10% of Halifax's population were soldiers. Some were stationed there to protect the town, but many were part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force waiting to be shipped overseas, including some 600 medical troops. On 6 December 1917, these soldiers faced an ordeal which profoundly tested their skills.

One hundred years ago, on 6 December 1917, at 8:43 a.m., the SS Imo, a passenger steam ship under charter to the Belgium Relief Commission, and the SS Mont-Blanc, a French munitions vessel, collided in the harbour. The Mont-Blanc was fully loaded with 2,900 tons of explosives bound for the battlefields of the First World War. It was entering the harbour when it encountered the Imo, moving at a very rapid pace out of the harbour. The Imo was empty, on it's way to New York to load cargo. The Imo slammed into the Mont-Blanc and when the ships reversed to disengage with each other, it created sparks which ignited a fire aboard the Mont-Blanc. Horrifically, the burning ship drifted down the harbour before crashing into Pier 6. A series of smaller explosions were followed by a catastrophic explosion at 9:04 a.m. that levelled the Richmond

District in the North end of Halifax. The explosion cause a massive nine foot high tsunami swamping ships, tossing them up on the shores, sweeping people off the piers and sending waist high water through the streets on both sides of the harbour. The explosion caused an earth quake and sent lethal molten shards of the remnants of the Mont-Blanc, blasting through the city. A black oily rain poured down on the city for nearly 20 minutes. Receding waters from the tsunami dragged victims out to sea. Almost 2,000 people died, another 9,000 were maimed or blinded, and more than 25,000 were left without shelter. Hundreds of victims, just simply disappeared, never to be identified. The entire city of Halifax went silent in the instant of the blast, unable to communicate with any outside regions. Many children were injured and over 500 children killed. The explosion was one of the largest human made explosions ever, prior to the detonation of the first atomic bombs in 1945. To add to the catastrophe the region was blanketed in a heavy snow storm impeding the arrival of rescue workers, many from Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Men aboard a train coming in from Boston had to shovel the tracks so that the train, stuck in a massive drift, could make its way to Halifax - an arduous, difficult thirty hour journey.



Frances Preece

The Halifax Relief Commission was set up by the Federal Government that very same day, to provide emergency relief to the victims. One child they took special care of was a 13 year old domestic servant, Frances Preece. Frances and her sister Florence were British Home Children brought to Canada through the Middlemore Homes. Their father had remarried after their mother's death, his new wife, not wanting the children, forced her husband to relinquish the children to care. They had arrived in Nova Scotia in 1914, just a few years before the explosion. In fact, the Middlemore Receiving Home that would have processed the girls for work, sustained damage in the explosion. Frances, working for a family on North Street, lost an eye in the explosion. Glass shards had embedded in her eye. The doctors removed her eye and replaced it with an artificial glass

eye. About 250 such operations were performed on victims. An estimated one in fifty people in Halifax had resulting damage to their vision. Coupled with the eye injuries in the First World War this lead to the formation of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

Francis was in hospital with her eye injury when the Halifax Relief Committee assumed the role of her guardian. They felt Frances should be allowed to finish her education, therefore they refused to surrender her to the Middlemore agency. By 1921 Frances was working with the family of David and Elizabeth Cameron in Halifax as a servant.

In 1924 she married Cecil Reginald Sherman. They started a family, raising five children together until tragedy touched her life again. In August of 1941, Frances was enjoying an evening out with friends at Paddy's Island when she lost her footing and plunged down a 25 foot embankment, breaking her back. Frances, totally paralysed in her lower extremities, lingered for nine months in hospital before passing away on 28 May 1942.

Sources

Blizzard of Glass: The Halifax Explosion of 1917 - By Sally M Walker

[EDITORIAL: Halifax explosion, tested by tragedy](#)

The Great Halifax Explosion: A World War I Story of Treachery, Tragedy: By John U. Bacon

The Halifax Explosion and the Royal Canadian Navy: Inquiry and Intrigue: By John Griffith Armstrong

The Halifax Explosion: Heroes and Survivors: By Joyce Glasner

Ancestry.com: Public Family Trees

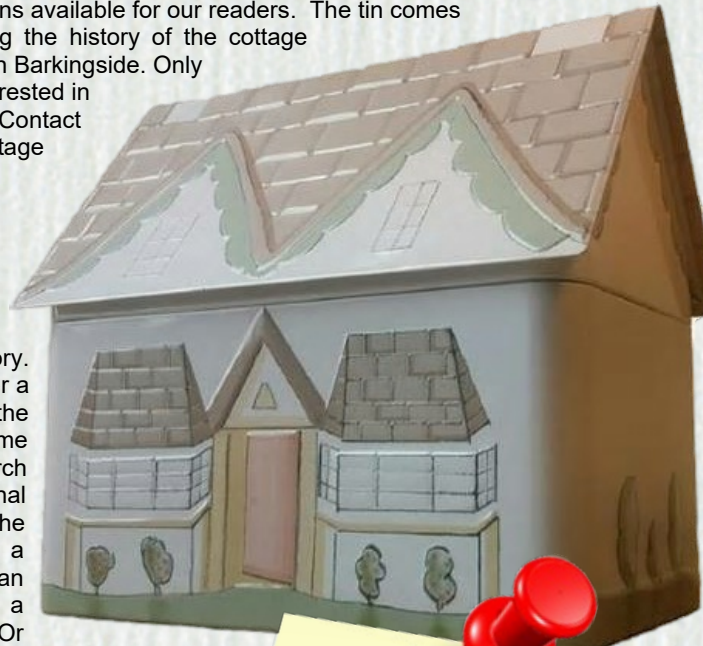
100th Anniversary of the Halifax Explosion



Barnardo's Cottage Collecting Boxes now in CANADA!

LIMITED
NUMBER
AVAILABLE

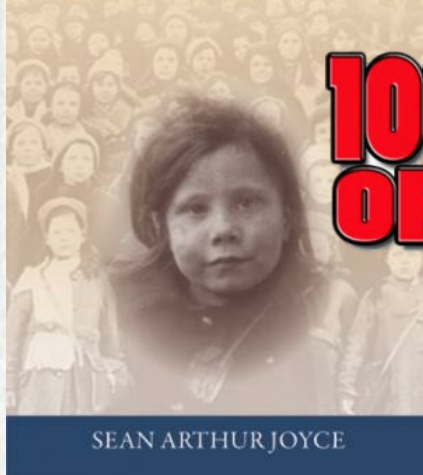
This is the 5th edition to Barnardo's iconic Cottage Collecting Boxes and was designed for their 150th anniversary. We have a small number of tins available for our readers. The tin comes boxed and includes the original 150th flyer detailing the history of the cottage collecting tins. The tin is designed after the cottages in Barkingsside. Only a handful remain, first come first serve. For those interested in the UK you can find the tins available on Ebay.co.uk. Contact us at info@britishhomechildren if interested in a Cottage Collecting Box. \$30 each shipping inside Canada.



Laying the Children's Ghosts to Rest

Laying the Children's Ghosts to Rest

Canada's Home Children in the West



10%
OFF

One of the best recently released historical books on the British Home Children, *Laying the Children's Ghosts to Rest* is a captivating blend of memoir and history. Author Sean Arthur Joyce offers the reader a personal, and highly readable narrative on the subject of Western Canada's 'home children'. With painstaking research and an ability to bring personal details to life, Joyce imbues the stories of 'home children' with a sense of redemption and human dignity. Joyce asks, "Are we a people who have lost our ghosts? Or are we in fact haunted by them, but can't remember their names?" as he raises the specter of thousands of child ghosts who inhabit our Canadian landscape.

Publisher Radiant Press is now offering "*Laying the Children's Ghosts to Rest*" [at a limited time 10% off.](#)

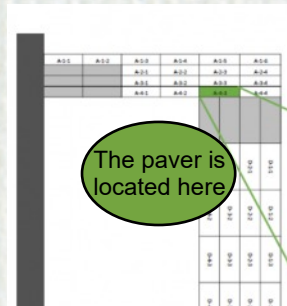
SNIPPETS

Canadian Museum of Nature

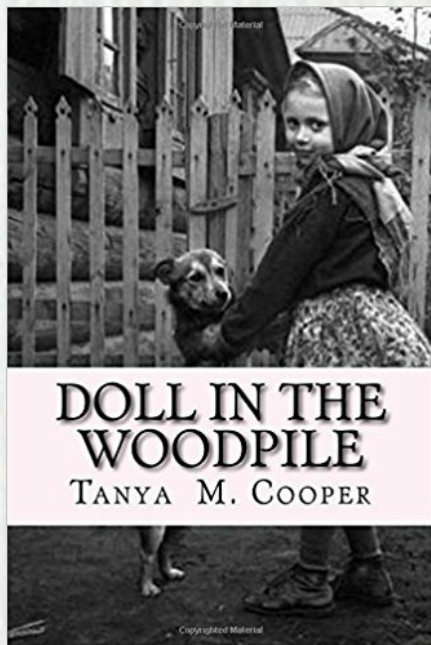
Steps across Canada
BHC Personalized Paver

LeeAnn Beer, administrator of our BHC Registry has sponsored a paving stone for the grounds of the Canadian Museum of Nature, located in Ottawa, Ontario, in their Landscapes of Canada Gardens. This outdoor exhibition space on the museum's property features about 60 native species of trees and plants (including grasses, sedges and mosses). They are species that are typically found in Canada's boreal forest, Arctic tundra and prairie grasslands.

This paver, inscribed with "Honouring Canada's British Home Children 1869-1939" was installed in the early fall. LeeAnn sponsored the stone in memory of her BHC Grandmother as they spent many hours together at this museum.



The paver's location is shown on the map above, off of McLeod and in the Arctic Tundra zone of the garden.



Doll in the Woodpile is new novel released by author Tanya Cooper. It is a true story of a young girl, Edith Farr, who is signed over to the Dr. Barnardo Institute by her destitute mother in England at the age of eight and sent to Canada in 1908 to become a child labourer in rural Ontario.

Tanya has now offered her book in a Good Reads Give Away contest. Visit the [Good Reads web site](#) for more information on her book and to enter this contest, closing on December 20th.



GIVEAWAY!

Park Lawn Monument 2017



Our BHC Park Lawn Monument
Dedicated to the lives of the 75
Children buried in this cemetery
And to all BHC who came
to Canada



75 roses laid, one for
each child, red for the children
White for the babies

A warm, beautiful day was gifted to us as we unveiled and dedicated our new BHC Monument in the Park Lawn Cemetery in Etobicoke, Ontario. The monument marks one of the two grave sites where the remains of 75 children rest, 58 Barnardo children and 17 babies of Barnardo girls.

This day was the culmination of 4 years of dedicated work, research and fund raising by the BHCARA members in a team lead by Lori Oschefski. The monument was designed by Bob Huggins of Orphan Boy Films.

The opening procession was led by piper Dan MacDonald, opening address by Lori Oschefski. Also speaking was Marjorie Kohli and Bob Huggins. Pastor Karen Stanton led the service. Music was provided by Marion Parsons and the Yonge Guns of Toronto. Spoken Word Poet Ian Keteuk recited a poem he wrote for these 75 children. Bob Wilson laid a wreath in memory of all our lost children.

John Jefkins read out the name of the 75 children as attendees placed roses for the children at the monument. While "Amazing Grace" was sung, Ms. Oschefski carried the roses for the children in the second plots to their graves.

This emotional service closed with a song written by Marion Parsons for these children, "Sleep in Peace Children" which was performed by the Yonge Guns.



CBC extensively covered this event. Segments were played on regional CBC TV stations across Canada on the Friday night leading up to the event. Friday morning MS. Oschefski was interviewed on CBC Metro Morning by Matt Galloway, who revealed he too is a BHC descendant! The Sunday [CBC The National](#) covered the event, marking the first time the BHC had been featured on our national news. This event was filmed for the upcoming documentary "A Barnardo Boy".

CBC Toronto's Mark Gollom published an article online about the British Home Children entitled "It's like they never existed: Toronto monument will honour mistreated British Home Children". The article, written after interviewing BHCARA CEO Lori Oschefski and BHC George Beardshaw, had been shared almost 18,000 times! [CLICK HERE](#) to read the article.



Bob Huggins, film producer
And designer of the monument -
An emotional address



John Sayers laying a
rose in memory of
one of the children



Lori Oschefski at the site
of the second group of plots



Spoken Word Poet
Ian Keteuk

Thank you!

Thank you to all who contributed funds, research, materials, participated and supported this project of recognition. A special thank you to Bob Huggins who designed this monument and oversaw its construction, to Barnardo's for their support, donation and for the research note provided for these children and to Video Producer Craig Chivers who was the driving force behind the CBC coverage. Photos © Megan Nicole Hill

Remembrance 2017 - Canada will Remember



Middle Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia



Once again it is heartwarming to see our BHC in Service remembered across Canada with many wreaths laid on Remembrance Day, 11 Nov 2017. This year, through the efforts of the BHCARA and its members, we have successfully lobbied Veteran's Affairs Canada to formally recognize the service of the BHC as an individual group of Canadians who served. This four year campaign came to fruition after CEO Lori Oschefska enlisted the help of Barrie-Innisfil MP John Brassard. Mr. Brassard is also the Official Opposition Critic for Veterans Affairs. Ms. Oschefska had met Mr. Brassard at a fund raising dinner late last year, discussing with him the unrecognized service of the BHC. In June of 2017, Mr. Brassard issued a [statement of support in the House of Commons](#) recognizing the service of the BHC. Following this statement, Ms. Oschefska followed up with a call to VAC, which lead to finally being put in touch with the Commemorations office in Charlottetown Prince Edward Island. Mr. Brassard also followed up with a call to the Charlottetown office. In September VAC released the above posting for "Canada Remembers" on the social media, marking their first public acknowledgement of the BHC. This posting received hundreds of responses in support. Two weeks after this posting, Ms. Oschefska received a phone call from the Charlottetown office, confirming the VAC will be moving forward with official recognition. In the upcoming months, the BHC should appear on their web site. Many thanks to all members who sent in e-mails of support when asked. Special thanks to Dawn Hueston, who has also tirelessly campaigned for this recognition. Together we stand!



Agassiz Cenotaph, British Columbia
Sponsor and Bearer: Carol Bateman

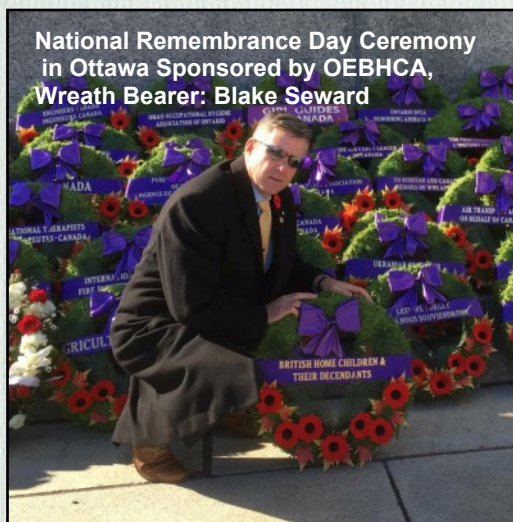


Tom Doherty
Red Lake, Ontario Branch 102
Remembrance Day Service



Carolyn MacIsaac
Pictou County,
Nova Scotia

Loretta Farquhar & Family
Kelowna, British Columbia



National Remembrance Day Ceremony
in Ottawa Sponsored by OEBHCA,
Wreath Bearer: Blake Seward



Patricia Allan
St. George Cenotaph
Liverpool, England



Hazel Perrier
Claresholm, Alberta

All My Worldly Goods

Maggie Wheeler

The Seaway Valley's Queen of Crime returns with a sweeping tale of generational secrets and murder



When Farran Mackenzie begins a genealogical search into her grandmother Evian's past, she finds more questions than answers buried in a murky chapter of Canadian history: the British Home Children. A visit from an unexpected family connection shines a new light on Evian's sudden death in the 1950s, suggesting a disturbing truth. When death arrives on the doorstep, Farran must use all her research skills to piece the past together—from the streets of WWI England, to rural post-war Ontario, to Depression-era Lost Villages and the origins of the St. Lawrence Seaway—before murder strikes again in real time.

As the Seaway Valley's Queen of Crime, Maggie Wheeler has spent over 15 years showcasing the social, cultural and psychological impact of the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project on Canadians affected. She is the author of the best-selling "Lost Villages" historical murder mystery series, which has garnered a nomination for the Ontario Premier's Awards for the Arts, an Ontario Provincial Hansard, and the "people's choice" Seeker's Award for *Literary Artist of the Year 2013*. The series has been used to teach English and history from intermediate to post-secondary levels in Eastern Ontario and Upper New York State. In January of 2017, Maggie was named Ottawa's Favourite Author (female) by FACES Magazine.

With the focus on British Home Child history, the new novel has a bit of a departure for her fans.

"*All My Worldly Goods* picks up where the fourth novel left off some years ago," Wheeler explains, "but while the Seaway history still figures in this, my heroine Farran Mackenzie must go farther back in time to find out her grandmother's history as a British Home Child (BHC) as part of solving her possible murder."

For Wheeler, the connection to the BHC history is personal, as her own grandmother came to Canada with Dr. Barnardo's as part of Great Britain's emigration program that spanned decades, from 1869 to 1939.

"My family really started digging into the BHC history about three years ago," explains Wheeler, "because, as with most BHC descendants, we knew next to nothing about it or my grandmother's history. It's been a journey. I wanted to explore and showcase the history through my writing. Happily, I was able to make it part of my Lost Villages mystery series."

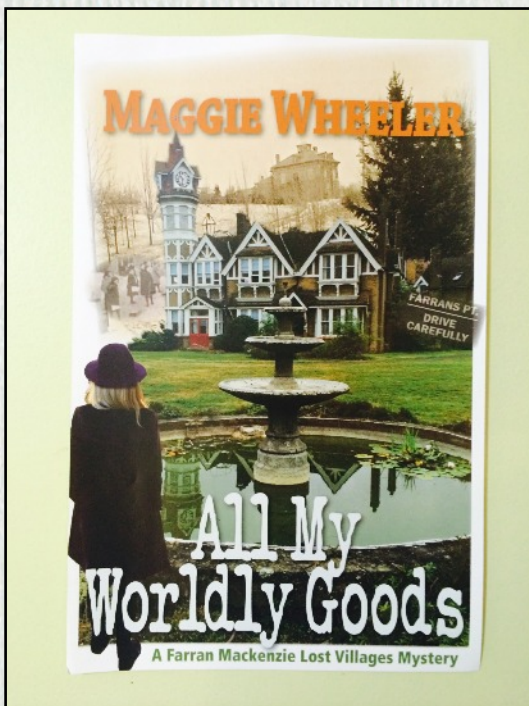
The Canada Council for the Arts supplied a grant for Wheeler's writing and research of the new novel, including a trip to England to speak with Barnardo Archive staff and tour the remains of the Girls' Village in Barkingside, London. She says the Council's generous support is part of the increased awareness at the federal level for this part of our nation's history.

"This year, Canada marks 150 years of nationhood," says Wheeler. "The 100,000 British Home Children who came to Canada and the over 5 million Canadians who are their descendants are definitely part of that story. "It's also," she adds with a smile, "another great era in Canadian history to create a murder."

**To order copies, contact Burnstown Publishing House
at www.burnstownpublishing.com.**

**To order autographed copies or find out more, see
www.maggiewheeler.com.**

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Retail \$25.00



In Remembrance and Reconciliation – a message from ALPHA Education

By Chen Chen, VP External: McMaster ALPHA chapter

"In war, whichever side may call itself the victor, there are no winners, but all are losers." -Neville Chamberlain

Yet, all should not have to be consumed with only what they have lost. To be remembered and to be supported are two simple-sounding actions which may make a world of difference: an important step of a healing process and a reminder that good things can follow tragedy. For the survivors of fateful days in World War II such as the Nanjing Massacre or the Bataan Death March, their experiences can be the most pivotal and traumatic times of their lives. Unfortunately, for so many, all that is known about these events is that the names sound awful. That is why the mission of ALPHA Education is to foster awareness of events of World War II in Asia, an often overlooked aspect of a tragic period.

ALPHA Education is an educational, non-profit, and registered charity in Canada that promotes critical investigation of historical events, in the interest of furthering the values of justice, peace, and reconciliation, both for survivors of the past and for those who shape the historical narratives of the present and future. We achieve this mission through education and advocacy initiatives. Along the direction of education and advocacy, ALPHA Education has chapters in several universities across Canada, including the University of Toronto, Western, Waterloo, and McMaster. We firmly believe in the power of fostering knowledge among the next generation of leaders, and that allowing youth to inspire their peers is one of the best avenues to do so. We achieve this by facilitating events such as the Butterfly Effect case competition and Comfort Women visual art and photography exhibit which are planned for McMaster University in February and March, 2018.

Like many members of the BHCARA community, the authors of the piece you are reading did not personally experience the events whose recognition we are advocating for. However, for survivors: to be labeled liars, to be denied the opportunity for reconciliation, and to be forgotten may sting as much as the memory of the event itself. Therefore, although we cannot be empathetic, we vow to not only be sympathetic, but to actively progress away from apathy and towards a future of fair solutions and peaceful dialogue. The stories of British Home Children spoke to us as well, and we hope to share knowledge and develop cross-cultural understanding with the community. We understand how much the past still matters, and we ask to walk alongside each other on this journey of seeking reconciliation and justice.

There are no winners in wars past, but we can be winners by preventing wars of tomorrow.

We would love to see members of the BHCARA community at our events, just as we would like to support yours! If you have any questions about ALPHA Education, the McMaster ALPHA Chapter, and our events, send us an email at macalpha@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page: ALPHA Education – McMaster Chapter.

BHCARA Student Achievement Award

For outstanding achievement in furthering the awareness of the
British Home Children's story within the Canadian education system

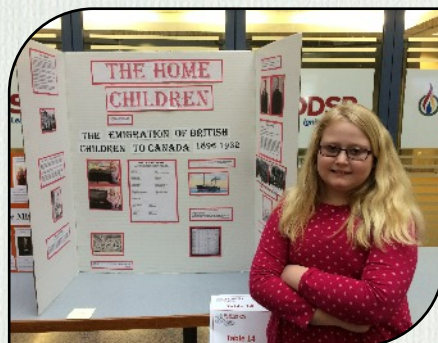
2015



Our 2015 award went to Chen Chen, a Grade 12 student. The Richmond Hill Public Library contacted me asking if I could assist a Grade 11 student with an essay she was doing on British Home Children in York County. Chen contacted me straight away, her enthusiasm for learning all she can about the British Home Children very clear. Chen joined our Facebook group to work with members and study their BHC family members. She purchased and read six books on the BHC, donating them to her school when done. Chen brought the story of the BHC to the heads of her school's History and Social Studies Department to ensure the story of the BHC would continue to be told.

We wish Chen all the best in her studies at University and look forward to participating in a joint event with her in 2018!

Each year the BHCARA presents an award to a student who we feel have given exceptional contributions in bringing the story of our BHC to our schools. In 2015 we were pleased to present the award to Chen Chen, the author of the above article. We are equally as thrilled to continue our association with Chen. We are currently planning on a 2018 dual event in Hamilton with Chen and the BHCARA, highlighting the work of both.



2017
Student Achievement
Award

We are thrilled to announce our 2017 Student Achievement Award Recipient is Gracy Lake. Gracy is the Great Granddaughter of BHC Walter Albert Kidman. She put together an exhibit on the BHC for the Durham Heritage Fair and won the Young Citizen Award. Gracy was asked to submit a short film about her Great Grandfather to Canada's History For Kids web site. It can be viewed at www.canadashistory.ca. As a result of Gracy's work, teachers and staff at her school have become aware of this important story. Several students and teachers recognized the story as one that involved their own families. One teacher came to her to thank her because they discovered, as a result of Gracy's work, that they too had relatives that were BHC.

Gracy was on hand with her exhibit at our Canada 150 BHC Family Reunion event held in Kitchener, Ontario in July. Congratulations Gracy!!

An Interview with John Middlemore: Part 2

ANOTHER MIDDLEMORE INTERVIEW

By Ann Griffin

[Click here to read Part 1](#)
Published in our
Autumn 2017 Newsletter

It is 1910, and I'm back in the past again. Sir John Middlemore is now a Member of Parliament, and there is much debate about building up the nation's navy and army, with the threat of war in Europe looming. Although I wish to interview him, I am unable to do so. He's an elderly man, no longer involved in the day-to-day operations of Middlemore Homes. Instead, he has referred me to George Jackson, who is now in charge.

Mr. Jackson believes I am from Halifax, and wish to speak about the children's receiving home and placements in Nova Scotia. He welcomes me politely, although he seems distracted.

I elect not to tell him I am from the future, at least not yet.

"Mr. Jackson," I begin, "when and how did you become involved with Middlemore Homes?"

"I began working with Sir John in 1883 as his clerk at the home. As time went by, he gave me more and more responsibilities, and eventually it was I who took the children to Canada. I'm still taking them, actually. To give Sir John time to attend to his duties in Parliament, you understand."

I nod. "Is it true the children are going to Halifax now, instead of Ontario?"

"Yes. We shifted our operations permanently to Halifax in 1893. It was a huge financial savings, nearly two hundred pounds per child. At first, we worked with Mrs. Emma Stirling. Do you know her?"

"Not personally, but I know of her."

"Indeed. From Halifax, we took most of the children to Fredericton, where they were placed with their adoptive families. That trip to Fredericton was the worst part of the journey."

"How is the program working now?"

He leans back in his chair, raises his hands, and gives me a deprecating smile.

"Marvellously well, thank you! We constantly receive letters from our children, both boys and girls, about how happy they are in their new homes. I can't tell you how many of the boys from the most depraved neighbourhoods here in Birmingham, are doing well in Canada. Tradesmen, farmers, even a few who managed to become lawyers and teachers. We are very pleased."

I write a few notes. "And the girls?"

"Many are married, and have children by now. We deem the program an unqualified success."

I purse my lips and scribble some more. "Unqualified? It's hard to imagine there haven't been some problems. Children running away, for instance."

Jackson presses his lips together. "Runaways are quite common on the farms, I'm afraid. If we can find them, we return them to their placement, or place them in another home, but sometimes they just disappear."

"What are the children's complaints?"

He leans forward, his elbows on his thighs. "Mostly not enough pay. They see other workers on the farm making thrice what they make, and although they are young lads, they expect to be paid the same." He shakes his head slowly. "They don't understand, they are just children."

I frown, just a little, as though considering the idea for the first time. "But surely, if they do a man's work, they deserve a man's wages. Is it possible the farmers are taking advantage of them for cheap labour?"

Jackson raises his eyebrows. "You're not the first one to suggest this. But in reality, consider what would have happened if they had not been sent to Canada. Most would be dead, or drunkards, or in jail by now. They should be grateful."

I'm slowly seething inside. But it's important not to upset him. I take a deep breath and grit my teeth.

"Mr. Jackson, I understand your point of view, but from the child's perspective, he sees he has been taken from the only family he knows, and put with a family that views him only for what he can do. My guess is, there's a fair bit of resentment."

"They are the small minority, Mrs. Griffin, very small."

Yet I notice he is perspiring. I press him still more.

"Mr. Jackson, is it your belief that the children you send overseas are inferior in breeding to children from better homes?"

"Of course. Breeding is everything."

"Really." My tone indicates skepticism. I lean forward ever so slightly. "I understand there have been cases of severe neglect, even cruelty, and some of the girls were molested by their foster fathers. How do you explain that?"

He twists in his chair and scratches the back of his head. "I cannot expect a woman such as yourself to understand what we go through. Certainly, there are some problems. We move a child when the placement is unsatisfactory. As to the girls, well, men will be men."

I can feel my face get red. I clench my fists, and it takes all my self-control not to shout and hit him in his sanctimonious face. I make a show of writing to give myself time to calm down. I must change the topic, or I will explode.

"Mr. Jackson, I disagree. However, I am not here to argue with you. May I ask how well you are working with the Halifax Children's Aid Society? It was formed five years ago, correct?"

Jackson exhaled quickly. "Yes, in '05. Their goal is to visit the children in their placements, but that's not easy. Getting around is still difficult in the rural areas."



"I believe they uncovered some cases of child cruelty, did they not? How were those resolved?"

"The child was re-settled, but the inspector was never convinced the incident actually took place."

"Why not?"

"The farmer denied it, along with his entire family. So, it was the child's word against theirs."

"And naturally, the child was not believed." I grind my teeth. "Who is in charge of your home there now?"

"Frank Gerow, a fine man, was with us until 06, but Sterling King, who's in place now, is giving us no end of trouble."

"Don't worry, he'll be gone in a few years," I say, before I realize what I've done.

Jackson looks at me quizzically. "How do you know that?"

I backtrack. "Just an assumption. You'll find a way to get rid of poor staff. Just keep your eyes open for a man named Ray. He lives there, and he has a good reputation."

"That's right, you're from Halifax, aren't you? Perhaps you have some observations that might assist me in my work?"

I lean forward, my hands on my knees. "Mr. Jackson, would you say the atmosphere in Europe right now is leaning towards war?"

"I regret to say, I believe so."

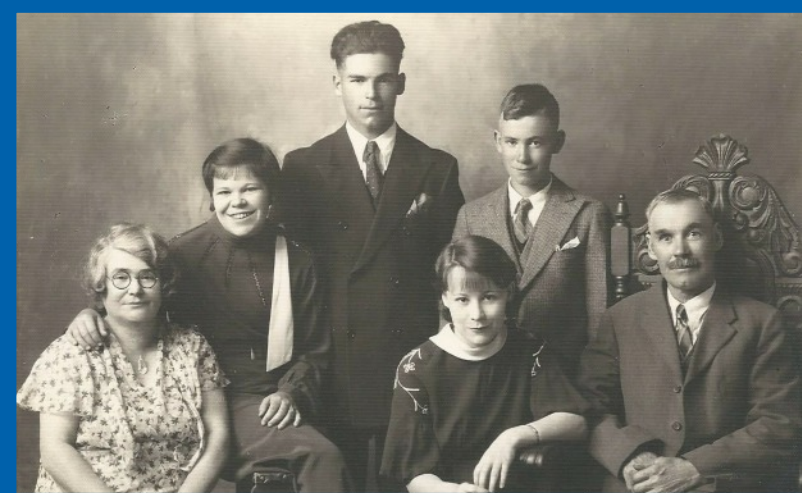
"Well, many of the children from Middlemore who have grown up in Canada, will enlist when the time comes. Some will return to England, looking for their families. They will acquit themselves honourably, and many will give their lives in the coming war. But you should prepare for a ban on child immigration for the duration, and for opinions to change afterwards. Canada is not the same country it was forty years ago. It is growing rapidly in both size and population, and while there will always be a need for workers, programs such as Middlemore will gradually shrink, and, eventually, cease."

He stares at me strangely. "You sounded more like a prophet when you said that." His voice shakes.. "Who are you, really?"

"You're not going to believe me, but I am here from the future, from 2017. I am the granddaughter of one of your immigrant children."



PERCY TOWNSEND
Percy Townsend arrived in 1909 at 11 years old through Middlemore



Ann's grandparents and their children. Walter Laws, the BHC is on the right. Ann's mother, Letitia Laws, is second from left.

Christmas. So, despite your good intentions, Mr. Jackson, many, many children were terribly harmed by your program and all the others like it. Thrown into families that had no desire to treat them as their own. Torn from their own families, poor as they might have been. Left to fend for themselves in the Canadian wilderness!" I realize I am shouting.

I stop. My breathing is ragged.

"I must ask you to leave, Mrs. Griffin. We have a good program here. Many, many children write to us with gratitude for all we have done for them." He stands and opens the door. I nod, thank him for his time, and leave, my heart still pounding.

It is impossible to change the past, I realize. I cannot change people's attitudes from a hundred years ago. As I walk down the street, waiting for the time machine to return me to 2017, it occurs to me that Middlemore, Jackson, and their contemporaries, all believed they were doing good Christian work. What are we doing now, in the twenty-first century, that future generations will view with horror? Will it be international adoptions? Our foster care system? Treatment of the homeless? Or something else?

Our hands may not be so clean, after all. But we can only work with our current knowledge, and do our best to treat others with kindness, compassion, and mercy.

Ann Griffin, a BHC descendant, is a writer focusing on historical fiction. This fictional interview contains facts about Middlemore's emigration program. The conversation, obviously, is Ann's invention. Ann divides her time between Mesa, Arizona and Toronto, Ontario, and has begun her second novel on British Home Children. When not writing, she can be found on the golf course, spending time with grandchildren, or walking her Old English Sheepdog. Her first novel, Another Ocean to Cross, is due out in 2018. Her website is <http://www.anngriffinwriter.com>

The main source for this article is *Great Canadian Expectations: The Middlemore Experience* by Patricia Roberts Pichette, 2016, Global Heritage Press. Additional sources include *The Little Immigrants* by Kenneth Bagnell, 1980, MacMillan of Canada, *New Lives for Old* by Roger Kershaw and Janet Sacks, 2008, The National Archives, and *The Golden Bridge* by Marjorie Kohli, 2003, Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc. All rights reserved.



So why was my British Home Child such a surprise?

..... Reflections on what make history from the other side of the Atlantic

By Andrew Simpson: Author, Historian & Researcher

Now when you are engaged in any historical research or have a favourite period from the past it is easy to live in a bubble quite oblivious to all the other events, and people that make up the sweep of history.

And I doubt that it can be any other way, after all history is big, indeed it is very big, which means that all of us will only have a vague idea of the bits that don't involve or interest us.

So you either adopt the broad brush approach and try and get a sense of the wider picture or burrow down deep into a period, a country or a historical problem.

The first offers a context but will often end up being shallow, while the second may have the merit of depth but operates in isolation from the rest of history.

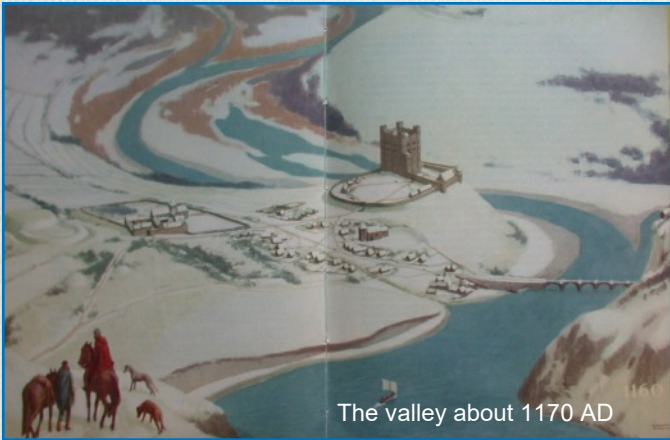
I was taught the broad sweep, starting with dinosaurs and the Stone Age and then moving effortlessly through the Romans, assorted "uncultured invaders" through to the Renaissance, and Reformation and into the modern world. It wasn't just Eurocentric it was completely British and in fact unrepentantly English and focused on the achievements of men rather than women, and by and large was taught from top down.

I knew all about the English Kings, as well as a few Queens, a handful of generals, some explorers and the odd scientist. There were some stories about Scotland, Wales and Ireland but only as a backdrop to English invasions.

Added to which when we came across Africa, Asia and the America's it was introduced as the Age of Discovery. The story of how Cabot, Columbus and Magellan amongst others discovered these new places never included the obvious observation that all of this was a surprise to the indigenous inhabitants who never though they were lost and were not at all grateful that a bunch of Europeans had happened on them. Especially as many had longer and more distinguished histories than us and would experience conquest and exploitation, as well as slavery and a loss of their own culture at the hands of the "discoverers".

Not only was it a rather limited historical perspective but it meant that if you were away for a lesson or looked out of the window you missed a significant chunk of the past.

By contrast my children were taught much more "in depth" studies which was fine for creating an understanding of an event but left them with no historic overview and no idea whether the Vikings came after the Romans and left them ignorant of the cultural impact of the Renaissance and Reformation on the works of Shakespeare, the Metaphysical poets or even the speeches of Gladstone, Disraeli and Dr King.



more attention, but it is understandable given that the Australian migrations didn't stop until the 1970s.

And that in turn means that there are many more Australian BHC still alive who can talk directly to camera which always will make for good television.

Their story has also been told in the excellent book Empty Cradles by Margaret Humphreys which became the film Oranges and Sunshine and led to the creation of the Child Migrants Trust which was established in 1987.*

To which we can add the public apologies for those migrations made by the Prime Ministers of Australia and Britain and references during the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse which have shone a light on the policy.**

But the growth of social media sites devoted to BHC and in particular this one has begun to have an impact in Britain, added to which the growing number of Canadian BHC publications are becoming better known.



All of which means that there are generations of people in this country whose historical knowledge is limited and rests on vague episodes which have been topped up by the great epic films from Birth of a Nation to Cleopatra and Brave Heart.

With this as a backdrop it is not surprising that the story of British Home Children is not widely known.

There are few books published in Britain on the subject and just a handful of documentaries, pretty much all of which focus on the experiences of young people sent to Australia.

There are those in Canada that feel a bit raw that Australia is singled out for



Unlike some I don't see a conspiracy theory here to hide the story only an exercise in neglect which until recently missed out the history of women, that of the working class and of ethnic groups. It is less that they have been airbrushed out and more that those who wrote our history regarded them as unimportant, fit only for a walk on part as a "spear holder, nanny or victim".

At which point I will succumb to a piece of outrageous self promotion and refer to the blog which to date has carried 193 stories on BHC.

There are also 116 articles on the Manchester and Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges which is now the Together Trust and migrated young people from 1870 to 1916.

Regular readers will know that I am writing a book on the history of the Trust with their archivist to coincide with the 150 anniversary of the charities creation which will be in 2020.

The charity has introduced a search engine on their website which will help people see if their ancestors were ever in one of our Manchester homes and by extension were migrated. This will sit beside the existing practice of assisting those who think a family member was a BHC.

So BHC may slowly be coming out of the shadows for a British audience and one day take its rightful place in the school curriculum along with Julius Caesar, Elizabeth I and the Battle of Britain.

We shall see.

Credits

Pictures; Boudicca, J.C.B. Knight, from People in History, R.J. Unstead, Volume one, The valley about 1170 AD, from A Valley Grows Up E. Osmond, O.U.P. 1953, the New Model Army, from The Pictorial History Book, & Co, Ltd Sampson Low, Marston & Co, Ltd, 1955

* It addresses the issues surrounding the deportation of children from Britain. In the post-war period, child migrants as young as three were shipped to Canada, New Zealand, the former Rhodesia and Australia, a practice that continued as late as 1970.

<http://www.childmigrantstrust.com/>

**Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse,
<https://www.iicsa.org.uk/>

***Chorltonhistory.blogspot,
<https://chorltonhistory.blogspot.co.uk/>

*****Were your ancestors in one of our homes?
[http://togethertrustarchive.blogspot.co.uk/2017/10/were-your-ancestors-in-one-of-our-homes_13.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+TogetherTrustArchive-GettingDownAndDusty+\(Together+Trust+Archive+-+getting+down+and+dusty!\)](http://togethertrustarchive.blogspot.co.uk/2017/10/were-your-ancestors-in-one-of-our-homes_13.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+TogetherTrustArchive-GettingDownAndDusty+(Together+Trust+Archive+-+getting+down+and+dusty!))

We must have first got to know each other a decade or so ago and in that time I have seen the project grow and deepen, sustained by Lori's determination and hard work.

And as BHC has matured and become a serious area of study, the web site she has established has reflected that change.

At which point I should include a serious image to accompany the text drawn from the history of British Home Children, but its Christmas and instead I included the Lemon Man, because we should all have a smile every day.

Andrew

Andrew Simpson

Stories, people and events

Click here to visit
Andrew's Blog

Thank You!

The BHCARA
extends its
gratitude to
Andrew

Simpson who

has been writing outstanding
articles for our newsletters for
three years now.

LETTER TO THE Editor



Now because I write for the newsletter I do get a sneaky preview before publication, which has allowed me to see in advance of Father Christmas the comment by Lori on my contributions over the last three years.

I am of course very appreciative and feel moved to add that it has been a pleasure to have had the opportunity to write for Canada.

But more than that I value having been part of Lori's work to take the story of British Home Children to a wider audience, and in the process help many people like me who were making their way through the history of the scheme.



The BHCARA wishes all our members a very Merry Christmas and all the best in the New Year. We thank you all once again for your support and help in making 2017 an outstanding year for our British Home Children.

Lori Oschefski, CEO BHCARA