

British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association August 2014 Newsletter

Written by Sandra Joyce & Lori Oschefski



Karen Mahoney (BHCARA), Lori Oschefski (BHCARA), Chris Bagley (Black Creek), Don Cherry, Glenna Walkden (BHCARA), Jennifer Harrington (Black Creek), Sandra Joyce (BHCARA) and Steve Fortnum (Living City Foundation)

BHCARA News

July 28th 2014:

On July 28th the BHCARA in partnership with the Black Creek Pioneer Village (BCPV) in Toronto held a First World War Commemoration Service for the BHC who served and who perished in the war. The service, attended by many, was a fitting tribute to our BHC who served and those who lost their lives in the war. Among the honoured guest speakers was Don Cherry CBC Commentator for Hockey Night in Canada and descendant of British Home Child Richard Palamountain. Richard served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the First World War.

BCPV Exhibit:

The BHC exhibit at Black Creek was officially opened the afternoon of July 28. BCPV and the Living City Foundation held a lovely reception for the opening.

With thanks to Mr. Cherry's participation and interest in our BHC, news reports of both these events have been published across Canada.

Upcoming events

- August 14 Probus Stouffville
- August 21 Probus Etobicoke
- August 22 Ontario Genealogical Society Scottish Festival
- August 23 Church of the Latter Day Saints

New book release

Promises of Home, a collection of British Home Children stories, is now available for purchase. Among the wonderful stories in this book, by Rose McCormick Brandon, are the stories of Robert Joyce, Sandra's father and Olive Cheesman, Lori's mother. Rose will be hosting an open mic at the September 28 BHC Day Celebration at BCPV. Promises of Home can be purchased at: <http://writingfromtheheart.webs.com/apps/webstore/>

Links for photos and news:

Photos:

<http://canadianbritishhomechildren.weebly.com/bhc-functions.html>

News articles:

<http://www.insidetoronto.com/news-story/4726773-forgotten-british-home-children-finally-remembered-at-pioneer-village/>

<http://www.bramptonguardian.com/news-story/4723917-british-home-children-war-veterans-honoured/>

Videos:

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/video/don-cherry-honours-war-british-201500833.html>

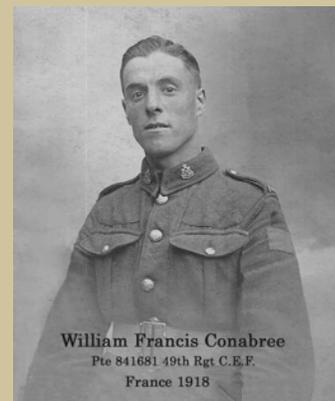
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgXOTY5QHBQ>

British Home Child Day:

September 28th at Black Creek Pioneer Village dinner package - limited seats: includes admission into the Village, all BHC events, parking and a three course meal. There will be entertainment at the dinner to culminate a wonderful British Home Child celebration Day. Tickets are \$40 and may be purchased by contacting our Secretary-Treasurer Glenna Smith-Walkden at: gwalkden@sympatico.ca

William Conabree

"When I went back to England with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces, I met some of my relatives. I did not tell them of my ill treatment on the farm, as I did not want them to feel bad about it. I just kept it to myself. My wife was a slave too, came to this country with the same organization at 8 years of age [1893]. She was put on a farm as a working hand. They never sent her to school. She did not know to read and write. She tells me she always worked in the field."



Pte William Francis Conabree, enlisted in March 1916.

This is an excerpt from a letter that was handwritten by Pte. Conabree and found amongst his wife's possessions when she passed away.

William Conabree was sent to Canada at the age of 14 by the Catholic Emigration Society. Via Montreal, he ended up in Bulger, Ontario in 1904. The boy he was sent to replace, who he knew very well from school in England, was so malnourished that William wondered if he survived the trip back to the organization. He wondered why they were sending him to the same fate, when it was so obvious the first boy had been so badly mistreated.

He stayed there for a year, having no way to get away. Even though William worked from dawn to sunset in the fields and was required to wash the floors and bake the bread, the 'lady' of the house kept a strap in the kitchen and had no qualms about using it.

Poor William, covered in lice, wearing the clothes discarded by the previous boy, was required to sleep on the kitchen sofa with the dog. He wanted to get away but had no money of his own, no writing paper or stamps and the farmer invoked the fear of the devil in him by promising him he would be horsewhipped to death if he ventured past the fence. By this time both his feet were frostbitten and were swollen and had sores on them.

Two inspectors visited him at this time. Both times it was evident how he was being treated, but the first one knew the family and did not submit a report and the farmer made William write a letter contradicting the second inspector's report. He finally decided to make his escape but was ordered back by the organization and sent to another farm where after a short while he was kicked and punched so badly he could hardly walk. The next day he limped all the way to Ottawa. From there, he worked for an elderly man, who treated him fairly, before marrying and enlisting.

During his stint with the C.E.F. as a stretcher-bearer, he was taken Prisoner of War and spend time in a German POW camp with Conn Smythe, future owner of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Used with permission of William's Great Grandson Gerry Lauzon