

British Home Children

Advocacy & Research Association

September 2020 Newsletter



By Lori Oschefski & Andrew Simpson

Guest Contributors: Lois Wilson, Dawn Sheppard, Student Doran Stephen,
Featuring the novel "The Tomorrow Country" by author Gail Hamilton



The Return of the Alfred R Williams Trunk to Family

By Lori Oschefski & Dawn Sheppard

In recent weeks, we have experienced a surge in BHC trunks and medals found and made available. Some are up at auction, some, like the Alfred Williams trunk, are given, at not cost, to families - if we can find them.

It is a wonderful experience and privileged to facilitate the return of this precious 1894 trunk to Alfred Rees Williams family. It is a rare early Dr. Barnardo trunk of solid wood, his name written in script on the front. The crazy thing is, the trunk was re-purposed into a fabric covered seating bench over 60 years ago, which remained with his placement family until now. It wasn't until this past month that the family looked under the fabric and found his name.

It was then that the Yearley family contacted the BHCARA asking for help to locating his family. This triggered a string of serendipitous discoveries which lead to the return of his trunk to family.

Our BHCARA search angels went to work, discovering that 12 year old [Alfred Rees Williams](#) has come to Canada in 1894 through the Dr. Barnardo's Homes. He was placed with the Yearley family in Crediton, Middlesex County, Ontario. They were good to Alfred, in later years he still considered them friends. Alfred married Rachel Ann Williamson in 1909. Alfred and Rachel did not have children, she tragically died in 1922. Alfred spent the next few years commuting from Windsor, Ontario to Detroit, USA for work. Eventually he settled in Detroit. However, tragedy struck again. While in Detroit, Alfred was fatally injured when he stepped in the path of a motor vehicle. His body was returned to London, Ontario where he was buried, with his wife, in the [Woodland Cemetery](#).

While researching Alfred, I happened upon a tree in Ancestry with him listed. Very few details but the name, Larry McIntosh, jumped out at me.
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Ups and Downs of Our Barnardo Boy John Ratheram

6 October 1890 - 2 October 1906

by Lois Wilson, New Zealand

This is the story of my Grandmother's youngest brother who was sent to Canada from England with the HOME CHILDREN when his family life was disrupted and he was left to roam the streets. No-one in New Zealand knew very much about what happened to John so I spent many years trying to find him. My Grandmother would not talk about him except to her daughter Dolly. And that is who told me enough to eventually find

him.

After a number of years of research we have located John through Barnardo's. We knew of him having been sent to Canada and of the accident that ended his life there. We also knew who his parents were and also his sister Ada. This was enough for us to get a reply from Barnardo's. In due course we were sent a lovely packet of information and photographs.

John, or Harry as he was called, was born on 6th October 1890 and named John Henry (Harry) Ratheram. John was born to Amelia Eleanor Markland and Charles Ratheram. They were married on 27th March 1864 at St Philips Church in the Parish of Birmingham, Warwickshire, England. Charles' occupation in Aston, Birmingham, was as a Wire Pickler. Amelia was also working, as a Charwoman, and had a difficult task to keep the family together. Most of the children were born in Coleshill, Warwickshire, and the younger ones were born in Aston, Birmingham, Warwickshire. The couple had several children, including Ada Hannah. Ada was born in June 1874 in Birmingham. Sadly, on 16th July 1895, Amelia died at the age of 49 years.



After Amelia's death, the family separated. Their father Charles could not pay his rent so the contents of the home were sold. As they had nowhere to live, Charles took John and entered the Springhill Union Workhouse in Birmingham. After about three weeks Charles left the Workhouse and took John to Ada who was already looking after their sister Flora. Charles then went back to the street where they had lived and asked for help and somewhere to sleep. A neighbour or two let him sleep in their wash-house - in those days there was only one wash-house to so many homes so this was not the best of arrangements. A former neighbour, Mrs. Fox, stated that he used to drink "fearfully" and that the sister was in delicate health. He was finally told to go as he never gave them any money and they could not afford to keep him. Mrs Fox said "Charles was too old and infirm to work" and when he set off they noticed he was looking very ill. Charles re-entered the Springhill Union Workhouse voluntarily. From the 1911 English Census it appears he was able to go out to work as his occupation was noted as an Iron Foundry Labourer and Worker. He lived there until he passed away in 1918 at the age of 77 years.continued

INSIDE: Update on the bid to save 661 Huron Street - the former Toronto receiving home of the Church of England, Waifs and Strays - visit page 5

Ada and her husband, George Terry, had two children and were living on Mansfield Road, Aston Warwickshire. Unfortunately, George, out of work and Ada, in "delicate health", could not cope with the additional responsibility of John, who had become too much to handle. John would disappear and she could not go looking for him with her babies to be watched. One day in desperation, she took him to the Barnardo's Receiving Home in Birmingham. John was accepted by Barnardo's Managers on condition that Charles, his father, signed the papers. Charles was eventually found at the Workhouse: he signed the papers and agreed that John could be sent to Canada when ready.

A Barnardo's Director wrote the following in John's records: "*John's sister Mrs Terry [the name was given as Tivoy to begin with] living at 2 Edward Villas, Manchester Road, Aston, Birmingham, brought this boy to our Birmingham Receiving House, where he remained during investigation. Our inspector reported as follows:- The father, through his evil habits of drinking, has been the cause of the family ruin. During the lifetime of the mother, Amelia Catherine [this should be Eleanor] Ratheram, the home was kept together entirely through her exertions, she being a hard-working woman. She died in Birmingham, from the change of life.*"

John was then sent to Barnardo's London Receiving Home in Stepney Causeway on 14th March 1898 at the age of 7 years 5 months. The following is the result of the Admittance examination which took place:

John was admitted to Barnardo's on 14 March 1898. Age: 7 years 5 months. Date and Place of Birth: 6th October 1890, Birmingham. Religious Denomination of Father: Church of England. Religious Denomination of Mother: Church of England. If Baptised: Yes. New Agreement with Canada Clauses, signed by Father. His hair was brown. Complexion fair. Eyes grey. Height 3ft.6½in. Weight 44½ lbs. Chest measured 23ins. Condition of body was well nourished and he had vaccination marks – 3.1.a.

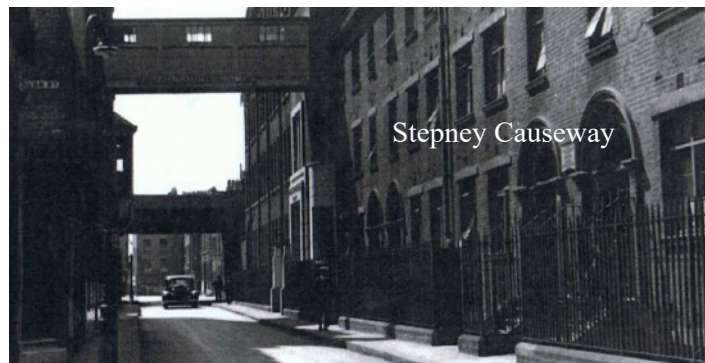
John was found to be a bright intelligent boy, strong and healthy. The managers of Barnardo's offered him admission and to be trained for farm work when he arrived in Canada. John was sent to three different Homes after leaving the Birmingham Receiving Home. Firstly he was taken to the Barnardo's Receiving House in Stepney Causeway, East London. Two days later on 16th March 1898 he was transferred to Leopold House in Burdett Road, Mile End, also in East London. Finally he was sent to Teighmore in Jersey, Channel Islands on 25th January 1899 for training in farm work ready for his arrival in Canada. The time came for John to leave for Canada. He was dressed in nice new clothing and had his photograph taken. On the 21st of March, 1901, John left the shores of England for Canada.

This is a summary of the journey John and others took from England to Canada in March 1901 taken from an article "*Our Twentieth Year's Emigration Work*" written by A.B. Owen and appearing in the 1 January 1902 Ups & Downs Magazine (Vol VII, No.2): "The first party of Home Children left on 21st March 1901, numbering 242 boys and 15 outsiders. The outsiders are so named as they were not from the Barnardo Homes but were relatives of boys already in Canada. The party was made up of boys from the Labour House, the Boys' Home, Leopold House, Shepherd House and Mittendorf. Everyone met at Epsom, Stepney Causeway, boarding buses and brakes ready for the ride to Paddington. The Great Western Railway had a train waiting for them which was to leave at 9.10 a.m. On arrival at Paddington there was a Grand March past with a band leading the smallest boys with the bigger boys from the Labour House, 30 in number, bringing up the rear. Two assistants were to travel with them - Mr Shepherd making his second trip and Nurse Carter, who had been transferred from Felixstowe to Hazel Brae in Canada. All the children had been vaccinated. About 3.00 p.m. the party embarked on the SS Tunisian, with Captain Vipond the Master, all passing the scrutiny of the officials, medical examiners and Government Agent. They were now on the way from Liverpool to Portland in Maine, United States of America.

The SS Tunisian was of the Allan Line. The boys' party were quartered in the forward part of the ship in a large airy compartment heated by steam and lit with electricity. The berths were against the sides of the ship and the long dining tables were in the centre. All this was in contrast to cramped spaces and hammocks slung over tables, oil lamps and poor washing facilities, and rusty leaking plates and cups, in past ships. Labour House youths were berthed in a compartment to themselves. Everyone was well behaved and the process of interviewing or "signing" as the boys called it was able to proceed. Any interval found between meals, services, parades and washings was taken up in this way. The officials of the party had to get some personal knowledge of each of their charges and find out if they had friends in Canada, if they wanted to be near these friends, their future, and what training and experience they had. The ship arrived in Portland Harbour at 11.00 a.m. on Saturday 30th March 1901. The

Grand Trunk railway provided tourist cars from Portland to Toronto and by midnight all the boys were safely housed in quarters at 214 Farley Avenue, Toronto, Canada.

Next day was given to bathing, changing clothes, and medical examinations by a Dr Moorhouse. The next morning was the final distribution of the boys' situations. Small detachments were going off on all the trains to the North, South, East and



West. Mr Griffith travelled with a large contingent to St Thomas, Ontario, Canada, destined to other places. John soon found himself in Mono, Dufferin, Ontario with Mr John Jackson. On 6th April 1901 he sent a Post Card to Barnardo's to say he had arrived safely. It seems John had arrived with sores on his toes. Mr Jackson wrote saying they would return John if his feet did not heal quickly and would ask for another boy. A letter was returned to Mr Jackson saying that there was no prospect of sending another boy. If they wished to send John back, a ticket would be sent for him to return to Toronto. John's feet did heal and he stayed with the family.

By all accounts, John was a happy young lad in Canada, loved his schooling and work on the farm. He became disturbed for a while when the lady of the house where he was living died. However he soon came right and appears to have a mischievous nature which caused his death. Reports were kept of everything to do with the children – letters sent and received, schooling, behaviour, and how they fitted in with the family they were placed with. There

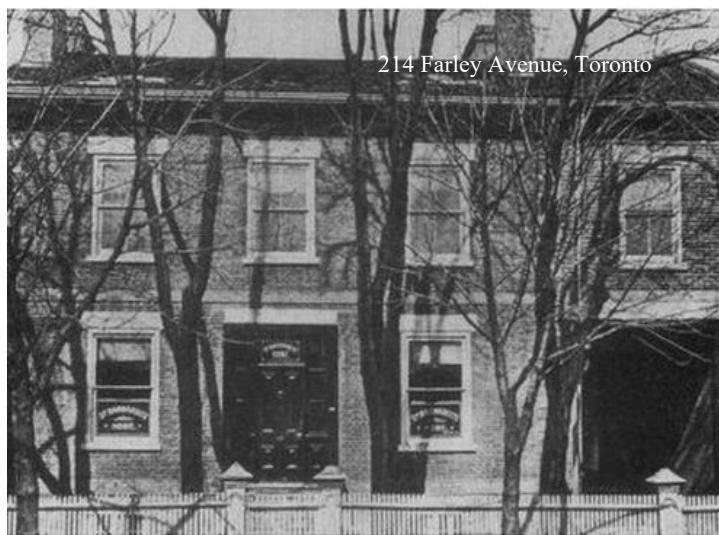
seems to have been someone always going to visit them and report on how they were getting on. John had made up his mind he did not like where he had come from in England and was not ever going back, Canada, was now his country.

December 1902 Mr Owens' report says John's health is good, he is a sturdy little lad, enjoys his life on the farm and is growing up under the care of respectable Christian people. 4th January 1904 Mr Owens again reports all is well. Just lately the Mistress had died to John's great grief. A grown daughter is now taking over the house-keeping. John has attended school beyond the periods required by the agreement. 11th July 1904 John wrote enclosing his photo and \$10 Canadian to the Homes. He thanked the Dr for sending him to Canada and doesn't want to go back to England. He goes to school, enjoys it and loves the fun of sleigh-riding in the snow. He has gained 34 lbs in weight since arriving in Canada, and has learned a lot about farming. During his indenture time, Mr. Jackson gave up farming, John stayed on with the new owner, Mr. Alexander. In 1905, John decided to work for Mr Joseph Kendrew, Primrose P.O. Ontario. Things did not go well for John, 21st May 1906 Mrs Kendrew wrote to Barnardo's complaining of John. He is said to be always complaining and his language is unbearable. She refers to John as threatening to commit suicide and also to "knock Mr Kendrew insensible.

In a letter to the Kendrews, dated 22nd May 1906, it stated that John can be returned at any time after giving the month's notice required by the agreement. On 2nd October 1906 John was helping with the hay/straw making or threshing, as it was called then, on the property of Samuel Buchanan, living in Prince of Wales Road, Mono on the Tuesday evening with two other boys. When quitting work at 6.30 p.m. they were told to get down off the stack but to use the ladder. The two boys did as they were told but John slid down holding his fork by the tines. On reaching the ground he fell onto the tines of which one pierced his heart. Poor John died immediately. The people of the locality thought he was a good boy and was well thought of. Dr Steele, the Coroner of Shelburne, was sent for, but John was dead before the messenger arrived in Shelburne. Dr Steele signed the death certificate and arranged for John's funeral to be held on 4th of October 1906.

On 12th November 1906 Mr Owen writing under the date of 24th October 1906, encloses a report of the boy's death as follows:- *"John Ratheram 15, went to Canada 30th March 1901. The death of this boy took place on the 2nd of October as the result of an accident. It appears that on that date he was employed at threshing and was working on the straw stack with two other young fellows. When the time came for descending the other two lads used the ladder as told to do but John unfortunately slid down from the stack holding his fork by the tines. On reaching the bottom he cried out "I am Hurt" and fell backward. He pulled up his shirt showing a puncture in the abdomen and almost immediately expired, blood flowing from his mouth." The coroner was notified and a certificate issued for burial. The family with whom John was living appeared deeply grieved at his sad fate and spoke of him with great feeling. The remains were interred in the cemetery at Shelburne. Mr Davis, who attended as representative of the Homes, states that there was a large turn out of the country people, with some thirty vehicles following the hearse. Three lads from the Home were present and acting as pall-bearers. There was a sum of money due in payment of wages at the time of the boy's death which has been absorbed in the funeral expenses, with the exception of a small balance which we have authorized for the erection of a grave stone."*

During my research I had a couple of letters which included a very disturbing thought. It concerned John's accident with his pitch fork. I was told that it may not have been an accident but done on purpose, many deaths were attributed to this violent action. I like to think that John's was an accident and he died through being mischievous.



The Workhouse button, the clay pipe, and the oyster shell touching our past

By Historian & Author Andrew Simpson
British Home Children the story from Britain



www.chorltonhistory.blogspot.com



I am looking at a small round metal disk, measuring just over 2 cm, which bears the name Chorlton Union Workhouse on one side and has a small ring fastener on the back.

It is a button from the uniform of an inmate of that workhouse and was found by chance on what is now an allotment but was once fields.

And it reminds me of just how powerful an object can be in evoking what has gone before.

We will all have such “things” and they offer a link to our collective past, and if we are very lucky will also connect us to a family relative.

Most will be pictures, or letters, with a smattering of official documents, and perhaps a piece of jewelry.

But in the case of those children who were migrated as British Home Children such items will be much rarer, making the link with their journey, the life they left behind, and the one they forged in Canada much more tenuous.

So, it is for Roger Hall, who was our BHC, whose “things” amount to a birth certificate, a fragmentary report from The Derby Union, a few more reports from the Middlemore organization, and a couple of references in a letter written in the 1970s by his sister to my sisters.

None of which is enough to recreate the man.

Although we are lucky in that his service record from the Great War has survived intact, unlike those of the rest of the family. In total six of my immediate family served in that conflict, but only great uncle Roger’s military records have survived, because he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, while the remaining five served in British regiments and their records were lost in an air raid during the Second World War.

And I suppose it is an irony that I know more about his army life, than I do of the other five, especially given that the rest of his life sits in the shadows.

But history is messy, and tends to play you out. So just as you think you have made a breakthrough you come to a dead end, and are forced back in to filling the gaps by drawing on the bigger story of BHC.

Which leads me also back to my button, whose story is almost as complete as that of great uncle Roger.



It was found by Frances Farrow on her allotment just off Nell Lane and was about 80 centimeters below the surface.

There is no date on the disc, but it will date from between 1837, when the Chorlton Union was established, and 1930, when the workhouses were abolished.

And I think we can narrow that timeline, because from 1837 the Union’s workhouse was situated in Hulme, until it was replaced by the new one on Nell Lane in 1855.

It is easy to forget that for most of the 19th century and into the 20th, many who became old, sick, or unemployed had no alternative but to seek help by entering the workhouse. These were grim institutions nicknamed Poor Law Bastilles and were predicated on the idea of less eligibility which maintained that the conditions inside the workhouse had to be so austere that only the very desperate would apply.

Despite this, many saw the workhouse as just one of the alternatives which they might be forced to consider. In the industrial north this might be because of trade fluctuations which closed factories, while in the countryside it might be during the quiet times between sowing and harvesting the crops.

And that brings me to my bit of clay pipe which I found in our front garden and was probably thrown away by someone working the land, or by someone passing by.

Although it is even just possible it came from night soil brought in from Manchester to spread on the fields of Chorlton.

Usually the pipes are broken and often turn up on their own, although sometimes a whole batch has been unearthed over a period of time all quite close together.



Mr. Gratrix's pipe c 1840's

They were the pipe of the working man, and some working women.

Inexpensive, easy to make and made in huge quantities, they are a true example of a throw away product.

They were smoked in the home, in the pub and at the workplace.

The evidence from sites in some of the poorer parts of London show that the owners smoked heavily.*

“Clay pipes come in many different sizes, some with long stems and decorated bowls and date from anytime from the 17th through to the 20th century. The last clay pipe manufacturer in Manchester only ceased trading in 1990.

The most interesting pipe to come back out of the earth was found in the archaeological dig of our parish church in the 1980s. It can be dated to between 1830 and 1832, and may have been bought to commemorate the coronation of William IV.

It bears the inscription “William IV and Church” around the rim and is highly decorated with the royal coat of arms flanked by a lion on one side and a unicorn on the other.

It is also unusual because it was found in one of the graves inside the church.

The final burial in the grave was that of Thomas Watson aged 54 in 1832.

There are those who might well imagine the pipe being placed alongside the coffin of Thomas Watson in imitation of the ancient practice of placing grave goods alongside the departed.

The less romantic will counter with the obvious observation that it was the casual act of one of the grave diggers.

Either way it is unusual for the bowl to survive. More commonly it is the stem which is turned up and even these are found as fragments.

Clay pipes were never expected to last. At best they might survive for a few weeks and in many cases just days. But then they were cheap.

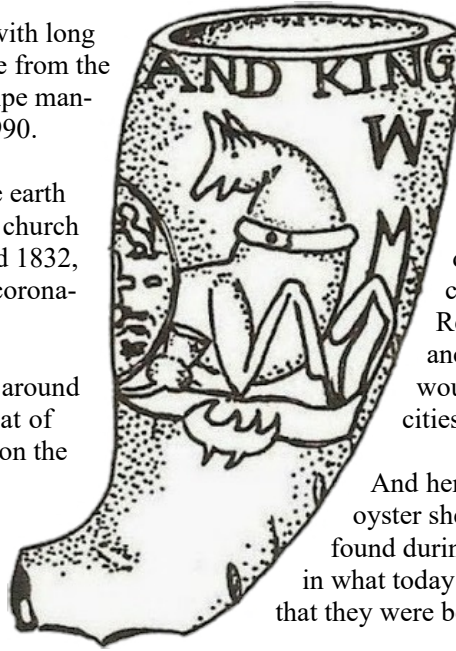
Very little has been published on the price of pipes but adverts dating from 1799 have unglazed ones selling at 2s 6d [12½p] a gross. Just over 130 years later the 1930 Pollock catalogue was selling them at 4s [20p] a gross. Longer pipes did cost a little more, but these were not the choice of the working man in the fields.

Shorter pipes could be smoked while working and it is these that turn up in the fields around the township.”**

So, I wonder about my bit of pipe.

I would like to think it belonged to Samuel Gratrix who was farming here in the 1840s, but chances are it was discarded by someone passing along the road, or worse still dropped into a privy somewhere in Manchester, only to make its way with a cart load of night soil along the Duke's canal to Chorlton.

At which point I could be accused of a bout of self-indulgence, but not so, because the button and the pipe take us back to a time



just before BHC, and are a link to those who might have been the parents or grandparents of children migrated to Canada.

As such we are back in that agricultural Britain when the majority of the population derived their living from the land. But the changes being wrought by the Industrial Revolution would mean that by 1851 the balance between an urban Britain and a rural one would have tipped in favour of the towns and cities.

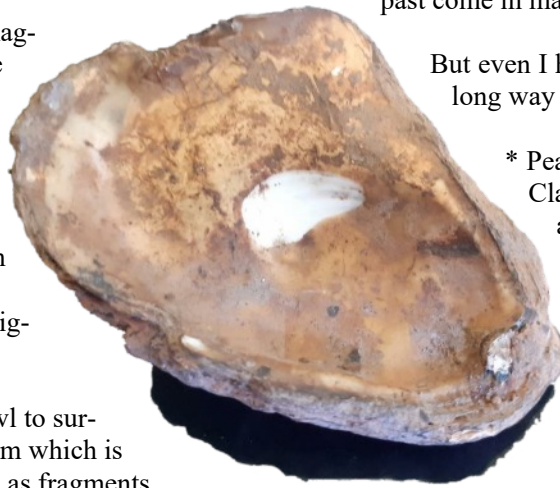
And here I was tempted to introduce my Viking oyster shell which is a thousand years old and was found during the excavations of Jorwick in the 1970s in what today is the city of York. So many were dug up that they were being sold off for 10p each.

Such is the price of history, and a reminder that our links to the past come in many different forms.

But even I have to concede that a Viking oyster shell is a long way from the story of British Home Children.

* Pearce, Jacqui, *Living in Victorian London: The Clay Pipe Evidence*, 2007, Geography Department at Queen Mary, University of London

**Simpson, Andrew, *The Story of Chorltoncum-Hardy*, 2012, The History Press



661 Huron Street Petition Update

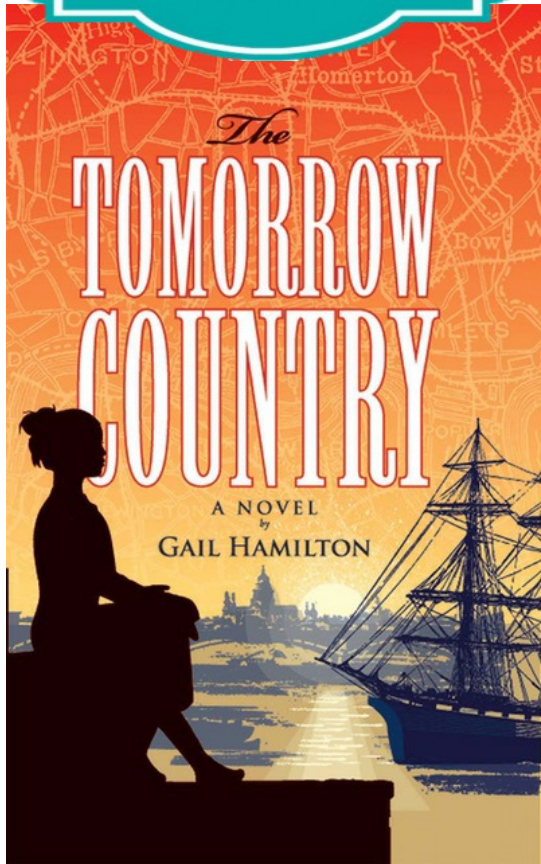
In June the BHCARA started a petition to save the former Church of England, Waifs and Strays Huron Street, Toronto receiving home from demolition. To date, there are 6,907 supporters. The petition can be viewed at: <http://chnng.it/zPpk55xdJp>

Our bid to save 661 Huron Street from the wreckers ball was heard on 27 August by the Toronto Preservation Board and it was unanimously voted that the property should be included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register with Intention to Designate under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. City Council will now authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the necessary bill in Council. We are one step away from having the property declared a heritage property and saved from demolition! Details can be found at: <https://bit.ly/2YULA9T>.

We have started compiling a searchable index of the Girls who were received at 661 Huron Street. You can visit the index at: <https://bit.ly/2DhfflM>.

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Striving Toward Canada

“The Tomorrow Country”

a novel by Gail Hamilton

I had never heard of British Home Children when my agent took me to lunch and suggested a heroine with a Home child background. She likely had a period romance in mind as I already had several romance novels to my credit. However, I began to research. Before I knew it, I had a few hundred pages written and my heroine had only reached the age of ten.

The book entailed a deep dive into the social conditions of Victorian England in the 1860s and 1870s, a time of enormous social upheaval. London was doubling and tripling its size as the “great wen” with little or no urban regulation. The towns, villages and farms where everyone was interconnected and children could usually find a hearth, were rapidly draining their populations into the cities to feed the voracious need for workers in the new factories and foundries.

The ancient social networks that had supported people for centuries were shattered, families thrown into isolation in faraway, unfamiliar places. When disaster, illness or accident struck, a breadwinner died, there was nowhere to turn, no family or friends to give a helping hand. Where, today, a bit of income supplement would have seen the family through, in those days there was often no choice but give up children one could no longer feed.

Attitudes to charity also changed. In the early part of the century, when there were many indigent after fighting in the Napoleonic wars, charity

was inclined to be kinder to their widows, orphans and brave wounded soldiers. Later, the tide of public opinion turned, growing resentful of needy hordes and supposing charity would only support drunkenness, idleness and crime. Workhouse rules grew purposefully harsh to repel all but the most desperate. Families were split up. The diet was barely palatable and often inmates were made to walk a treadmill all day or pick apart rotten ropes to make oakum to caulk ships lest they enjoy some indolence with their gruel.

The era was one of rampant laissez-faire capitalism that shoved aside the old aristocracy and created fortunes for new industrialists and upstart entrepreneurs. The scramble for money was ruthless and fierce because just about everyone could see the yawning abyss of ruin awaiting should they fail. Were not the tattered and penniless proof of that!

Upper society was indeed alarmed by the burgeoning numbers of the lower orders. Opinion split into various streams. A great many thought that any help given to the poor would only enable them to breed like rabbits and overrun the country with degenerate stock. Disease, hunger and the ravages of depravity were the only way to keep their numbers in check. Keep your money and let nature takes its course.

Yet this was also an era that developed the concept of progress and the shining belief that, with enough effort, all social ills could be solved. Out of this stream came the enthusiastic do-gooders who set up ragged schools and built

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Poor children in Victorian England

mechanics' libraries, who improved sanitation, designed workers cottages and created all manner of rescue schemes, including the child emigration movement.

As a side note, I noticed that so many of the compassionate projects were led by middle and upper class women who had the time and little other outlet for their energies. In fact, most of the reforms and advances of the era had behind them a hidden but critical mass of female effort. While some man may have stood up in parliament to push through a bill for reform, the impetus behind it was likely the collective activities of church organizations, reading circles, prayer groups, improvement societies, local charities and ladies' clubs creating a ground swell of demand.

Among the do-gooders also raged vigorous arguments about only providing aid to the "deserving poor", not those drowning their misery in the gin dives, the prostitutes, the petty criminals trying to steal their next meal or an array of others violating the strict moral boundaries of the era.

In my novel, *The Tomorrow Country*, I decided to follow the fortunes of four children struggling for survival in the unsettled conditions of the time. Katie is found as an abandoned newborn meant to be flung into the Thames, a river that regularly tossed up its cargo of infant corpses. Will is the son of a drunken labourer who tramped about the countryside until signing onto a ship and handing Will to a chimney sweep to be a climbing boy. Cully is extracted from a cellar where she was a rickety, famished child slave making baskets. Laura was raised as a pampered heir to an Elizabethan manor until discovered to be a bastard. Greedy relatives flung her to charity for removal overseas, out of sight, out of mind as quickly as possible.

At bottom, the book is a fictional account of the early roots of the child emigration movement. Miss Amelia Radmore, one of the improving women of her time, has heard wonderful tales of life in Canada and is determined to establish her own refuge through which destitute children can move on. Innocent, clueless and idealistic as she is, she had seen the beggars, the packs of street urchins, the little ones rooting in refuse heaps for potato peels. In some regions of London, the average life span was twenty years. Something must be done.

Of course such a novel must be, first and foremost, an entertaining read. It must captivate with action, adventure, unexpected plot twists and, yes, romance. It must be laced with humour and have readers rooting for characters they desperately care about.

Surrounding Miss Amelia and our four young protagonists is a whole troop of picaresque folk, also products of their time. Red Nell, the fearsome local crime boss fled the Irish potato famines. Jenks, the shifty administrator of the Infants Asylum which sheltered Katie for a time, is skimming every penny he can from unsuspecting Miss Amelia. Mary, Katie's protector and exploited servant of all work, twisted and bent as child labour in the mines of Yorkshire dares to escape with Katie to the streets.

The *nouveau riche* Crisp family, whose fortune comes from the blackened, pounding mills, is awkwardly trying to social climb and sees charity as a way to pry open firmly slammed class doors. They have spawned a maverick remittance man and an obsessive schemer bent on making another fortune off the new railway cuts slashing through London's poorest neighbourhoods. Strawberry Rose, a rising songstress, is inextricably tied both to Red Nell and Miss Amelia's charitable endeavor. Raised by Cornish smugglers, her reckless allure for men soon gets her into more scandalous trouble than she can possibly handle. There is even some randy meddling by HRH the Prince of Wales himself. His eye for the ladies was no secret in posh circles.

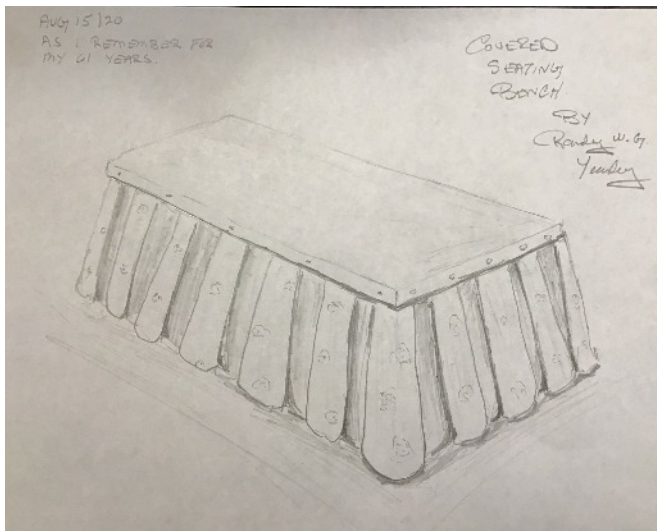
All these turbulent social currents toss our four children into peril after peril as I try to convey what it was like to be little and young in such a tough, unpredictable environment. Miss Amelia dreams of providing a new life for lost young ones in beckoning, bountiful Canada, the *Tomorrow Country*, but she is facing ruin herself from the same treacherous forces. All that's left is luck, chance and the ability to muster a fighting spirit. Whether any of them will beat the odds and actually reach the *Tomorrow Country* is anybody's guess. I hope you enjoy the adventure.

End

Note: For anyone interested, *London Labour and London Poor* by Henry Mayhew is a fascinating book. Mayhew, a mid-nineteenth century newspaperman, conducted and published direct, verbatim interviews with London's poorest, providing a first hand look into real lives at the bottom of the social scale.

Check out Gail's web site at: www.gailhamiltonwriter.com

The trunk as Randy Yearley remembers it all his life



Larry and his partner Dawn Sheppard have been long time members and supporter of the BHCARA! I quickly touched base with them to find out just how they were connected to Alfred - I will let Dawn tell the story now.

From August 9 we began working to confirm Larry's relationship with Alfred. Complicating that search was the scope of his McIntosh tree of 125,400+ persons and the four-page Relationship Chart connecting Larry to Alfred. Because Larry and I are distantly connected through another family relationship, we felt it would be simpler to transfer the lines from that chart to my tree, through our common branches. This also fed my hunch to check both our trees on the wild possibility there was a Sheppard relationship, though I suspected it would be even more indirect than Larry's McIntosh route. By Aug 12 we had arranged to meet Randy at his home three days later to receive that precious piece of family and BHC history. Emotions were running high and in all directions by this time. Family Tree Maker and Ancestry connections were not cooperating that day, so when they stabilized I stayed up and worked through the night, not expecting sleep to be possible anyway. About 4 am on August 13 I discovered Alfred had married my 2nd cousin 3 times removed when a warning popped up that I was duplicating someone already in my tree - Alfred's mother-in-law. Searching her name in my index indicated the same person connecting back to a paternal 4th great-grandfather. Initial shock and disbelief were followed closely by goose bumps and tears. Blinking and rubbing my eyes did not change what I saw. A new Relationship Chart confirmed that Rachel's great-grandfather was my 4th great-grandfather! When Rachel Ann Williamson married Alfred Rees Williams, the Sheppard and McIntosh trees were connected through another quirk of serendipity. Our work was confirmed by the BHCARA Search Angels that Alfred and Rachel had no children.

Seeing and touching the trunk so carefully constructed by Alfred in a Barnardo carpentry shop 126 years ago was the culmination of an adventure none of us could have imagined. Five-year-old Alfred Rees Williams lost his father, aged 31. His mother struggled to keep her children, but she lost Alfred through poverty, hoping he would find a better life. Barnardo Homes, the Yearley placement and re-use of Alfred's trunk, the union of the Williams and Williamson families, discovery of the hidden trunk by the grandson of Martha Yearley from Alfred's placement family, and the decision by Randy Yearley to remove fabric from a re-purposed seating bench. One event could be

called a coincidence, but this is a chain of Serendipity. Simply put, we were all in place to rescue a trunk, built in England by a boy of 12 who was sent to Canada with that trunk. His name is painted there in beautiful late 19th Century cursive: ALFRED R. WILLIAMS

Is the trunk you found a Home Child Trunk?



There were so many different styles of trunks brought by the children over the years, sometimes it is next to impossible to determine if a certain trunk would have been a BHC trunk. The upper right photo of Cecil Bennett's Barnardo trunk is the most common type of trunk, and easily identifiable. When determining the authenticity of a BHC trunk, these are a few of the markers we look for:

Name found on the trunk - many BHC trunks had the child's name painted on the front. Sometimes the child would print or write their names inside the trunks.

Stickers or stamps identifying the organization Distinctive markings, such as the Waif and Stray's trunks painted green with the red cross

Family knowledge of the trunks origins: Keep in mind that sometimes oral family histories are incorrect.

Is consistent in structure with other confirmed BHC trunks?

Identifying document glued in or on the box: Indenture contracts were sometimes glued inside the trunks. Right is a trunk with documents glued on it.



The 1910 Annie Macpherson trunk of Henrietta Wren

Structure of box: - many of these trunks were made by the children in the institutions. The trunks are often very basic in structure. Fancy embellishments are not generally found on a BHC trunk. Think stacking, hundreds of these trunks were often stacked on the ship for the trips to Canada. Flat top trunks were the easiest to stack.

Size: A typical alligator tin covered Barnardo box measures 12 inches high, 14 inches deep and 27.5 inches wide.

Learn more about the trunks:

- Our [February 2017 Newsletter](#) - 4 pages on the trunks.
- Our [2019 BHC 150 Magazine](#) has a special article by Marjorie Kohli on the trunks
- Visit our [Children's Trunk & Bible](#) page on our web site.

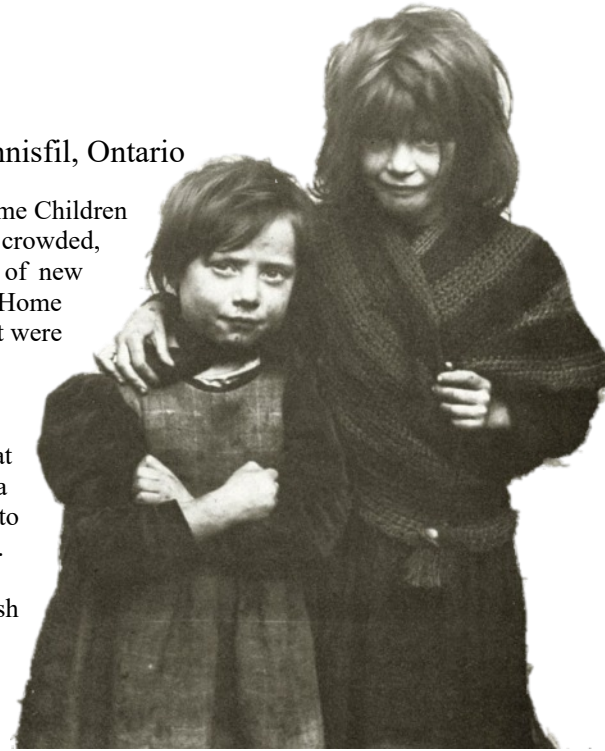
It has always been part of our policy that when an artefact is found, there is an attempt to find the family of the BHC and the item offered to them. We encourage our members to do the same.

A British Home Child Essay

By Doran Stephen

A history student of the Ontario Nantyr Shores Secondary School, Innisfil, Ontario

"It was a moment born of very good intentions," said Dan Oatman of the British Home Children Advocacy Research Association (BHCARA). The idea of taking infants out of the crowded, polluted slums of Britain and sending them to Canada, where a better life, full of new opportunities awaited them. These young boys and girls were known as British Home Children. Throughout the 1800s in Britain, children were struggling to survive. Most were living on the streets with no family to take care of them or mothers and fathers who could not support them. Their only option was to stay in the slums, a lice-infested, filthy, congested area where the less fortunate slept. By the end of the nineteenth century, Britain concluded that something needed to be done, as it was a problem that was impossible to ignore. After lots of consideration, the government came up with a solution to help these children, along with another struggling country. The plan was to send these boys and girls on a steamship to Canada and be adopted by a farm family. This way, the kids would receive fresh air, education and shelter, and help solve Canada's farm labour shortage.² Despite what the children endured in Canada, British Home Children have made a significant contribution to Canada and have impacted Canadian history.

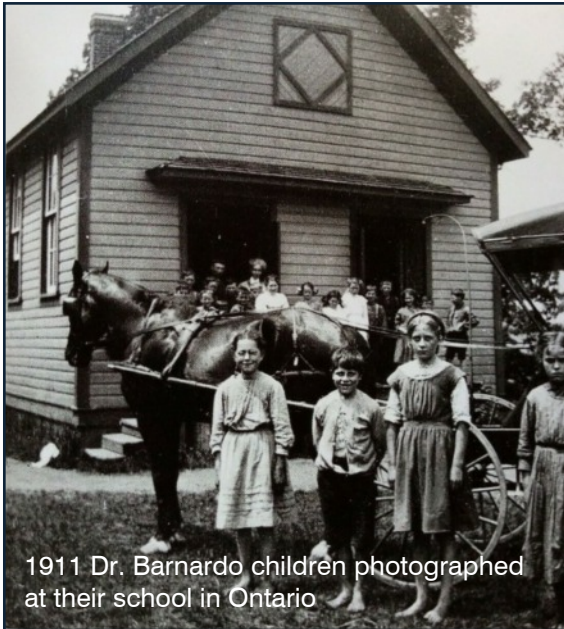


Between 1870 and 1940, Britain sent over 98,000 children to Canada.³ It was believed that the children would have a better opportunity at a thriving life in Canada if they were removed from poverty in Britain. Thomas John Barnardo, the founder of Barnardo Homes, recorded in 1889, "We in England with our 470 inhabitants to every square mile, were choking, elbowing, starving each other in the struggle for existence..." This statement explains how desperate Britain was for a solution. Girls and boys were playing in the dangerous streets where disease spread easily and there were no parents around to nurture them. Most families gave up their children because of sickness, death and lack of money. Fathers were too injured from war to work, and mothers went into domestic services. It resulted in too many children on the streets. Britain had no choice at this point but to take action, and so the British Child Emigration Movement was born. Barnardo's Home, The Salvation Army and Quarrier are just a few of the 50 programs that helped relocate helpless children to Canada.⁵ Britain and Canada endorsed these organizations as they both benefited. Barnardo noted, "... it relieves the overcrowded centres of city life and the congested labour market. Second, it supplies what the colonies are most in want of, an increase in the English speaking population".⁶ As described, Canada would receive an increase in population and workers that would help the rising nations because British Home Children were a source of domestic help and cheap labour. Britain also supported the British Child Emigration Movements. This helped with the struggling children in their country and reduced the cost of living.⁷ The movements started in September of 1870 when Barnardo began to search for children who were living in poor conditions. He started with only twenty-five boys in his home and by the end of 1905, he had helped over 30 000 children, before he died.⁸ Barnardo Homes was the largest organization that sent children to Canada, hence why another name for British Home Children was Barnardo Boys. It was thought that all the children that were taken to these homes, were orphans, however, only twelve percent actually were.⁹ Most kids were removed from homes because their living space was a place no child should be, while others were sent temporarily until their family had enough money to provide for them. Sadly, the children who were put in this situation were shipped to Canada and gone by the time their family came back for them. In spite of the problem of too many children in the streets of Britain being solved, what the children soon had to endure, was nothing like they have ever experienced before.

A new life in Canada consisted of nothing but hardship and discipline for British Home Children. These frightened children were removed from their families and placed into institutions like Barnardo Homes, where boys learned how to farm, and girls were educated on how to assist farm wives. Once a year of training was complete, they boarded steamships, including the Corinthian, Sardinian or Parasian to Canada.¹⁰ Brothers and sisters were then separated and sent on a week-long train ride to an unknown location to meet their caretakers under the terms that they would provide food, clothes, education and shelter. Alex Mackay, a Barnardo Boy was told you could pick gold off of the streets.¹¹ Like most British Home Children, he thought travelling to Canada would be an adventure and exhilarating. Not only were children excited, but also the families. Parents felt a sigh of relief to hear that their child had gone to the land of mills and honey. However, the harsh truth was ¹² that British Home Children found themselves suffering from loneliness and neglect. A British Home Child named Gwen Pottie mentioned: "I was so disappointed and wanted to go back home."¹³ Children arrived in a place that looked nothing like they imagined, nor did it fit the description in the stories they were once told. Canada provided a completely different life than the one they had back in Britain. Annie Cairns, a Home Child, says in an interview, "I did not mind the hard work in Canada, it was homesickness, parents were so nasty... I got a beating a day."¹⁴ Many other children like Annie could not care less about being overworked on the farm, it was the fact that they experienced malnourishment, sexual assault, beatings and psychological abuse. British Home Children were never truly a part of a family and received no emotional support. They often slept in attics, chicken coops or dog houses, crying themselves to sleep. Author, Kenneth Bagnell, expresses his



We are pleased to publish this essay by Doran in our newsletter. It is very well researched and detailed. It is heart-warming to see our students take this story forward to honour and remember the contributions these children made to Canada.



1911 Dr. Barnardo children photographed at their school in Ontario

opinion in a video titled "With Glowing Hearts"; "I guess if I were to select one that was tragic my mind goes back to a man named Charles Gautier. They placed him in a dog house and he had enough to eat if the dog did not eat all of it."¹⁵ Children were put in horrible situations and felt no affection. British Home Children felt desperate and needed to escape their foster placements. Kids would take their own lives, run away and disappear, they often were discovered to be dead not too far from their homes. Enlisting in the war was another effort to get away from their farm family. Kathleen Hobday states "6211 Barnardo Boys from Canada enlisted in the war and 514 were killed."¹⁶ This declaration means that boys were hoping that by joining the army, there would be the possibility of reuniting with loved ones, however, 514 did not get the chance too. Children who did not enlist were getting check-ups done by Child Emigration workers. Daisy Peacock, a British Home Child said in 1914, "The wife was mean and ruled us with an iron hand when visiting women came... I would not dare to complain for this foster woman would drill into me that I would be severely punished."¹⁷ This suggests that girls and boys had no voice to stand up, hence why the British Child Emigration Movements continued. While several Home Children suffered, others lived the life that was promised in Canada. Children were adopted into warmhearted families and were provided with the education they needed. Walter Longyear, a Barnardo Boy was one of the fortunate children to have a better life in Canada. He communicated "I felt very lucky to have a farm home where I was treated like a son... Grandma would always bring me cookies in her apron pocket!"¹⁸ Nearly all British Home Children experienced a different life than the one Walter lived in Canada. Girls and Boys faced several obstacles, some of which they could not overcome.

British Children who were sent to Canada have impacted future generations. They have become our relatives, along with the mothers and fathers of our history. As a result of several British Home Children growing up in Canada, many Canadians can trace back their family history to find out they are connected to a Home Child. Studies indicate that 1 in 10 Canadians have a British Home Child in their ancestry.¹⁹ Despite their contributions to Canada, many Barnardo Children feel humiliated to be a Home Child. For this reason, most have remained quiet and have not spoken about their past for their entire lives. Walter Goulding, a Barnardo Boy, was interviewed in 2012, he explained "When I hit 104 and my two sons never knew I was a Home Boy, I was ashamed to tell them." Correspondingly, British Home Children felt that their family would be embarrassed to be related to an orphan from Britain. Yet, when relatives found out their background, they were proud. Descendants are here today because British Home Children immigrated to Canada. A poem written by Walter Richard Willaims was dedicated to British Home Children and shared to the World, how Home Children truly felt. It reads:

*"60 years we've been here
they never told us why,
After 30 years I found the rest.
I couldn't even cry,
Some were lucky, some were not
but one thing we all shared,
Our families had forgotten us
and no-one really cared." (63-71) 21*

As described, British Home Children never knew why they were sent, nor did the rest of the world know about this tragedy. Home Children wanted records, to reconnect with their past as one does not know who they are, without knowing who their parents are. To ensure that British Home Children's past life is not unrecognized, various programs have collected stories and data on Home Children. It will also help families find their roots. Organizations like British Home Children Advocacy and Research Association (BHCARA), have goals to continue British Home Children's memory, to share their stories and to bring families together who were separated by the British Child Emigration Movement. Another action made to appease Home Children was an apology from Britain and Canada. British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown issued an acknowledgement of his country's failure on February 24, 2010. He announced: "Two years ago I was proud to offer an apology for the UK's role in the shameful deportation of thousands of children to former colonies. The deportation of the innocents was not only cruel, unnecessary and deeply unjust but demanded the fullest apology to all who suffered and were so wrongly robbed of their childhood."²³ Canada conversely did not form an apology. Instead, they identified the horrible period in Canada's history and created commemorative stamps, declared 2010 the year of British Home Children and created the Pier 21 museum, in Halifax²⁴, to share the details on British Home Children. The British Child Emigration Movements has impacted the lives of Home Children in several ways, and this matter needs to be recognized by all Canadians, as it is part of our history.

The migration of British children to Canada was one of the most impactful moments in Canadian history. In an interview, Kenneth Bagnell commented, "Historic moments and conditions fit together like a hand fits a glove."²⁵ His declaration was accurate. Men were crying for someone to till their land²⁶ in Canada, and Britain had several children who needed to be saved from sickness, death and starvation. The two issues managed to resolve each other. British children were sent to Canada where they worked on farms and Britain

was able to alleviate their problems of dealing with poverty and homeless children . British Home Children then became very important to Canada's economic success. Children were seen as a labour source in Canada and set the economic reality in motion. Home Children 27 helped produce more raw goods and more people were buying them. They began to build Canada and shape it. Case studies show that progress on Canadian farms would not have been attainable without the services of Home Children. 28 Not only did they play a key role in Canada's success on the farm, but British Home Children also increased the amount of residents in Canada. An estimate of 100,000 children were taken from poverty in Britain and placed in homes in Canada 29. As a result, the number of inhabitants in Canada has grown increasingly over the years. A journal by Susan Brazeau, notes 12.5% of Canada's population are descendants of British Home Children. 30. This suggests that the majority of the Home Children planted their roots in Canada, and have contributed to Canada's population growth throughout the generations."Today, their numbers are legion and they are counted among our most courageous and successful nation-builders."31 As Gail H. Corbett put it, British Home Children have made the nation what it is today.

In conclusion, the journey that British Home Children endured and the obstacles they faced have formed a nation known as Canada. The children ended up solving Canada's shortage of farm helpers and Britain's struggle to provide for children. Impactful as it was, Home Children lived through a terrible time where they were overworked and wrongly treated. The situation should have been handled better. Children should not have been placed in homes with cruel guardians, nor should have siblings been separated. However, their assistance on the farm was a great contribution to building the agricultural industry, furthermore, sustaining the country's economy and population . Stories of British Home Children and what they went through, should be further recognized by Canada because they are a part of our heritage. The country should learn from their mistakes so the situation that children were put in, does not happen again. Thankfully some programs have spread awareness but more should be done. British Home Children have changed the course of Canadian History, by building the nation.

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Happy Birthday George!!

George Beardshaw, a former Dr.
Barnardo Boy turns 97 on
September 14th!

Help us celebrate his birthday by
sending him a birthday card. They
can be addressed to George at:
114 Bruce St London ON
N6C 1G8