

British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association

June 2015 Newsletter

Written by Lori Oschefski,
Special column by Andrew Simpson
Member submitted story
by Marilyn Wallis



New Book Release - "Bleating of the Lambs"

Bleating of the Lambs

Canada's
British Home Children



Written and compiled by
Lori Oschefski

Available
June 13
2015

Author Lori
Oschefski's

passion for the

British Home Children stems from the need to help her mother, a surviving child migrant. Through Lori's search of her family history, she came across many others desperately seeking help themselves. In 2012 she created the British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association which, in its third year now, quickly moved to the forefront of the British Home Child Awareness Movement in Canada. It is the first organization of its kind to use the social media to function and to promote the BHC story with unprecedented and unparalleled success.

"Bleating of the Lambs - Canada's British Home Children" is Ms. Oschefski's first book. Based on years of research, it is a compelling collection of British Home Child stories, important and interesting facts and a historical overview of these migration schemes.

Books are available at BHCARA
events or on line at:

www.britishhomechildren.com

The Ironic Life of William Cheesman Grandfather of Lori Oschefski



Two years following his parents death, William Cheesman, was homeless and trying to earn his keep in the streets. He was arrested for trespassing. The authorities "seeing good in this boy" and with hopes that he could be helped, he was handed over to the Dr. Barnardo's Home as an alternative to jail.

On March 29, 1894, William boarded the S.S. Sarnia and sailed to a new life in Canada. He was taken to Barnardo's training farm in Russell, Manitoba, Canada. Shortly after William's arrival, he was placed for work with Ed Short, at a rate of \$55 per year. This was not to last, however, and on January 12, 1896 William wrote to Barnardo's to informing them he had left his situation with Mr. Short and that he was having problems obtaining his wages. Ensuing correspondence shows Mr. Short complaining about William's conduct and William complaining of Mr. Short's treatment of him.

In March of 1896 William was placed at a work situation with Mr. Ferguson. In a letter dated March 23, 1896 to Barnardo's, Mr. Ferguson states "Wm Cheeseman is about house - he is well and is a splendid boy, a credit to the Home (Barnardo's) of which he speaks so highly". However, this situation also did not last. William absconded from care on July 20, 1896. In his letter to Barnardo's informing them of the situation, Mr. Ferguson writes, that "William is

a good worker although very rough with the stock". He also expressed his opinion that another fella by the name of Wainwright had been bad influence over William.

In 1905 William became a farmer in his own right. He had obtained a Homestead in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Women were scarce in the Prairies of Canada and William applied to an organization for a wife.

On March 27, 1912, twenty six year old Annie Reta Marion Prince boarded the ship "Grampian" in Liverpool along with a large group of other single women, whose occupations were listed as "spinsters". Annie's intended occupation was listed as "wife" and her reason for immigration was "to be married". Her destination was the village of Zealandia, which lays 17.9 km north east of Rosetown.

Annie and William were married on April 11, 1912 in Rosetown, a mere week after she arrived in Canada. Nine months later, their first child was born. By 1919 they had a budding family of five children, but were under considerable financial strain to keep the farm going. The farm was sold and they moved to a rental farm close by. It is believed by my family, that there was a fire on that farm in 1919. This prompted William to bring Annie and the children back to her family in England and when the family boarded the ship "Metagama", the reason given for the trip was a holiday. Four months after the family arrived in the UK, on March 19, 1920, William to Rosetown alone, to rebuild the farm. Leaving his family in England was never meant to be permanent and in the fall of 1921, William returned to take them back to Canada.

In April of that following year, his plan had changed again and William, alone again, travelled back to Canada. Annie later told her family that Williams plan was to return to Canada, sell the family's belongings and return to his family in England. After he left; Annie, close to seven months pregnant with their sixth child, remained at Brook Cottage with the children awaiting the birth and the return of her husband. In June 27, 1922 she gave birth to my Mother, Olive June alone (Muriel). William never returned. For reasons we will never know or understand, when he boarded that ship for Canada he sailed out of his family's life forever.

Annie, probably out of embarrassment, told her family a fabricated story of how William had sold the property, and had been traveling to Moose Jaw on horseback with two men who robbed him and murdered him. In the fall of 1922, Annie and the children were forced to take refuge in the Kington Union Workhouse and from there, William's children were emigrated to Canada as British Home Children, just as he had been himself.

Read both William & Muriel's full stories in
"Bleating of the Lambs"

Available at www.britishhomechildren.com

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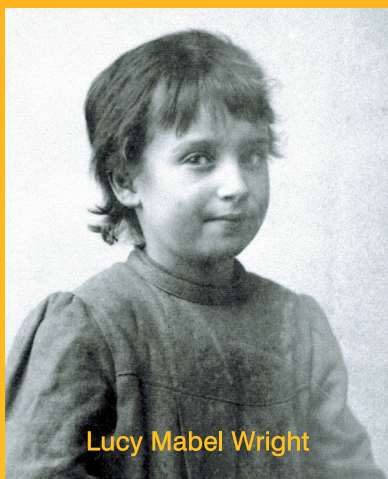
Happy 93rd Birthday on June 27
to BHC Muriel Oschefski
Also the 91st anniversary of when
she arrived in Canada June 27, 1924



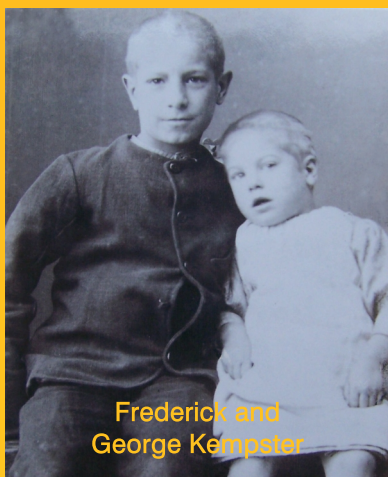
The first photo known to have
been taken of Muriel



Fred Holt



Lucy Mabel Wright



Frederick and
George Kempster



Arthur Godsall

When it's all said and done history is just a collection of stories.

And it doesn't matter if they tell the great events of State or focus on the domestic arrangements of a textile worker in 19th century Manchester, each has a value and each contributes to our common knowledge.

And behind that story are the personal experiences of people, a vast amount of scholarship and a key to unlock everything from the political, and economic to the cultural outlook of countries.

Now that might sound a grand claim for the tale of a young man who crossed the Atlantic in the May of 1914 to start a new life which it was hoped would banish the years of institutional care and set him off on a new path in a new country.

But I think not, because my great uncle's story is about the breakup of a poor working class family, the recourse to the Workhouse and the response of the authorities presented with children whose mother was "not fit to have control."

All of which will be familiar to many who have a British Home Child in their family. The details might differ but the broad outline will be the same and together they offer up a powerful insight into how we dealt with issues of poverty, and deprivation in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

And in turn points to how the story of BHC has moved from what was essentially a quest by individuals trying to make sense of their own family history into a serious area of study.

THE MIDDLEMORE HOME
FAIRVIEW STATION, HALIFAX, N. S.
IN CONNECTION WITH
THE CHILDREN'S EMIGRATION HOMES
ST. LUKE'S ROAD, BIRMINGHAM ENGLAND

Letter Report on Child

Name of Child	Roger J. Hall	Age	17	Year sent to Canada	1914-16
Name of Union or Home from which child was emigrated	Derby				
Name of Employer (was) Duncan M. Millan	Occupation	Farming			
Post Office	Whycocomagh	County	Inverness	Province	N.S.
How long with present Employer			No. of previous places	Date of Report	
Reporter's Name	Wm. S. Ray	Date	Aug 3/18		



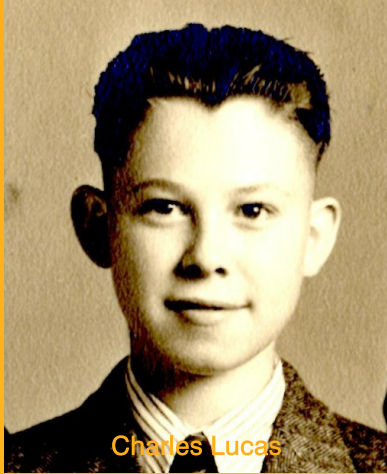
Young people in the care of the
Manchester & Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges, date unknown

It began with a few lone pioneers inspired by their own experiences, moved up a notch with the formation of self help groups who shared their skills and knowledge, and took a huge leap forward with the use of social media.

Today that growing interest is reflected in a host of events across the country, regular stories in the media and the big debate about the legitimacy of migrating children.

But we have moved on I think from the two simplistic battle positions which condemned the whole policy or claimed that it was the only solution to

Children featured in Bleating of the Lambs



Charles Lucas



Beatrice Smee



Cyril Hewitt



Reuben John Jeffery

the evil of child destitution and neglect.

The one rightly focused on the appalling experiences of some children at the hands of exploitive and occasionally brutal employers while the other argued that given the lack of real political will to alleviate poverty migrating children offered them a second chance at something better.

Now history is messy and the claims of both have validity, but as the individual stories are uncovered they offer up a complex picture where one young person's awful experiences are matched by another's successes.

Likewise as more research is done and we burrow deep into the historical records on both sides of the Atlantic there are grounds to challenge the idea that there was no alternative to migration being advanced at that time.

There were those who opposed it on ideological grounds arguing radical solutions to poverty and inequality would eliminate the need to send children to Canada, and those who pointed to the exploitive nature of the scheme and the evidence of malpractice and ill treatment of children.

But nor do I think we should just embrace that position that migration was purely governed by economics.

It is true that some Poor Law Guardians did calculate it was cheaper to migrate children in their care while others saw the potential of supplying cheap labour to the farms of Canada which in turn exported a potential cause of social unrest and grew the Canadian population.

But Britain had been doing this for centuries, whether it was criminals during the 17th century or the carefully worked out policy of the Poor Law Commissioners in the 1840s to assist families caught in the agricultural depression to start out again in Canada.

Added to which the idea of a rural solution to the problems of industrialization and urban overcrowding were being advanced as a genuine alternative.

Sadly some BHC never experienced that rural idyll and instead endured great hardship set against awful loneliness. But for others it proved to be a rescue from a grim life in an institution or worse on the streets and was the stepping board to a happier life.

All of which brings us back to that simple observation that each story will be different but each story needs to be told not only so that they will be remembered but that we can better explain and understand this bit of our history.

Picture; from the Middlemore Organization from the collection of Andrew Simpson, remaining images, courtesy of the Together Trust, www.togethertrust.org.uk

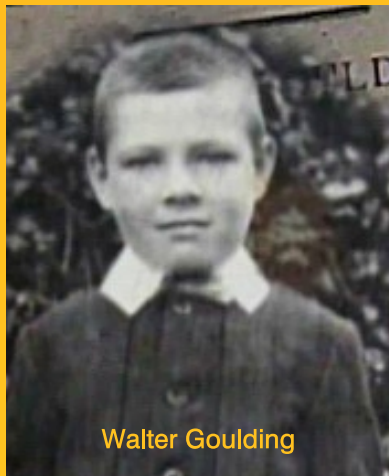




Edith Brooklyn



Lily Wood



Walter Goulding



Gypsy Simon Smith

WALTER BOWNS (BOWN) - 1880 - 1969

Member submitted story by Marilyn Wallis

When Benjamin and Annie Bown of Hampshire, England had their third child in July, 1880 (my grandfather), I'm sure they never anticipated what the future would bring for them and their children. At the time of Walter's birth, Benjamin (a former policeman) was a licensed victualler and Walter was actually born in the pub - The Vine Inn on Stoke Road, Gosport, Hampshire.

A fourth child, Ernest, was born in September 1883 and in April, 1884, their mother passed away at age 32, soon followed by Ernest in August, 1884 (both in the workhouse). Hard times had obviously befallen them and Benjamin was now left with three motherless children and unable to cope. They were in and out of the workhouse a number of times and they appeared in the 1891 census as residents of the Portsea Island Workhouse, Benjamin being a worker in the "insane asylum" and the children listed as "paupers". Benjamin passed away in 1893, again at the workhouse, leaving three children orphaned, my grandfather "Pop" being the youngest at age 12.



Walter Bowns

We don't know what Walter's life was like following his father's death (was he getting into trouble - was that the reason he was sent to Canada?) - but it would appear that he either ran away or was moved from the Portsea Workhouse at some point after his father passed away, and in early 1895 he was at the Annie McPherson Home of Industry in London. From there the "Board of Guardians" arranged for his journey to Canada as a British Home Child. (BHC records have him as Walter "Bounds" travelling with Rev. Wallace's group of children.) He left Liverpool on the S. S. Vancouver on March 28th, 1895 arriving in Halifax on April 7th and on to Marchmont Home in Belleville, Ontario, by train, arriving on April 9th, 1895 to be indentured out as a farmhand. It would be less than a week before he was sent out to his first "placement". I'm sure he had no knowledge of farming, having lived his short life close to the sea, and I wonder how much training he received at Marchmont over the few days he had there before his departure to a farm in Metcalfe, Ontario on April 15th.

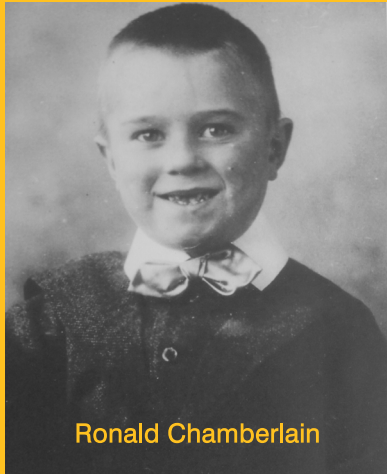
There were many other home children sailing with Walter at that time as part of the Rev. Wallace group, and for a glimpse of what he might have experienced en route and on arrival at Marchmont Home in Belleville, the following is an excerpt from a story of two orphaned brothers ages 8 and 13 on the same ship and heading for Belleville: (Adventures of an Orphan, an autobiography of George R. Steele)

" The trip across the great Atlantic was made in twelve days The first few days were pleasant but The ship tossed about from one side to the other. The latter part of the trip was calm and enjoyable. The twelve days, although being a short time, seemed like years to us. All the youngsters were planning what they would do the first thing when they arrived on land. One would do this and the other would do that. We had fine food and were treated very kindly by all on the ship ... Upon arriving in Halifax we were placed on a train for Belleville Ontario Canada, where we were taken directly to the Marchmont Home..... This house was a large brick building, surrounded by large green lawns and beautiful flower gardens, all being enclosed with a board fence. On this lawn I picked the first flowers I had ever seen. They were dandelions but as pretty and fragrant to me then as a rose would be today. We were free to roam and come and go as we wished, as long as we kept within bounds and the board fence. There was a feeling of liberty, freedom - no heavy gates to clang when they closed, or to bar us from the outside world. We were here assigned to large, airy sleeping rooms and playgrounds. Mr. and Mrs. Wallace had charge of the institution and sure were very nice people. Our stay here lasted about six weeks, when one day two parties wrote in for two boys to go out on farms "

Unfortunately, unlike the Steele brothers, my grandfather was not afforded the luxury of six weeks at Marchmont.

Following his arrival at the farm of his first "employer", the farmer commented that "you did not send me the Scotch boy I sent for". He was returned to Marchmont on July 9th and sent to a new post not long after. He would remain at this new farm in Brighton, Ontario for some time although

Children featured in Bleating of the Lambs



Ronald Chamberlain



Annie Lee Whatling



William Joseph Carter



William Hammond



a neighbour in 1897 had to complain to the "authorities". "I like him, no clothes, very destitute, will you put this matter very strongly to Mr. xx, his employer." In May 1900, we see an entry in his records "a big strong young man, still working for xx", a new employer. We do know from the 1901 Ontario census that he was employed as a farm hand in the township of Seymour, Brighton, Ontario. We believe that this was after his indentured period had expired as Walter would have been 21 at this point. And on March 29, 1903, his records indicate: "Walter called, fine young man, well dressed. Gets \$180 for year. Has no bad habits. Attending Tabernacle."

Little was shared by Walter with his family of his early years, except a few details of family names, that he "ran away from home" at age 12 and that he had worked for the School for the Deaf (now the Sir James Whitney School) in Belleville, Ontario at some point. Because his marriage certificate stated Belleville, Ontario as his place of birth, we assumed Walter was with his family in Canada when he "ran away", but of course that was obviously not the case. I think the truth of his birthplace must have come out when he had to provide a birth certificate for pension purposes but even then his BHC story did not surface.



His BHC story in Ontario was not a happy one at all but he dealt with it and eventually found himself in Regina, Saskatchewan where he worked hard and had a good life, marrying a lady from England who only after letters exchanged between them travelled to Canada in 1912 where they married a month or so later. They celebrated 50 years in December 1962. My grandmother died the following March. Two sons were born to Walter and Ethel, the youngest of which was my dad. As stated above, Walter never told his story and we only found out about it long after his death, following some sleuthing to find out how he got himself to Canada knowing as we did that he was a "pauper". What we did find in his records explains a lot about his demeanour throughout his lifetime. My dad was so upset that he didn't know his father's background and said it would explain a lot - why he wasn't very demonstrative - he never let his sons lack for any material things but didn't let his emotions show.

My grandfather was very hardworking and a good man, provided well for his family and prided himself on very lovely vegetable and flower gardens every year until shortly before his death. He did laugh - especially when he recited the alphabet backwards to my glee when I was a child or when he played with each new grandchild as they came along! - I am just so sorry that we didn't talk to him more about his life - but he only told us what he wanted us to know and if we had questioned more he would probably not have "fessed up" in any event. He obviously did not want his workhouse and BHC experiences to be remembered as a part of his life and I do feel a bit torn now making it a part of our family history. But after receiving his BHC records and accepting the story of his early life, it IS part of our family history albeit not a happy one for him. How could he wear long woolen underwear year round I used to ask myself - but according to the records received, he was soooooo cold during the bitter Ontario winters during his indenture, he must have said "I will never be cold again!" - Sad story to say the least - but his descendants are well and thriving and we are so proud of him and wish we could tell him so. And I am so encouraged by the attention the BHC story is receiving throughout the country and hope that there eventually will be a national day of celebration of British Home Children declared in each and every Province across Canada.

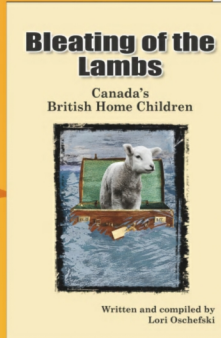
BHCARA News - New Book Release by Lori Oschefski

Descendents English Tea & Scone Party & Open Mic

Saturday June 13th 2015
1:30 pm at the
White Lions Tea House
33 Westmount Dr. N.
Orillia, Ontario

Book launch

"Bleating of the Lambs -
Stories of British Home Child"
by Lori Oschefski



Tea, scones
cream, lemon
homemade jam
fresh fruit

Ticketed event
\$10 each person
For tickets visit

www.britishhomechildren.com

About "Bleating of the Lambs" Cover and Title

The title of this book comes directly from a peaceful and vivid memory the former owner Pam Rosser, of a beautiful little cottage called "Brook Cottage". My mother, Muriel Oschefski was born in the peace and tranquility of Brook cottage, nestled in the hills of rural Herefordshire, England. The vivid memory? The sound of the bleating of the Lambs.

In England, young children are often endearingly called "little Lambs". The cover picture depicts a frightened little lamb embarking on an uncertain journey with a disengaged look; surely representative of the way many of our British Home Children looked and felt as they departed England for the distant shores of Canada - lost souls, their whole world packed in a tiny trunk.

The cover image was created by British "Found and Lost" artist Nerea Martinez de Lecea. Nerea and her Toronto partner Michele Woodey created the breathtaking art exhibit featured last fall at our Black Creek Pioneer Village BHC Day Celebration. A video of the instillation of this exhibit is available for [viewing on you-tube](http://www.foundandlost.info). Visit their web site at: www.foundandlost.info

Events: Many thanks to all who attended our May events! We have had an excellent turn out to each event. Our Sparrow Lake Historical Society event was very well received and attended. Beverley Schulz's presentation on her Grandfather William Hammond was excellent and heart felt. Gasps were heard when the topic was changed to the life of BHC Cecilia Jowett, as many in the audience had known her personally. The room was buzzing with excitement afterwards as people recanted their memories of Cecilia. Both William's and Cecilia's stories are told in "Bleating of the Lambs".

June 13, 2015 - White Lion Tea House in Orillia - Bleating of the Lambs book Launch and open mic - tickets available at the door or on line at: www.britishhomechildren.com

Sunday June 28, 2015 - Shelburne Public Library - British Home Child presentation, book reading and signing event. Guest BHCARA Member speaker will be Dallas Boudreau. The library is located at: 201 Owen Street, Shelburne, Ontario, 2pm to 4pm

Facebook Bullies :

It is strangely odd that a topic from over a hundred years ago would rely on a modern day phenomenon like FaceBook. However our group is an important tool for people to communicate their thoughts and activities, and in our case - the stories of the British Home Children. Many people have gained an understanding of the BHC and have greatly benefited from our FaceBook group as an information source and a place to gather and share. This is all in jeopardy unfortunately, due to an equally new phenomenon - the cyber bully.

These are real people who have real lives. Outwardly, they seem normal and even nice! But behind a computer keyboard they become vindictive, evil, deceitful and more cowardly than any bullies that came before them. The old school bullies were obvious. Everyone knew them for the nasty people they were and you could either join them or despise them. The cyber bully is far worse. They hide like cowards and cause untold harm. Their identities are often known by their victims but the Internet offers anonymity through unlimited fictitious personas and allows lies to propagate virally at the speed of light - literally.

As an organization BHCARA has been forced to adapt sign up procedures for the protection of our members. We know who the bullies are but we can't always stop them. They truly should be ashamed but they have no shame - enough said!