# Home Children Canada May 2024 Newsletter

### Alfred Cecil Bell By Chris Bell

Alfred Cecil Bell was born on 1st September 1881 @ 350 Fulham Road, London living over the store his parents Samuel and Lucy ran. He had a brother and five sisters. (Coincidentally the shop was within 100 yards of where Premiership Chelsea FC's Stamford Bridge now stands, which probably explains the extended Bell family's long term support for the club.)

Samuel changed his job in 1884 to a Commercial Traveler and the family moved to 14 Highweek Road, Tottenham, London. (Street demolished in 1976). However, in 1889 the family moved back to Fulham to 71 Harwood Road. Its not known what Samuel's job was after he moved. Samuel contracted TB and at the age of 39 died on 4th January 1894 at 202 North End Road, West Kensington, London. Alfred was twelve years old.

Thanks to David Waller, former Chief Executive of the Fegan's Society we now know that five months later on 21st May 1894 Alfred was taken by his mother Lucy to a Fegan's home, probably the main one in Lambeth SE London. Mr Fegan was a philanthropist and non conformist evangelist who started his work in England establishing homes for poor boys called Mr Fegan's Ragged School. We are fortunate that David has been able to provide the document generated when Lucy delivered Alfred to the home. He's described as 4'10' tall, 6st 11 lbs weight, dark hair, blue eyes. "How



received" explains why Lucy was faced with taking this very sad and difficult decision. "Cause Destitute". (Copy attached)

Mr Fegan, like many child rescuers of his day he believed emigration to Canada could offer these boys a much better future. The Fegan registration document describes Alfred emigrating to Canada on April 25th 1895 aged 13. The Home Children Canada records state aged 12. There were discrepancies between the ship manifests and the organisations involved but it seems pretty certain he was 13.

Fegan's records show that he was one of a party of 93 boys who sailed out of Liverpool on the the SS Labrador of the Dominion Line built by Harland and Wolff in Belfast. We now have a photo of the group in their Fegan home uniforms showing grandfather third row from the back, 8th boy from the left as you look at the picture. The manifest describes 86

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Home Children Canada News

Find my Past Collaboration

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Home Children Canada is pleased to be participating in this two day event at 29424 Lakeview Line, Wallacetown, ON N0L 2M0. Lori Oschefski will be hosting our tables. Sir George Beardshaw, our 100 yr old Veteran of the Second World War is expected to be on hand to greet the public. More information will be released on Facebook or visit:



Home Children Canada will be hosting a event table in the Market Place at the Ontario Genealogical Society's 2024

Conference, An Interactive

Experience: Explore, Engage, Enjoy! — taking place in Toronto June 14-16, 2024. On hand will be Lori Oschefsk and Dan Oatman from Home Children Canada and Shannon McKnight.

To register for this popular event, visit https://conference2024.ogs.on.ca/

men passengers. Any male over the age of 11 was thus described in those days. He landed at Quebec on 4th May 1895.

Emigrants to Canada comprised the bulk of its weekly service to Quebec and Montreal, calling at Irish ports en route. This Canadian trade was maintained as a joint service between 1909 and 1926 with White Star Line, the line that owned the Titanic and is now known as Cunard White Star. In 1899 she was shipwrecked off the coast of Tiree Scotland with remarkably no loss of life.

The group were Distributing Home, 295 George parties of boys were sent to country. They were encouraged and outfits to make the same and many did so. Those that did copper plates at the English appear on the names of those

The one missing piece sent to work. We believe he six years until on 2nd July 1900 in Montreal as a crewman on the Dempster Lines and worked his England from where he was His stay in Canada thus missed that might have told us. If there Distribution Home records answer this question?

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initially taken to the Fegan Street, Toronto. From there annual farms in various parts of the to repay the cost of their passage opportunity available for others, had their names engraved on orphanages. Alfred's name doesn't who contributed.

of information is where he was worked as a cattleman/cowboy for at the age of eighteen he signed on cargo ship Degama of the Elder passage back to Avonmouth, discharged on 6th August 1900. both the 1891 and 1901 census were any discoverable stored somewhere these might

As an aside in 1911 it

became evident that a lot of the

boys lacked skills in working on the Canadian farm. Fegan had the inspirational idea of recreating a Canadian-style farm in Britain. A farm was found and bought and all the farming implements were ordered from Canada so the boys could be trained in their usage before being sent to that country. The name of this farm was Home Farm and was situated at Goudhurst, in Kent. Fegan died at the farm in1925, but his wife continued his work until she was killed in an air raid that struck the farm in October 1945.

Five months after returning on 25th January 1901 he enlisted in the army in London to fight in the Boer War. (1899-1902). His regimental number was 22471 of the 69th company, Imperial Yeomanry, a force of civilian volunteers equipped as mounted infantry. Four months later on the 29th May 1901 he was severely wounded in the leg at Vlakfontein during a guerrilla attack by the Boers in an action described in Thomas Pakenham's "The Boer War". 49 men were killed and 130 wounded. On 29th August 1901 he was certified medically unfit for further service in nearby Pretoria and on the 18th November that year was discharged from the army at Shorncliffe, Folkestone. The Royal Chelsea Hospital paid him a war pension until 19th December 1902 at which point they paid him a gratuity of 100 pounds in lieu of all further pensions.

On leaving the army he worked as a Commercial Traveler living with his mother Lucy at 174 Trevelyan Road, Tooting Graveney, London. Aged 21 he married Daisy Anne Sayers in 1903 at St Peters Presbyterian church, Beechcroft Road, Wandsworth, London. Daisy was 20, living at 80 Mellison road. She was the daughter of Charles Hind Sayers and Emma Eliza Sayers who ran a grocer's shop at 8 Selkirk road, Tooting, London.

Initially they lived at Cowick Road, London, SW17 but clearly had plans to emigrate to Canada as soon after the birth of their first son Reginald on 14/1/1904 they sailed to Newmarket, Ontario, Canada. Initially Alfred worked as a Teamster and later a Jointer. Their second son Cecil was born there on 19/10/1905 and their third Ronald on 3/3/1907. They were both delivered by Dr Webb a well known Newmarket physician.

However, immigrants from England were not made welcome at this time as there was a strike and the British were felt to be taking Canadian jobs. A fire, thought to be arson, destroyed Alfred's chicken farm. Also Daisy was by now so ill with worry and homesickness, the doctor advised Alfred to take her back to England. So in 1908 they boarded the SS Atlantic to return to England. The two sons were taken on

board without tickets. Anecdotal evidence suggests Alfred couldn't afford the fare and smuggled them on. Daisy was pregnant again and the crossing was very rough.

They went to live initially in Balfour Road, London, SW19 followed by Franciscan Road, Byton Road and Trevelyan Road. Their third son Horace was born on 7/1/1909, their daughter Phyllis on 22/4/1910 and their youngest son Alfred on 15/8/1913.

A year later WW1 broke out. Although he was not of an age where he would have been expected to enlist Alfred went to Tooting library and volunteered again for the army. He joined the East Surrey Regiment as a Corporal, was stationed at Dover with a regimental number of 23736. He later transferred to Acting Sergeant in the Labour Corps, number 363721. Sometime around 1915 Daisy waved goodbye to him as he boarded a troop train at Waterloo to join the war in France.

Its unclear if he saw active service but anecdotal evidence suggests he didn't. It is possible he had some sort of role in the Quartermaster's section. Whilst there he sent many silk postcards to his daughter Phyllis and on his safe return brought back German rifles, bayonets and a German helmet. On 30/1/1921 he was issued with the British War Medal and on 20/6/1921 the Victory Medal.

After the war Alfred worked with the Pearl and later the Liverpool Victoria Insurance Companies becoming a District Inspector in 1921. It was this year that his mother Lucy died. The family lived at 32 Longmead Road, London and then in 1926 a new house Court View, 11 Ramsdale Road, London. The latter was damaged by bombing during WW2 so they moved to 13 Garden Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey.

Alfred died on Christmas Day 1948 aged 67 at St Helier Hospital, Carshalton, Surrey. Daisy moved to 23 Greyswood Street, Streatham, London and died on 2/4/1968 aged 84 at St James Hospital, Balham, London. They are buried together in London Road Cemetery, London Road, Mitcham, Surrey. Grave no 6109 Plot 17.

My only recollection of my grandfather is in his back garden a year before he died when I was two, as the attached photo shows. I also attach a photo of him with his family. Grandfather's experience illustrates clearly how small positive actions can have wide ranging benefits. We are grateful as a family that he benefited and in due course his son, our father was able to reflect the support given to him by caring for the Kindertransport boys in 1939.

BHC Registry ID #: 43692



### **Find my Past Collaboration**

First global collection for tracing British Home Children launched by Findmypast in partnership with Home Children Canada! This FREE collection will revolutionize the search for information on British Home Children!

Find My Past, in collaboration with Home Children Canada, The National Archives, British Library, Library and Archives Canada, presents a new collection of Home Children records launched March of 2024 at Rootstech in Salt Lake City, USA! This comprehensive

collection features a vast and varied range of records which delves into the stories of those affected by the forced child migrant scheme from the 1860s to the 1970s. Including workhouse records, Juvenile Inspection Reports, Board of Guardian Records, and more, this repository will continually grow, potentially encompassing historical newspapers, migration records, and military records. For descendants seeking their roots, this collection offers accessible resources previously held in private archives, facilitating the tracing of their ancestors' journeys and connections. **Best of all, it's free with a general Find My Past account!** (no subscription necessary) Our Military service Index and Hazelbrae Index files will soon be included. PLEASE NOTE: This information has not been "sold" and will continue to be available for free on our web pages. Hazelbrae is schedule to be incorporated into the Home Children Canada BHC Registry.

# Plugging the gap ...... one charity .... and caring for children in need By Our Andrew Simpson

By Andrew Simpson, Author of "The Ever Open Door"

<u>British Home Children ...... the story from Britain</u>

Visit Andrew's Blog: <a href="https://chor/tonhistory.blogspot.com/">https://chor/tonhistory.blogspot.com/</a>

Plugging the gap ...... one charity .... and caring for children in need

However, we view the policy of child immigration to Canada it was just one aspect of how Britain responded to child welfare in the late 19th century.

The intervention of the State into childcare was slow in coming and much fell to the operations of the Poor Law Unions and charities.

One such charity was the Manchester and Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges which started in 1870 with just one night shelter for six destitute boys who were fed given a bed and turned out the following morning back onto the streets.

Within just a decade of opening this first Refuge on Quay Street the Charity had extended its operations to include homes for working boys in Broughton, along with homes for younger destitute boys, established its first home for poor

neglected girls, and made use of two training ships for youngsters

who wanted to go to sea. It began the new decade by setting up the Boys Rest and Coffee Room in Angel Medow.

Underpinning each of these ventures was the simple belief that those in their care would benefit by a stable and caring environment, coupled with the opportunity to learn a trade, and gain meaningful employment.

It was as the Lord Mayor of Salford observed, "cheaper and better to strive to help these young people become useful members of society than to permit them to grow up into either paupers or criminals."

At the centre of all the activities was the Central Refuge on Francis Street, which

On admission undated

was also the administrative hub of the organisation. It consisted of four buildings bought for £1,000 and completed in four stages

with the last extension finished in 1884. It was home for up to 120 boys.

The Central Refuge also incorporated workshops for apprenticeships offering tailoring, firewood, shoe making, printing and joinery.

Along with the workshops, living accommodation and offices, could be found a gymnasium, a laundry, a reading room, games room, a visitor's room, a swimming pool and an infirmary. All of these could also be used by those who had left the Charity.

There was accommodation on all three floors, and these consisted of sleeping cubicles with bathrooms and lavatories on each floor and more in the basement.

The design had been influenced by the idea that the building should not resemble a

public one but instead have a more homely look.

That said the basement also contained "disinfecting closets "which is a powerful reminder of the condition of some of the boys when they arrived and of their life before admission.

Complementing the Francis Street site was Heathfield on Broughton Lane in Salford, which was home from 1878 to 1894 to girls aged from ten up to fifteen. Here they were engaged in laundry and housework and later were found jobs in households.

The variety and scope of the jobs undertaken by young people in the care of the Charity is evidenced from the stories of the 58 boys who lived at the four homes in



Lower Broughton. These were situated at 11 Sussex Street, 214 Broughton Road, St John's Place, Great Clowes Street, and 8 Camp Street.

In the February of 1880 the Charity's magazine, The Worker, reported that the 58 were gainfully employed ranging in trades from painting and organ builders to joinery and engraving.

But perhaps the three occupations which most prominently advertised the work of the Refuge were the three brigades, made up of the shoeblack brigade, the parcel brigade and the Caxton or newspaper brigade. Each had their own distinctive uniform and in the winter of 1885, there were 297 of them.

In that same year the Refuge placed 148 boys on the "training ship Indefatigable which continues to be a very useful adjunct to the work of the Refuge as an outlet for such of the boys who desire and are physically fit for a seafaring life." The ship was based at Liverpool and in the previous decade the Refuge had also made use of the training ship Warspite, which was located in Woolwich on the River Thames.

And mindful of the need to reach out to those young people who were not already in their care, the Charity opened a Boys' Rest and Coffee Shop in Angel Meadow, which was one of



the most notorious parts of the city. This new addition was seen as a stepping-stone to the other services. In time, some of those who visited it might approach the Charity for help and even apply for admission.

The Together Trust has an extensive archive of material ranging from admission books to the application form, which were filled in when an application was made.

Admission would depend on the circumstances of the child. Many of the application forms were signed by parents but if they had none

they would be signed by a close relative.

The overriding principle was that the child came first and this was central to the Charity's activities, extending over all they did so that by the beginning of the 20th century the Charity confirmed the assertion made by the Lord Mayor of Salford that it was "an integral part of the city's agencies for social amelioration and an essential part of the social fabric of the modern community."

Pictures; courtesy of the Together Trust

Adapted from The Ever-Open Door, 150 Years of the Together

Trust, Andrew Simpson, 2020

## Home Children Canada's BHC Registry Update

### Exciting news in the development of the Home Children Canada's BHC Registry!

First, our Registry has moved and how is housed directly on our HCC website making it more accessible and user-friendly.

To access the Registry the URL now is: <a href="https://www.homechildrencanada.com/registry">https://www.homechildrencanada.com/registry</a>. A redirect has been placed on the old URL to ensure continued use. Our new site is just new, but many other features will be added, such as obituaries of the Home Children. The addition of photos of the Home Children, just newly added is now available, coupled with the ships and receiving homes, and the upcoming inclusion of obituaries will surely enrich the database and help descendants connect more deeply with their heritage. The Registry is now open to public submissions! This is a major step forward. It will not only allow descendants to contribute their own family stories but also create a more comprehensive and inclusive resource for researchers and anyone interested in the history of Home Children. Barry Veerkamp, our new web developer, has created a specialized submission form. Forms will be vetted before the information is uploaded to the Registry. The vetting process for submitted forms is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the registry, helping to ensure the information provided is accurate and properly sourced. Family stories will also be accepted. *Please note: The children's ID numbers have not changed.* I am sure, the late Perry Snow, who started the Registry, with just one name, that of his father, is smiling down on us. Visit the page of William Cheesman, Grandfather of Lori Oschefski to see how the registry presents:

https://www.homechildrencanada.com/registry?id=59478

To submit information or missing children from the Registry visit: https://www.homechildrencanada.com/registry-update

### The Story of Adolf Nisbet

By Rosemary Jewers



In 2009 I received some old documents and photographs which related to the Brereton family, they were found in the attic of a house on the south coast of England. The couple who found the stash wanted the items to go back to the original family. As my maiden name was Brereton I decided to take up the challenge... little did I know where these photos and papers would lead me.

Over several months I combed through the documents finally deciding they belonged to a distant Irish branch of the family. Having Googled combinations of names mentioned in the papers, Geraldine Mary Welman (née Brereton) appeared on the peerage.com. Her father

was a brigadier general in the British Army. The website showed Geraldine had a son, Gerald. She married in 1909.

I then found her son Gerald's obituary in a USA newspaper. The article mentioned a church which I contacted, and my email was forwarded to his widow. Later the photos and documents were sent to her. Job done! I sat back and congratulated myself.

In 2014 I received a phone call from Scotland, the caller was a man named Trevor. He started by saying he had a long story to tell. Continuing, he told me he had purchased a set of old books, in the flyleaf of each was the name 'Agnes T. Husband'. He was curious to know who she was. He discovered she had married a Robert George Nisbet, who described himself as widower. Trevor found him in the 1911 Census.

Robert Nisbet was a lectured in Humanities at Glasgow University, his first wife, was Henrietta nee Hardeland, she was born in Germany and they had three adopted English children living with them in Glasgow. Robert and Henrietta had already changed the names of the children. This was done before the law



Left to right.

Adolf, Hugh and Marlies (source: Beatrice Geraldine Brereton)

two year old girl who they named Mary Louise Nisbet. Trevor couldn't find the two boys in later life, but he did find a remarkable marriage certificate of Mary Louise Nisbet, aka Beatrice Geraldine Brereton - nickname Marlies. On the certificate she mentioned the name of her mother, Geraldine and that she had married Arthur Pole Welman!

required it to be done legally.

One of those children was a

In a nutshell, Trevor told me that Geraldine (mother

of Gerald Welman) had conceived a child out of wedlock and probably Arthur Pole Welman, who she eventually married, was the father of the child. The pregnant Geraldine was packed off to Folkestone, Kent to have the baby.

Geraldine had named her baby, Beatrice Geraldine Brereton. Arthur, a married man was being divorced by his wife, the Army sent him to Sierra Leone. Shortly after the decree absolute, Arthur and Geraldine married there. Meanwhile baby Beatrice had been placed somewhere, possibly in an orphanage.

The eldest adopted boy was born in 1905, the Nesbits had named him Hugh Nisbet - probably after Robert Nisbet's brother. The next boy was born in 1907 and they named him Adolf Hardeland Nisbet.

A month or so before Henrietta Nisbet died, her adopted son, Hugh, aged 17 was sent to Australia. Henrietta Nisbet had been suffering with breast cancer for almost 12 years. A month after her death, her adopted son Adolf, aged 15 was sent to Canada.

Adolf had filled in a 'DECLARATION OF PASSENGER TO CANADA' form. He stated he had been born

in Northamptonshire. If he hadn't known before, he would have found this on his birth certificate. Robert Nisbet, his adopted father had paid for his passage. Adolf had £5 in his possession and he was under the impression he was going to Canada to learn to be a farmer. He was being sent to the notorious Cossar's Farm in



Lower Gagetown, New Brunswick, run by Mr. Meiklejohn.

Adolf travelled on the Metagama which was bound for Saint John. They departed from Prince's Dock, Glasgow on 16th March 1923. It seemed harsh that he was sent away a month after Henrietta's death and Trevor and I wanted to know more about him.

Having discovered from Trevor that Mary Louise Nisbet (nickname Marlies) aka Beatrice Geraldine Brereton had married a William Cunningham Watson, I donned my detective hat once again and searched for William and Marlies' descendants.

I finally traced William Watson's nephew. I discovered William and Marlies had a daughter, Eileen who had recently moved to Norfolk, England with her daughter, Heather.

My next phone call was to Heather. As it turned out, Heather knew the real name of her grandmother and she also knew that her great grandmother was Geraldine, and that Geraldine had married Arthur Pole Welman but that was all the family knew.

Heather sent me the following information which was written on the reverse of Beatrice Geraldine Brereton's birth certificate.

'Springside Gardens, N Kelvinside, Glasgow 11th May 1911' 'Having on the 15th February 1911 adopted named Beatrice Geraldine Brereton as our daughter, we have named her Mary Louise Nisbet, which name she will in future bear' '(signed) Robert G Nisbet' 'Henny Hardeland Nisbet'.

Over the next few months we tried to find out how and why the Nisbets adopted the children. I tried various Folkestone sites and orphanages in the Kent area but I only came up with blanks.

there he died from cancer.

Heather told us Marlies had been told not to reply to any letters Adolf might send her. She was warned if he wrote asking for money she was not to send any. He must have been starving at times as the rations at Cossar's Farm were not plentiful.

Heather told us

through

find

her

business.

Adolf never change his name legally, but was know as Charles or Charlie. After much research we found that he married Violet Partington and they did have children. Adolf gave one of his daughters a second name, Marlies. In World War II he was a cook on a ship but sometime later he and Violet divorced.

When Adolf and Violet married, he was required to write his mother's name on the marriage certificate. He started to write his adopted mother's (nickname) Henny and then he wrote H. This H was probably for her maiden name, Hardeland. He then wrote the possible surname of his birth mother, Whitlock!

While I continued to research Adolf's life, I found two family trees which mentioned him. One mentioned his birth, 16th November 1907 Rushden, Northamptonshire, died 15 Oct 1982 Fredericton, NB. I then found the record in full. Adolf/Charles Nisbet died on the 15th October 1982. His grave is at the Fredericton Rural Extension, York County Cemetery - a soldiers grave plot: 83-1. NB.

The second tree owner appeared to be his granddaughter. Trevor and I later found the marriage details of her mother. We also found details of a marriage of yet another of his daughters.

Not long after the death of Henrietta Nisbet, Robert Nisbet married Agnes Thomson Husband, the original owner of the books.

Heather has told us that her granny, Marlies would have been aware of her real father's existence and his name. On the marriage certificate it mentions her former name, Beatrice Geraldine Brereton. Under mother is written 'Geraldine Mary Brereton (afterwards married to Arthur Pole Welman army Lieutenant Colonel)'. As this was an official and legal document the registrar would have only entered this information as it was relevant and possibly to identify her mother.

Heather found in the index of an old school book, that her grandmother, Marlies attended a private school, Laurel Bank School, Glasgow between 1913-1926. She also told us that Hugh was an engineer in Sydney, he had married and had a family. Eventually I tracked down his daughter, but I'm not sure she ever read the information I sent.

I was very keen to find Adolf's family, unfortunately his granddaughter's Ancestry page hadn't been updated in years and I'd had no luck contacting the tree owner. In 2015 I had a sudden brainwave and looked at the pseudonym used. I always assumed this name was a combination of Jean and another family name. Anyway, I decided to Google it and to my delight her name appeared. I discovered she had a blog but this was also old, so I set about looking for her phone number as she had mentioned where she was living in Canada.

Luck was on my side, the phone book showed only one family with that surname in area. That night I made my phone call. Jean answered - I had found the right person! It turned out she had absolutely no idea her grandfather was adopted. Since then we have been in contact and we have sent photos and information to her.

It was Jean who told me that her grandfather, Adolf had been a cook on a ship in WWII. After the war he returned home

a changed man. She wrote that he was a loving man to all of his family and even when he and Violet divorced, they remained good friends until his death.

In Adolf's obituary it states he was born in Glasgow, Scotland, the son of Professor and Mrs. Robert George Nisbet, therefore his true identity and where he was born did not appear. He was listed as a painter by trade, and a member of the Fredericton branch of the Royal Canadian Legion and an associate member of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association. Apparently the Air Force Club was very near his residence on Regent Street, Fredericton.

It was wonderful to find and put these descendants in touch, but the story we had uncovered with its many twists and turns was a sad one. Having been plucked from England and taken to Scotland with two other children, this boy had his name changed to a German name, his adopted mother had been seriously ill for most of the time he was living with her and now she was died. Brought up in an academic household and sent to a private school, at 15 he was cast out and sent to Canada. On the ship he would mix with boys who weren't educated to the same standard as himself and he was duped into thinking he was going to learn to be a farmer. Over the years I have tried to find Charles/Adolf/Nisbet/Whitlock's real name, but as yet the records are not giving up their secrets.

Rosemary Jewers

Link to full story.

https://www.breretonworld.com/search?q=Family+reunited

Dor	one Adolf H NISBET marriage 1935.JPG	(A)	
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