



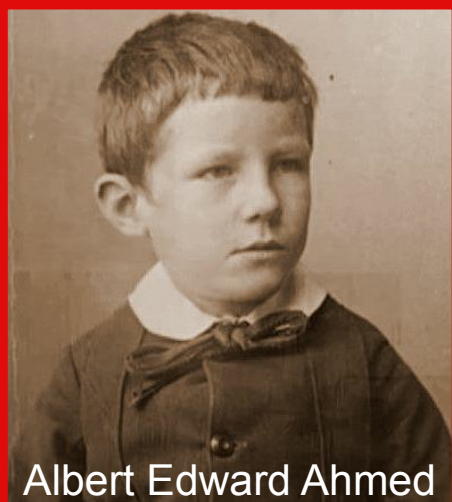
# British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association

[www.britishhomechildren.com](http://www.britishhomechildren.com)

May 2015  
Newsletter

By Lori Oschefski with  
a special feature by  
Andrew Simpson

Special Edition - Remembering our Fallen in the First World War



Albert Edward Ahmed

**E**ight year old Albert Edward Ahmed, arrived in Canada in 1893, brought by the Dr. Barnardo Homes. Born Abdullah William L'Hage Ahmed, 1885 in Kennington, England, he was the son of L'Hage Ahmed and his wife Elizabeth Uncles. Albert was admitted to Barnardo's at the age of seven after both his parents had died. Elizabeth had died when Albert was four, his father L'Hage, who was the head of a troop of acrobats, died a year after his wife. Albert left several siblings behind in England when he was removed to Canada.

In Canada, he was placed with Gordon Emerson of Bervie, Ontario. Indicating he had stayed with Mr. Emerson, Albert was awarded the Barnardo Home silver Good Conduct Medal. This was awarded to the boys in Canada who stayed with their first placement for a certain amount of years and whose conduct was worthy of recognition.

Albert enlisted in Tiverton Ontario in April of 1916. He arrived in England later that year. He was overseas for some time before he transferred to the 78th battalion, just months before they found themselves at the battle of Amiens, his first direct action, and his last. On October

11, just three days into this battle, during the attack on Hallu, twenty nine year old Albert went missing and was declared dead, killed by enemy shell fire. His name would be etched on the Vimy Memorial in France.

In 2006, then 14-year-old Fabien Demeusere was looking for badges buckles and old cartridges near a depression in his backyard in Hallu, France. His family home had been built on the old battlefield. Digging deeper he came across human remains, later identified as eight soldiers of the 78th Winnipeg Grenadiers who were killed on Aug 11, 1918.

One of these soldiers has been tentatively identified as Albert Edward Ahmed. Although DNA testing has not proven to be one hundred percent conclusive, Albert's family is convinced it is him.

This month, a special internment ceremony to bury the soldiers with military honours alongside others of the 78th will take place at a cemetery in Caix France. There to honour Albert's sacrifice will be his family recently located in England and the United States.

Now members of our BHCARA group, family members Susan, Anne and Veronica now know the story of our British Home Children and their important contribution to the First World War. In France this month, they will honour not only Albert, but all our 1060 BHC who died in this war.

For more information and  
to view the CBC film  
[Lost Men of the 78th.](#)



## Tower of London

### Blood Swept Land and Seas of Red

This exhibit marked the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. It was created by artists Paul Cummins and Tom Piper. 888,246 ceramic poppies progressively filled the Tower's moat from July 17 to November 11, 2014. Each poppy represented a commonwealth soldier who died in the war. The BHCARA First World War Project has identified, to date, 1,060 BHC who died in the war. Many of their names were submitted to the Tower and read out during their evening sunset Roll of Honour service. In honour of our BHC who perished the BHCARA purchased one of these poppies to be included in our displays.

For more information please visit:

[Tower of London Remembers](#)

For information on our First World War Honour Roll [please visit our web site.](#)

## BHC First World War Facts

- Almost 100% of the BHC eligible to enlist did
- Almost 10,000 BHC enlisted
- To date 1,060 have been identified as having lost their life in the WWI
- BHC Claude Nunney was one of Canada's Victoria Cross recipients
- Canada's last surviving infantry man from the Battle of Vimy Ridge was BHC Charles Reaper



George Bradford Simpson  
circa 1918  
*From the collection of  
Andrew Simpson*

# On discovering the service records of a British Home Child

by Andrew Simpson©

I have no pictures of my great uncle who went over to Canada in 1914 with the Middlemore charity. Nor has he left much else in the way of personal material and even the official records stretch to just a few census returns, the register of his birth and fragmentary documents from the social services, Middlemore and the Derby Poor Law Guardians.

My great aunt left a few memories of the man and I have two letters and that is about it. I know he had an unhappy time, was placed on three farms between May 1914 and August 1915 before he ran away from his last placement, changed his name, lied about his age and enlisted in the Canadian Army.

But that decision has at least offered up a wealth of information and has gone some way to bring him out of the shadows.

I know what he looked like, the colour of his eyes, his hair and his weight and general health and I can follow his experiences from his enlistment through to his basic training, embarkation for Britain and onward journey to the Western Front.

Moreover knowing who he served with it is possible to read the war diaries of his unit and get an understanding of what he went through in France from the daily tedium of training and fatigues to the brutal realities of serving on the front line.

And along with his medical records are a list of his misdemeanours which suggest that the troubled adolescent in Derby who could not settle on farms in NB and NS found the discipline of army life no easier.

Between 1916 and 1918 he faced four military courts from refusing to obey an order to absent without leave while on active service. But of all the military documents it is perhaps his Attestation Papers which are the most revealing for this is the moment when he sets his face against everything in his life so far.

It starts with that name change and the falsification of his age and goes on to deny the very existence of his mother, preferring instead to offer his aunt as his next of kin. Now this is not the place to explore why that might have been and while I can vouchsafe some reasons they will always be speculation.

Suffice to say that his mother who was my great grandmother may have been a difficult woman who in her way was no less troubled than her son.

After his demob he all but vanishes from the record. I know he was instrumental in helping his sister cross to Canada in 1925 and there is a suggestion from her that he had gone west but there the trail ends.

So those army records offer up a brief glimpse of my great uncle and are all the more important given that we have none of the military records for the others in the family who fought in the Great War.

In all six of my immediate family joined the Colours, and they include my great grandfather, my grandfather, two of his brothers and two of my uncles.. But ironically it is the one family member who left for far away Canada whose military career is intact. Sadly the records of the other five are part of the 60% of service records which were destroyed in the Blitz.

So today I have one letter from an uncle dated December 1918 as his unit prepared to cross the Rhine into Germany, a few photographs, the demobilization papers of my grandfather and a few bits from my great grandfather who served in the armies of the old Queen between 1888 and 1892 and briefly served again during the Great War.

Not that this will surprise anyone who has gone looking for their family history but there is perhaps a slight irony in that the man who was sent from these shores, and whose later life would end in a mystery should for a brief few years provided the most detailed records of any of his family.



*C Company of the First City Battalion of the 16th Manchester's 1914  
courtesy of Bob Potts.*



# Digitization of Canadian Expeditionary Force Service Files by the Library & Archives Canada

The digitization of 640,000 Canadian Expeditionary Force personnel service files is underway by the Library and Archives Canada. This project aims to preserve these files while making high quality digital copies available of the full service records for free on the LAC site on their [Soldiers of the First World War: 1914-1918](#) page. When a file has been digitized, a link called 'Digitized service file - PDF format' is added to the database entry. If there is no pdf link, it means the file has not yet been digitized. This project is of special significance to our BHC research as almost 10,000 of our British Home Children enlisted. These records hold valuable clues and information which helps us to put our family stories together.

Digitized service file - PDF format

[B0052-S057](#)

The symbol to look for on the right hand side of the page

## First World War Identification Project



Beginning in 2013, the British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association began the project of identification of all the British Home Children who died in the First World War. The original list was compiled by the outstanding efforts of Perry Snow. Knowing the importance of this work, Marjorie P. Kohli and John Sayers quickly stepped up and contributed their information to the list. John Sayers, located in Ottawa, visited the Library and Archives Canada on our behalf. He was able to obtain the listings from many of the organizations which were sent to the Government during the war, detailing the boys from each organization who were serving and those who had perished. Together with our Head Researcher Jennifer Layne, Lori Oschefski, Marjorie Kohli, Dona Crawford and Carol Black researched each boy carefully and their information was catalogued. Thousands of enlistment records were combed through in efforts to extract our BHC. The current number of BHC who died in the war stands at 1,060. In July of 2014, a special Commemoration Service was held at the Black Creek Pioneer Village in Toronto where a Memorial Honour Roll plaque was unveiled bearing the names of most of these boys. This is an ongoing project and names are being added as they are found. Since the unveiling ceremony, approximately forty names have been added.



This beautiful plaque was designed by Dawn Heuston, using the original memorial plaque presented to Ben Johnston of Caven Township, Durham, Ontario, in honour of the death of BHC [Cecil Bennett](#). Cecil was taken in by the Johnston family and was lovingly cared for as a son until his death on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1917 at Vimy Ridge. In the future BHCARA would like to see a permanent memorial created in memory of our BHC casualties after all the names of our BHC who died have been found. To view the full list of names, information and for a FREE download of this beautiful plaque visit our web site [British Home Children in Canada](#).

# BHCARA News & Events

**W**e would like to extend our welcome and congratulations to the Ontario Geological Society Special Interest Group - British Home Children on their new Facebook Group. Run by their new Chair Person, Dianna Hanson Fulton, this promises to be an excellent resource for information and research assistance. Click here to join their [Facebook Group](#).

## Facebook Tip:

Our very active group means often postings are pushed down the page making it difficult to find them again. Our group can be searched by using the icon found on the upper right hand corner of the page. Example —>

## May Events

**Wednesday May 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm**

Cafe Caledon, St. James Church Building,  
6025 Old Church Road in Caledon East

**Saturday May 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm**

Severn Bridge Woman's Institute Hall  
1035 Southwood Rd, Severn Bridge  
Featuring guest speaker Beverley Schulz

<a href="#">Photos</a>	<a href="#">Files</a>	<input type="text" value="Search this group"/>	<input type="button" value="Q"/>
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# Black Creek Pioneer Village Exhibit

1000 Murray Ross Parkway | Toronto, Ontario M3J 2P3 | 416 736-1733 | [bcpvinfo@trca.on.ca](mailto:bcpvinfo@trca.on.ca)

## REOPENED FOR 2015

Canada's largest and most comprehensive BHC exhibit!

For information please visit  
[www.blackcreek.ca](http://www.blackcreek.ca)

**“B**reaking the Silence - Stories of the British Home Children” exhibit, created in 2014 in partnership between the Black Creek Pioneer Village in Toronto and the BHCARA, closed for the winter months is now opened for 2015! The exhibit is located in their beautiful McNair Gallery where thousands have visited including many Ontario school children!



**Join us for our second  
British Home Child Day Celebration  
At the Black Creek Pioneer Village  
Sunday September 27, 2015**