

# British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association

## November 2016 Newsletter

Written by *Lori Oschefski*  
and *Andrew Simpson*

Remembering the  
contributions our BHC made  
to Canada's War efforts



Victor at Barnardo's



# Victor Ford

Victor William Ford, born on September 11, 1911 in Weston-super-Mare, a resort town on the Somerset coast of England. He was the son of William Day and Annie Emily Ford and a sibling of Blanche born in 1906 and Queenie, born in 1910. Annie and William never married, therefore the children sometimes went by the last name of Day and sometimes, Ford. Annie had two more children, Kenneth in 1912 and Harold in 1914.



Victor,  
Queenie,  
Harold  
and Ken

Annie loved her children dearly but, unable to support them, admitted Queenie, Victor, Kenneth and Harold into the Bath Union Workhouse. Annie would visit them often, taking them for outings. Tragically, Annie died February 21, 1925.

Following her death, Victor and Kenneth were transferred to a Dr. Barnardo Home. By November of 1926, Victor and Kenneth were on the list to be emigrated to Australia, but Victor was deemed to be too short. Therefore Canada became their destination.

On March 18, 1927, two years after Annie's death, Victor and Kenneth were sent to Canada to work on farms. His first placement was with Mr George Skelling at Orono, Ontario. In December, Kenneth was placed with Mr George M Veit, RR3, Delhi, Ontario. At this time, Victor asked Barnardo's if his sister, Queenie, and brother Harold could come to join himself and Kenneth in Canada. Harold arrived in April of 1929. Queenie was kept in England and was put into domestic service.

Placements did not seem to work out for Victor who was transferred to several farms. In 1929/1930, while working in Port Colborne, Victor met a young Ethel Grace Gertrude Robinson (Grace) and they fell in love. In 1933 Victor tried his hand as a salesman for "Fuller Brushes" and also worked for a Doctor but both jobs were poorly paid. Neither were very successful and his advisor in Barnardo's recommended he should return to farming which he knew well.

On April 9, 1934, Grace married Kenneth Bell of Toronto, Ontario. Her descendants believe her parents had forced her hand in this marriage. Purely speculation, but as British Home Children were not held in high regard in Canada and Victor was struggling, could it be Grace's parents did not consider Victor good enough to marry their daughter?

Elmore Eden Bell, was born in August of 1935. Grace gave birth at home, sixteen

months after their marriage, to a boy, Elmore.

From 1936 to 1937 Victor travelled throughout Europe, by bicycle, visiting nine countries including two visits to the United Kingdom where he visited Queenie and other family members. In 1939 Victor toured the United States of America returning to Canada in early 1940. Upon his return, he resided with Grace and her mother.

Grace's husband, according to the family, was unkind and abusive to Grace and her little boy. It was Grace's mother, the very person who had forced her to marry Ken, who removed Grace and Elmore from his home. After their marriage disintegrated, Ken was never heard from again. The family, in later years, was told he had died, but this has proven to be untrue.

Victor in unwavering love for Grace, stood by her and Elmore. The three enjoyed some happy times. Grace and Victor planned to marry once Grace was legally free of her first marriage. Their happiness was interrupted, sadly, by the outbreak of the Second World War.

On 2 August, 1940, at twenty seven years of age, Victor enlisted in Dunnville, Ontario with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn Dufferin and Haldimand Rifles, then the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. His brother Kenneth had worked with the Honsberger family there. While Victor was waiting to be called up, he also worked with the Honsberger family. Victor attended the Diltz United Church in Dunnville, finding great peace and fellowship there.

In 1941, Victor was attended the Mechanic Trade School at Camp Nanaimo in British Columbia. April 9, he appointed Grace both beneficiary and executrix of his will. On June 24, he was admitted to hospital, for a weeks stay, for treatment of kidney stones. He qualified as Driver Mechanic Class 1 in June of 1942 and was transferred to Eastern Canada, only to be transferred again in October of 1942 to the UK to begin active service.

It is interesting to note that letters sent from

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# "At times life seemed in vain but I always thought of you thinking of me"



the soldiers were censored. Victor's military files contain numerous personal letter transcriptions. Despite the many letters he sent to friends and family, it was mostly the letters to Grace that were kept in his file. These letters were not kept until after a letter dated 21 Jan 1943, to Queenie, in which Victor writes: "I am leaving here Tuesday for Scotland or at least for an island off Scotland I believe to Rothsay but if you write....do not mention names of places etc. or I may get into trouble as I shall post this down here in Littlehampton. Now I am or expect to be leaving for SCOTLAND TUESDAY morning by train as convoy by road will take too long. Now I want you to write Grace and tell her I have gone to Scotland. Just tell her that Victor left for Scotland last week and she will tell Mrs. Honsberger by letter as I cannot

write to Canada for a while. Do not mention anything else about R.H.L.I. or anything or it will be censored out. Just (Victor has gone to Scotland) as the censor will not know who Victor is, either civilian or army. I wrote to her awhile back and prefer not to write now till I see how things work out up north. No do not forget those addresses if anything should happen such as another Dieppe, etc., I want you to burn this letter after you have read it do not leave it hanging around....." After this letter, most letters to Grace were censored, transcribed and kept in his file. On 13 February 1943, Victor changed his will. He left Grace as executrix, but named Queenie as beneficiary of his estate. The copy in his file is unsigned.

Victor always asked about Elmore in his letters to Grace. In fact he expressed a great amount of care and concern for Elmore's well being. Victor reminded Grace, in a letter, dated 23 Feb 1943, to refer to herself as Grace Robinson and not Mrs. Bell. Victor was in England visiting his sister Queenie who had asked, in front of her husband, who Mrs. Bell was. Victor wrote "please always put Grace Robinson as what they do not know will not matter she asked me about it in front of Alex I said I guess your step-mother sent it."

10 May 1943, Victor wrote Grace from Rustington Sussex ; "I have to write this on my knee in the tent so please excuse writing it is raining, hard here still every day and night now, my blankets were nearly floating this morning, gosh was the ground ever wet and we sleep on the bare ground with only two blankets gosh it is cold and wet....Now I am in 1st Canadian Division in first line casualties for 48th Highlanders of Toronto." Victor looked forward to letters from Grace, telling her in this letter, "For God's sake write, even if they take months as a few in the front line will mean or be worth millions to me."

Victor was dispatched to North Africa, arriving there 11 June 1943. On 13 June, the rest of his troop, the 48th Highlanders, were ordered to break up camp permanently in England and were sent to Italy. It was during this time Grace's father became ill and passed away on May 30. Grace, anxious for comfort, wrote three letters to Victor, dated May 16, May 30 and June 1. Victor received them on August 5.

6 August 1943, Victor wrote to Grace telling her that he had received her letters and expressed his condolences on the loss of her father. He wrote, "I think of you every day and trust that the present state of things will be cleared away by the time the war is over; I mean regarding Mrs. Bell and that again she will be free; I know you understand what I mean or hope you do."

Victor often spoke to Grace regarding his personal finances and belongings and how they should be sorted out should he not make it home. The threat of imminent death weighed heavily on Victor's mind. He said he would write to Mrs. Honsberger that Grace should have his personal belongings and what she did not want to send to his sister. His clothing, he figured, could be sent to his brothers. "Life has played some funny tricks on me but this one of not knowing where I will be tomorrow is a new one", Victor wrote, "I am well, so hot here we saw a dog chasing a rabbit and both were walking".

On 7 August, 1943 Victor wrote again to Grace. He was leaving Africa for Italy and once again stressed to Grace that she may have his things in case he was killed. "I wrote and told Mrs. Honsberger that if I should get killed you would be up for things....But I hope to survive and come back to enjoy life if you do not hear from me for awhile it will be because I am unable to write. I have had a fair time in Africa; it has been hot dirty and tiring but being over the Mediterranean has made it a beautiful spot for a camp. Had my last swim in the Mediterranean today it was so peaceful on the sands."

On 25 August, 1943, Victor changed his NOK to Mrs. Alec Brown, his sister Queenie. 1 September, 1943 he wrote Grace from Sicily; "I am always thinking of you and wishing I could see you again, while I lie under my mosquito net and look at the stars, I think how grand it will be to be home again"

Victor's Lorie watch had stopped working and he wanted to send it home to Grace to be fixed. "If I do not survive I want Elmore to have the watch". Without his watch, Victor is lost. "I now have not only lost track of days but of time also I do miss watch so badly." Victor reported he was fine, but "Gosh the flies are biting like murder they really hurt too and here are they ever thick one is never left alone continuous onslaught of biting flies, everywhere the flies cling on to me."

On 26 October, 1943, to Grace, he wrote "wish your dream were true about me coming home. Yes I am well at present, and as for work well soldiering is more than work it is days of toil and nights of strain, waiting for the enemy or not knowing where he is, and this war with its mine-fields a heavy mental strain is on the men who are in front. How would you like rats running over you at nights or nibbling at your ears?" He assured her he was a good man, clean in his thoughts and deeds. The war was taking a toll on Victor. Many men surrounding him were suffering horrific deaths. Victor's thoughts turned to his church in Dunnville, a church he attended as a young man, the Diltz Church. He expressed a desire to have a stained glass window designed after the painting "Light of the Word" and donated to the church in his memory should he be killed.

Bless You all.  
Victor Wm. Ford.



"The stained glass picture in the end of the church with an electric light bulb showing through the lantern would be an inspiration to all. I so often remember the peaceful Sundays I have spent at that church and the hymns we used to sing. I know you will not let people know and not tell anyone until I am gone, but I want so much to come back, but every day sees so many more dangers. Some day you may hear of the bitterness of war I trust Elmore and Keith will not have to face warfare. Just what place in Elmore's mind have I? Does he know anything about his real father? You do not have to answer if it hurts; I wonder so often about what could have been."

Victor was grateful for the letters he received from Grace and his sister Queenie. Feeling empathy for those who don't receive many, he wrote, "I guess people enjoying peace, no shells coming over, radios, heat, light, beds, good food etc. have no idea how the thousands of lads over here long for all of it again and look so much for all the little bits from home and letters."

23 November, 1943 Victor wrote Grace asking about Elmore and her family. He thanked her for the birthday wishes and the Laura-Secord chocolates. "I shall be thinking of you all on Christmas Day, have no idea where we will be then. The weather is very bad here wet, and talk about mud, gosh no pavement here and every-where is mud the mountain slopes are covered with snow, have been the last few weeks." A ship carrying Christmas

parcels to the troops sank and Victor expressed hope that the parcels from his family were not on that ship.

Victor was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal given to men in the Naval, Military or Air Forces of Canada who voluntarily served in active service and honourably completed eighteen months (540 days) total voluntary service from September 3, 1939 to March 1, 1947.

On 18 December 1943, Victor was injured and admitted to hospital and on the 27 December, Victor wrote Grace from his hospital bed. "The last letter I wrote to you was on Nov 28th. I went up to the front again next day so have had no time to write since. I thought of you all so much on Christmas Day as I have had plenty



Dear Members of "Diltz Sunday School,

*"I die not as a hero of war but as having done my duty to the cause of freedom of the younger generation who I hope will never know the terror of warfare."*

Victor Ford

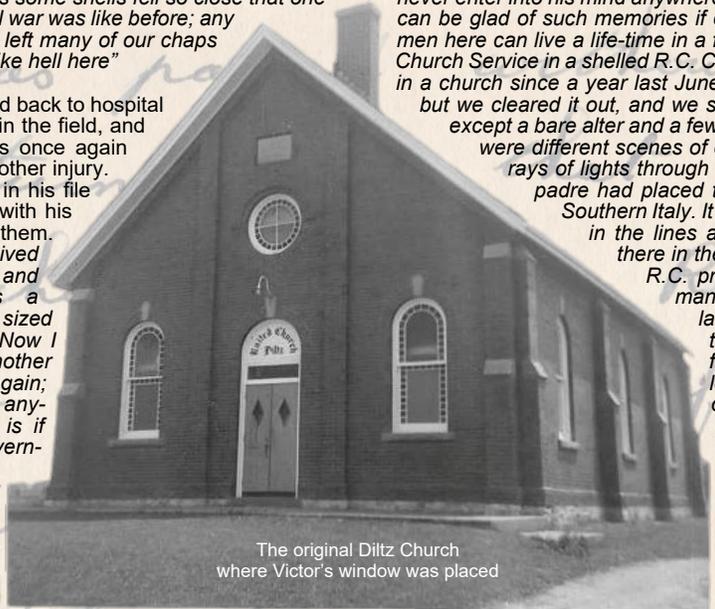
of quiet time to think as I am in 54th General Hospital so my thoughts have been constantly with your this season...I pictured Elmore at the Christmas tree and all of you at dinner....I expected to be up fighting but God willed it otherwise, I came from up front Dec 16th have been to three hospitals, came by ambulance and Red Cross-train, am well back of the front now, I am feeling better too, will soon be on my way up again....I trust next year I will be home again with you. Please do not forget the window "Light of the World" as I would sooner have that done than Kenneth squander the bit of money there and Queenie will have quite a bit in bank from my assigned pay...It was awful up front before I came back, and at times life seemed in vain but I always thought of you thinking of me, gosh while alone in trenches some shells fell so close that one got covered in mud, had little idea what real war was like before; any second and one may have got it, we have left many of our chaps behind as you know by papers....Raining like hell here"

Victor returned to the front in 1944, admitted back to hospital for a short stay in May after being injured in the field, and once again in June. In August Victor was once again injured in the field. September 22, saw another injury. There was not another letter from Victor in his file until 7 October 1944. He was concerned with his victory bonds and receiving a good rate on them. On 9 Oct he wrote, " Dear Grace, I received today your round tin of candy maple sugar and two films, also lovely card, thanks a million....what I really need is a medium sized flash light with plenty of batteries to fit...Now I have had or we all have had to fill out another card, as usual before we go into the front again; so I put next of kin, Kenneth Ford....so if anything happens to me you know what it is if anything comes for him in telegram on government letter so I give you permission to open it and see contents I would have put Queenie's address but then it would be a long time before you knew...Now Grace the \$50 and \$100 Dollar Victory Bond should I get killed I want you to have to put Elmore through school, they are Bearer Bonds so they go to Elmore ok you know my wishes about the rest...We are going into some tough fighting in a day or two long before this leaves here. We have been in and out but continue to go in again so lets hope eh!...It's hell here rain and more rain and mud well worst i have ever seen, it will be a long time now before the end and may take several months of 1945. If I were only married I would get home as prisoner of war escort but you were not ready for me, see the money you could have saved from the monthly checks, well why think of it but it does hurt sometimes to think I could have had a wife and son to come home to, well I have time for thought in the night so I do regret not having what I should have had, you must understand my feelings way out here don't you? Do you? Well I will try to live to come back just keep praying, it will be a long wait not, hope it never means Japan for me if I do get out of here."

On 10 October, 1944 he wrote to Mrs. Honsberger "I wonder when I will get home guess I'll have to settle down in a business or farm by the looks of the loans we can get, wouldn't mind getting Phillip House's farm it is small, cheap and has a good house on it would be idea for an easy quiet life eh; What do you think? Or don't you?"

Later that month, this powerful letter was sent to the Diltz Sunday School members:

Dear Members of Diltz Sunday School, It may have been months since I wrote a few words, but even so hardly a Sunday has passed without my thoughts turning to that little peaceful church on Diltz Road where I spent so many hours of fellowship in the years gone by, it is a far cry from Italy to Dunnville, yet the inspiration of those days have formed a bridge where Sundays I can cross for a little while to be with you. I realize I then live in the years past seeing you all as you were then, Mary at the piano, Neil with his violin, Mr. Honsberger leading the singing, but I know you have changed a little some grown up some living with memories when they were young as they hand over the position they have cherished for years, yes I live in the happy past with you on Sundays, trusting the time may come soon when I will live in the present and future with you. Sometimes weeks slide by without one remembering Sunday as amidst the din of battle and activity of life in the front lines



The original Diltz Church where Victor's window was placed

days are forgotten as one hangs grimly to life and has a duty to perform for the people at home which demands every thought to be awake to what is going on around, but during the lull of battle or rest periods our thoughts wander to the peace at home and long for the end of this bitterness and hate. Yes your quiet peaceful little church awaking each Sunday with its atmosphere of rest and fellowship is a beautiful memory here so far from home, many of us have such scenes of in our minds from different parts of Canada, England, New Zealand, USA S. Africa, Poland and the many other places from which our comrades around us come from. Above the noise of the great guns and moaning mines of the Germans when one is low in the shell holes one thinks of things which would never enter into his mind anywhere else only under the strain of battle, yes we can be glad of such memories if only for a few fleeting seconds, funny how men here can live a life-time in a few minutes. A few weeks ago we held our Church Service in a shelled R.C. Church on the Adriatic Coast, the first service in a church since a year last June in England. It was a pile of rubble inside, but we cleared it out, and we sat on the floor as nothing left of the inside except a bare alter and a few plaster of Paris plaques on which in colour were different scenes of our Lord's Life, the sun was bright sending rays of lights through the shell holes onto the alter on which the padre had placed two crosses one from Sicily and one from Southern Italy. It was our first service after many hard weeks in the lines and everyone there knew the joy of being there in the House of God even if it were used for the R.C. prior to the capture of the town. We sang many of the old hymns and remembered the lads of our regiment we had left behind on the hill-tops around who had given their life for the peace of the world, yes we had all lost many close friends and only make new ones to find after each battle they too have given their all in life. Yes up front we are near our maker and when we hear the whispers of the dying wonder if we will survive, it makes one think pinned down by bullets and shells in a shell hole with Germans dead and our own, why we can go on, but we find strength in prayer to step off into the unknown ahead. Yes never will one be in such places to have the phases of life rush to memory in such short

spaces.

Will you sing "On a Hill Far Away" as I lost a very dear friend a short space back who I had spent the last few months with, he died as he wanted and is buried on a hill-top here near the Adriatic Sea beneath a white painted cross bearing his name and a maple leaf, also a hymn for me "O Jesus I Have Promised to Serve thee to the End." I will be thinking of you singing on Sunday October 29. If I am still here on earth one has no right here to expect to be when there is so many dangers to encounter. I shall be thinking of you all many times in the future months of battles if I am spared. May God Bless You All. Victor Wm. Ford." In a P.S at the end of this letter, Victor remarked "this next battle is going to be worse than hell."

On 1 December, 1944, the Canadian Corps had returned to action, just as the heavier fighting began. Dubbed "Operation Chuckle" it called for the liberation of Ravenna, Italy which was situated in the Adriatic coast. The Canadians were successful in this battle on December 4th, however a following poorly prepared attack across the Lamone River failed and forced the troops to withdrawal. Close to two hundred Canadian soldiers had been lost. Further attacks were postponed due to heavy rain which had set in.

On 9 December, 1944 Victor wrote Grace once again. "Dear Grace, Was glad to receive your last two letters...Well we are in a hot spot Jerry on one side of the river and we are on this side we are getting every kind of shell thrown at us. A little instant we were over the road and his shells were singing over our heads going further back when bang one landed right in front of us guess did we ever duck in the mud and he laced them in thick for a while in our spot, shells are falling all around every few seconds....I know you are willing to do anything within reason I ask of you and do so appreciate it and know I sit the long night in a trench thinking of you and your goodness in the days gone by. I think of Mother too and her kindness to me, if I did not have your memories life would be harder here. Yes I only trust your prayers will be answered as I want to return and settle down for some happy years to come, but God only knows if any of us will be spared, It is



Grace and Elmore

changed a little some grown up

# "It will be hell on earth tonight the air will be rent asunder by flying death"

*danger every second and goodness knows when we will be out of this....Well I guess Elmore will ask questions now he is so old too bad you not been free years ago then he would have been younger however you know best what to tell him. I would not lie to him too much, if you know what I mean, I only wish you all the best in life and trust I may survive."*

On 10 December, 1944 the weather had cleared and it was confirmed the Canadian troops would attack that night. The action called for the soldiers to create a half-mile-deep bridgehead across the now sixty foot wide Lamone and to press forward to Bagnacavallo, a town astride the Canale Navaglio.

That day, Victor wrote his final letter to Grace. Bit by bit, the war had taken its toll on him, he had now given up all hope of surviving. "Now Grace it seems as if we are going to make a crossing of the river tonight as it has cleared up. I have been thinking of you such a lot lately and trust should God Will I lay down my life that he will always provide for Elmore and yourself. I have been very much in thought with Queenie and others lately as we have waited for the rain to clear, it is awful waiting but will go in tonight and do a man's job if I fail it is better I then someone who has a Mother, wife and Family. I want you to know I go in with Gods strength and pray for the Grace of God to carry me through, if his will is otherwise Grace I die not as a hero of war but as having done my duty to the cause of freedom of the younger generation who I hope will never know the terror of war-fare. The shells are bursting around us now have been for days and one gets use to the waiting of the one which will hit, last night one hit the house over the road and one the end of our house outside our window it broke all the windows clean out and blew the shutters and frame out so we slept down in the cattle stall all night except when we were outside on patrol....I will be thinking of you always and am glad of the trust and faith you have always shown in me. If any money should be left over from the "Light of the World" I want you to give it to Dr. Barnardo's Home on Jarvis Street. The Victory Bonds are for Elmore and his schooling. My best love to Mother for all her goodness and love to me in the years gone by I often think of her and am grateful for her kindness to me. It will be hell on earth to night the air will be rent asunder by flying death. God protect you and always yours. I will be guided by your remembrance tonight and will die for honour. Victor

Victor and his regiment, were successful, but there was a heavy loss of life from all the battalions. Under adverse and controversial conditions, the decision was made to press onwards. The Germans were on the offence and strong. All conditions pointed to a fierce and deadly battle. The battle for the Naviglio Canel in Italy began after dark on Tuesday, 12 December 1944, just two days after Victor's last letter. The Canadians moved over the canal, with the task of driving the Germans out of ancient, walled Bagnacavallo, where many of the enemy counter-attacks had originated. December 14, the Canadian troops, flanked by Desert Air Force Spit Bombers, successfully attacked the enemy. But at the cost of 4 killed and 16 wounded. December 15, while continuing to battle for success, the Germans gradually being forced to concede ground, Victor lost his life. His troops continued without him. For Victor, the war, his battle was done and it had been worse then Hell.

The battle fields were not cleared of the casualties until early 1945. Victor's body was carefully wrapped in a blanket, and buried in a simple ceremony in the Ravenna War Cemetery, Grave 19, Row G, Plot 5. The cemetery is located at the dyke top of the Lamone River, at the very spot where Victor crossed with his battalion just before his death. Victor left two very devastated people behind, Grace and Elmore.



Victor and Elmore, Niagara Fall's, Canada

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4131 151244

Queenie, Kenneth and Grace became engaged in a battle over Victor's estate. Perhaps not understanding the relationship between Grace and Victor, his siblings seemed to resent the interference of an "outsider". However, Grace was determined that Victor's last wishes be fulfilled. She presented the letters Victor wrote, to the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League, May of 1945. Grace was successful, Elmore received Victor's war bonds and The Victor Ford Memorial Window was soon installed in his beloved Diltz United Church.

Grace eventually found happiness in a marriage to Ralph Barber. She is remembered as a warm, loving person who never complained. She loved to knit and crochet. Grace passed away in February 29, 2000 at 88 years old. Sadly for Grace, she had lost her son Elmore just seven months before her death. When Elmore died, Grace, who had lost everyone from her past, gave up. She told her Granddaughter Amber that she would not live much longer. Although she was buried along side Ralph, her heart remained with Victor. Grace had lovingly kept all the things Victor sent her while he was away in the war. She loved Ralph, who was good to her and Elmore, but Victor was the love of her life.

Elmore is remembered as being a terrific person. Al, as he was called by his family, was a shipper receiver for the Robert Simpson Company for twenty six years until it closed in 1989. Al opened up the North country for the Hudson Bay Co. who took over Simpson's. He was an avid fishermen, sometimes spending twelve hours a day fishing. In his youth he was always outdoors. Al married Mary, a woman who adores him long after his passing. Prior to working with the HBC, Al worked for his family's furniture storage business involving the use of pesticides and sprays. This caused a lot of his problems with emphysema. Elmore passed away on 4 July, 1999, leaving behind his adoring wife, two daughters and the mother he adored all his life.

Victor's window which has now been moved to the new church in Dunville



When Victor's brothers were released from their BHC indenture contracts, Ken worked in a steel mill, and Harold worked in the gas fields of southern Ontario. Ken was badly burned in an industrial accident and was not able to join the war effort, or even work steadily again. He married Margaret Ayers of Toronto but the marriage did not last. Ken did odd jobs in Toronto, for example as a night watchman. Eventually he moved to the Collingwood area and lived with a family with whom he had farmed. He remained there until his death. Harold enlisted in the RCN where he became a communications officer. He served in the North Atlantic war, mostly defending convoys between Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands north of Scotland and Murmansk Russia in the Arctic Circle. After the war, he married Nina Devine of Boston Mass, who he had met while in port. Thanks to experience in the Navy telegraphy became his trade and he joined the railway where he worked until his retirement, advancing to a position as a supervisory agent, a decent post considering his lack of education and French. He died of heart failure at the age of 77. In their later years, Ken and Harold were sought out by and visited by their youngest sibling, Ron.

Grace kept all the original letters that Victor had sent her during the war. She kept all the precious photos of herself, Victor and Elmore. Grace and Elmore kept Victor's memory alive for their descendants, who all know very well, the story of the soldier who once loved Grace and Elmore.

In May of 2016, the BHCARA was contacted by a member of the Ford family seeking information on Victor, as the new Diltz church in Dunville wanted to publish a write up about Victor's window in their bulletin. We soon discovered that his Second World War files were published on Ancestry.ca and the treasured letters they contained. The letters read like a sad, tragic love story and it compelled us to find out who Grace and Elmore were and what happened to them. Victor loved them so much. After posting in our group on Facebook, our amazing researchers quickly went to work. Melissa Dolan stepped in, and after an evening of intense researching with Lori Oschefski, she amazingly found the information we needed which gave us the family details!

Soon we were in contact with not only Victor's family, but also Grace and Elmore's family! The pieces of this amazing story just kept falling into place! A reunion was quickly planned at the new church. Film producer, Bob Huggins, of [Orphan Boy Films](http://Orphan Boy Films), was on hand to film segments for his upcoming documentary.

This story was stitched together by Lori Oschefski, with the contributions of Melissa Dolan, Christopher Coles (Queenie's family), Donald Ford (Kenneth's family), Mary Gray (caretaker of the Diltz church and descendant of the Honsberger family, Mary Lansdown (Elmore's widow) and Mary and Elmore's daughter, Amber Bannister.

<https://legionmagazine.com/en/2010/06/bedlam-at-the-lamone/>

PATRONS: { THEIR MAJESTIES KING GEORGE VI. AND QUEEN ELIZABETH  
HER MAJESTY QUEEN MARY

405-F-13501.

# Dr. Barnardo's Homes: National Incorporated Association

FOUNDER: THE LATE DR. BARNARDO  
PRESIDENT: THE RT. HON. EARL BALDWIN, K.G., P.C.  
CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL: SIR MALCOLM DELEIVINGNE, K.C.B., K.C.V.O. CHAIRMAN OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: D. J. MACANDREW, ESQ.  
HONORARY TREASURER: THE RT. HON. THE LORD EBBISHAM, G.B.E.  
COUNSEL: J. SHIRLEY DENISON, ESQ., K.C.

Our Ref: 1.27

MANAGER:  
JOHN W. HOBDAY

LADY SUPERINTENDENT:  
MRS. J. W. HOBDAY

THE WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING  
538 JARVIS STREET, TORONTO, ONT.

The Director of Records,  
Dept. of National Defence,  
OTTAWA, Ont.

17th February, 1945.

RePte. Victor Ford, B.42813

Dear Sir:

*PC (P) 19/2/45*

A letter sent to our above-named former Ward in November has just been returned through the mail marked "Deceased". We had not heard of this and wonder if you would be good enough to supply us with available particulars, and the name and address of next-of-kin?

We shall much appreciate your co-operation in this matter.

Yours very truly,

*John W. Hobday*  
Manager.

RH/DTF

Director of Records  
A. G. Branch  
FEB 19 1945  
Nat. Defence Hq  
Ottawa, - Can

CAS. REGISTRY  
FEB 22 1945  
0210

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*(10)*

PATRONS: { THEIR MAJESTIES KING GEORGE VI. AND QUEEN ELIZABETH  
HER MAJESTY QUEEN MARY

405-F-13-501

# Dr. Barnardo's Homes: National Incorporated Association

Your Ref: H.Q.405-F-13,501  
DR 2 (b)  
Our Ref: 1.27

MANAGER:  
JOHN W. HOBDAY

LADY SUPERINTENDENT:  
MRS. J. W. HOBDAY

THE WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING  
538 JARVIS STREET, TORONTO, ONT.

Colonel R. T. E. Hicks-Lyne,  
Acting Director of Records,  
Dept. of National Defence,  
OTTAWA, Ont.

24th February, 1945.

Re Pte. Victor William Ford, B.42813  
(Deceased)

Dear Sir:

We have just received your letter of the 22nd inst. and indeed greatly regret to learn of the death of our above-named former Ward while in action in the Mediterranean.

Thank you for the addresses of his relatives, with whom we are communicating.

Yours very truly

*John W. Hobday*  
Manager.

RH/DTF

*No action necessary, pls. info. H. G. Branch, 17 Mar. 45.*

Director of Records  
A. G. Branch  
FEB 26 1945  
Nat. Defence Hq  
Ottawa - Canada

# “Meet me To-night in Dreamland but not in these” ..... messages home from the Western Front

By Historian and Author Andrew Simpson

I have no idea what Alice made of Tom's postcard showing a pair of laced pyjama bottoms which he sent home from an army camp with that wished for outcome.

But in its way it highlights that simple observation that despite all the horrible news from the battle fronts, the sacrifices and growing hardships at home people continued to use humour as a way to cope with those four years of war.

The postcard industry produced a huge range of funny and risqué cards which took the place of those equally bawdy seaside ones which had accompanied the holiday messages home.

But they were just the tip of a huge business which supplied the need to make contact with loved ones.

Many were romantic and conjured up idealised scene of lovers who had been separated but now were reunited and sitting beside these were those mourning the loss of a loved one be it a sweet heart, a husband or a father.



Some of them may strike a modern reader as mawkish but there is no denying the force of cards like the one portraying a mother and child on a flight of stairs with an image of a wounded soldier and the question “MOTHER, WHY DOESN'T DADDY COME HOME?”

A large number of cards featured photographs of soldiers in uniform, some in groups, some as individuals and others with a sweet heart or wife and more as a family group.

They range from commercially produced scenes of a training camp or Red Cross Hospital to very personal ones taken in a studio and meant just for a limited circulation.

Some of the most beautiful are the embroidered ones many of which were made in France and carry designs of flowers or the badge of a regiment.

The remaining groups of cards cover everything from landscapes to images of battered Belgium towns, patriotic calls to participate in war savings schemes and appeals from charities.

Occasionally a darker and more savage card makes its appearance like the one depicting a scantily dressed woman relaxing with a cigarette and reading the war news in the paper carrying the caption “I wonder if he will ever come back again.”

Adapted from the forthcoming book:

## **Manchester and Great War**

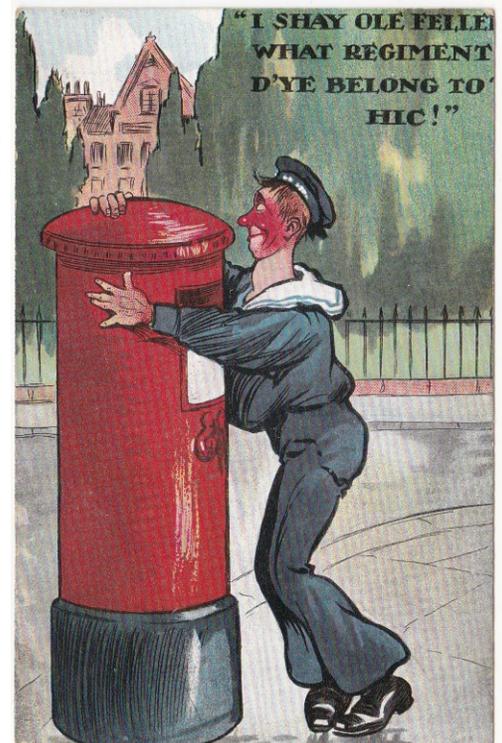
by Andrew Simpson

to be published in February 2017, by the History Press

Visit Andrew's Blog at:

[www.chorltonhistory.blogspot.ca](http://www.chorltonhistory.blogspot.ca)

Postcards; from the collection of David Harrop



# Nantyr Shores Secondary School of Innisfil 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge Trip to France



Anthony Bailey

On the 17 of October 2016, attending our Innisfil Historical Society presentation at the historic Ontario Knock Community Centre, was Nantyr Shores Secondary School teacher Craig Froese.

Mr. Froese told us that forty five students and staff from Nantyr Shores Secondary School of Innisfil, Ontario, Canada are journeying to Europe this spring and will be part of the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. As part of the preparation for the homage, students were each assigned to research one of the 61 soldiers from Innisfil who were killed during the First and Second World Wars. Three soldiers were found to be British Home Children. Private Anthony Mansfield Bailey (159021), Private Samuel Arthur Cross (142604) and Private Albert Edward Spragg (142636) were all former Dr. Barnardo children who settled in Innisfil at the turn of the century. All three enlisted in the Canadian army. Private Bailey signed up with the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles and died on October 1, 1916 at the Battle of the Somme. Private Cross went over to France with 78th Battalion and was wounded in the thigh at the Battle of the Somme, but returned to duty and was killed on May 9, 1917 in the Vimy area. Private Spragg went overseas with the 78th Battalion and was killed on September 28, 1916 at the Battle of the Somme.

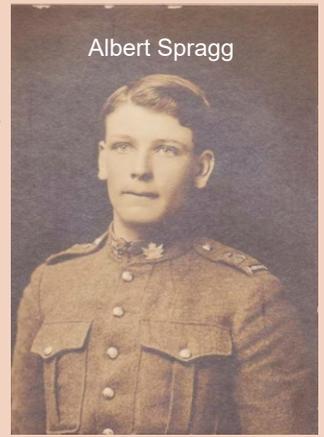
Students have designed crosses for each soldier to be used at a Remembrance Day assembly prior to their trip. They are hoping to visit the graves of some of the soldiers in France and Belgium to place Poppies and wreaths on the graves. Private Cross is honoured on the Vimy Memorial so he will be part of the student tour and his grave will be visited.

For more information on these three British Home Children being honoured, visit their information pages on our Soldier's site: [Anthony Bailey](#), [Samuel Cross](#), [Albert Edward Spragg](#)

For more information on this project, the students will be presenting at the Innisfil Public Library on Thursday Nov 3 at 7pm. This presentation is open to the public. They are also hosting a ticketed fund raising dinner on Thursday November 10. I am sure if there are any members who would like to come out to any of their events or to donate towards their trip, we are sure the students would appreciate it. Representatives of the BHCARA will be at both events.



The crosses that Craig Froese and the students of Nantyr made for the soldiers for their Remembrance Day presentations.



Albert Spragg



## BHCARA News

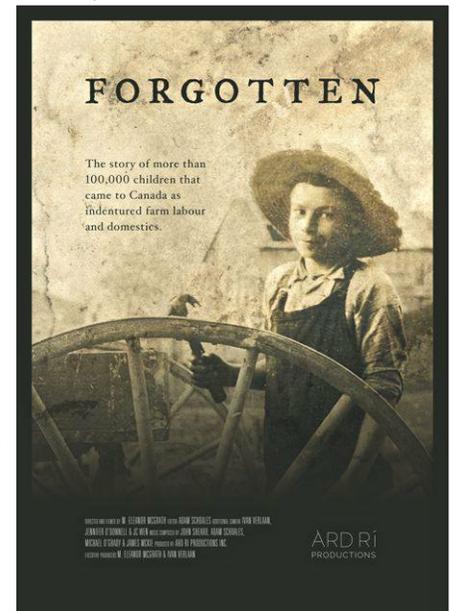
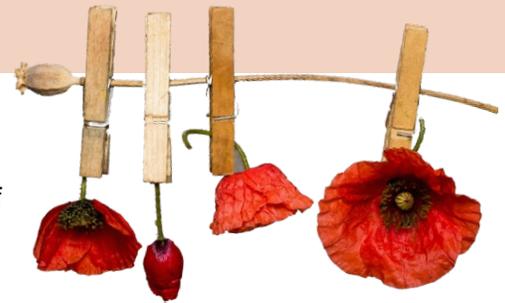
**LAST CALL!** Our E-Petition is available for signatures until November 25<sup>th</sup> only! If you have not signed and wish to, visit the Government of Canada's web site at: <https://petitions.parl.gc.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-312>. All citizens of Canada can sign, no matter where you live! A new page has been created on our BHCARA web site where you can keep track of the progress of the apology petitions. Visit [www.BritishHomeChildren.com](http://www.BritishHomeChildren.com)

**Apology Challenge!** Parliamentary petitions read in the House of Common's only require twenty five signatures. We challenge each member who supports the call for an apology to download our apology petition, get it signed by at least twenty five people, and send it to your local MP for presentation. Remember, traditional petitions can only be signed by citizens of Canada living in Canada. Visit [www.canadianbritishhomechildren.weebly.com](http://www.canadianbritishhomechildren.weebly.com) to download your copy and get collecting signatures! Let us know when you have submitted your petition so we can track its reading on our web site.

## "FORGOTTEN" DVD Release

Forgotten is about the yearning to know one's history -- what began with a fire at 295 George Street in Toronto, the former Fegan receiving home, become the catalyst to share the BHC story of over 100,000 children who came to Canada as indentured farm labour and domestics. This is the forgotten heritage of many Canadians, both of the children themselves and their descendants. Produced by Eleanor McGrath, this film, released in the fall of 2015, is now available for purchase on DVD.

Visit [Amazon.ca](http://Amazon.ca) for purchase details



# New Book Release

'Stepping Stones' is a novel based on the stories of young immigrants to Canada, including British Home Children. It follows the paths of two fictitious characters, Skip and Benjy, and one real-life youngster, John Buchan, from Scotland. The title "Stepping Stones" symbolizes the challenging paths taken by the three youngsters as they struggle through life on the streets, to enduring a horrendous sea crossing and finally becoming valuable immigrants in an emerging Canada.

Through circumstances, unforeseen and beyond his control, Skip is forced to a life on the streets. His path crosses that of Benjy, who, unwanted and discarded by an uncaring stepfather, has also become a street urchin. Together they decide to leave London, the threat of bullies and the dirt and squalor of the 'Homeless Urban Community', in which they have been forced to live. With the sun as their compass they head north and, after a long, tedious journey mostly on foot, they are eventually welcomed into a Dr. Barnardo's Home.

For a few years the two youngsters enjoy a life of stability, participating in school lessons as well as learning skills towards getting employment until fate steps in again. To make room for other children needing spaces in the Home, Skip and Benjy must leave, along with many others. Now, with the support of the Barnardo Home, they find themselves part of the British Government program to send youngsters to Canada.

At the same time John Buchan, the real-life character, is desperately seeking employment to help support himself. There are no jobs around his Clydeside home and he believes his only hope of finding employment is to leave and travel south. Walking hundreds of miles, mostly sleeping in the open and scrounging food, he searches in vain, eventually arriving in Liverpool where the Salvation Army folk offer him a place of refuge. While there he learns of the British Government's emigration program and he decides this could be his only chance to make something of his life. After a sad farewell to the parents he knows in his heart he will never see again, John arrives at the docks where the ship awaits to take him to a new life. It is here the three characters meet and a lasting bond is formed - one that remains through the soon-to-be separation of their ways.

Arriving in Canada as a young teenager, John Buchan is first indentured to a farmer in Cassburn, Ontario. After overcoming many challenges and his term of indenture completed he branches out on his own. He eventually meets and marries Betty (Pollard) from Vankleek Hill and they finally become the owners of two farms in Apple Hill, Glengarry, where they settle with their family. These farms are still in the family, one is worked by John's only daughter and the other by his youngest son.

The authors, Jan and John Milnes, knew John Buchan, meeting him shortly after arriving in Canada in 1970 as immigrants from Britain themselves, John became a firm friend and, over time, he shared his stories, telling them much more than he ever disclosed to his family.

*Jim Brownell, a former MPP, a British Home Child descendant himself, who, while in the Legislature, was responsible for September 28th being declared British Home Child Day, was one of the first to read the book and he wrote:*

*"Although quite busy, lately, I have had some time to begin reading your latest publication, "Stepping Stones"! Wow!! I can hardly put it down! You did an outstanding job, and your descriptive detail is awesome!! As well, I like how you've woven into the story the historical facts of so many of the towns and cities! Tonight I walked in the shoes of that Scottish lad, John Buchan, some parts certainly tug at the heart-strings. Just had to take a minute to congratulate you on a job "Well Done!!"*

**"To purchase a copy visit the [www.GlobalGenealogy.com](http://www.GlobalGenealogy.com) website or contact [sandra@globalgenealogy.com](mailto:sandra@globalgenealogy.com)"**

**Jan and John Milnes will be speaking at the Vankleek Champlain Library on Wednesday November 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. For details visit:**

**[The Review](#)**

