



Home Children Canada December 2023 Newsletter


NELLIE PAGE.....A HOME CHILD
BY HER LOVING DAUGHTER MARY ARNOLD

Nellie was 4 years old when her world and the life she knew for that age , would change. She slept beside her Mama , what she didn't realize that mama had died in her sleep, she couldn't wake her so she climbed on a chair and unlatched the door to go across the lane to a Aunt and Uncle's home. Her father was a drover in those days and whether he ever came back to Norwich was not documented .

Nellie was sent to live with a blind Uncle. This tiny little girl would be seen on the streets begging along side her blind Uncle .There was no schooling, she was in rags , , there was no normal home life just living with this man in darkness. On the streets one day a Military man Colonel Lieutenant Hearside , saw Nellie and it quickened his heart to help her . He asked the Uncle for permission to take her to a Dr. Barnardo's Home for orphaned children . The Uncle quickly gave permission and Nellie was admitted to this Orphanage. She would be about 11 years old now. Dr. Barnardo's had a village with homes for girls. She was cleaned up, photographed and sent to Barkingside Village to live , be given some schooling , taught manners to prepare her for her life as a domestic in another Country. Dr. Barnardo was a hero to thousands of poor children , given to him by destitute parents or care givers. These children were of all ages from infants to teens .

Living at Barkingside was a dream , each home had a house mother, whom the girls quickly became attached to. The life their was beautiful , what they didn't know was that an end was in sight, and they would be heading for a strange country, either Canada or Australia to work as domestics and farm life.

This hero Dr. Barnardo and his organization received monies for each head that they sent. He did not foresee that the children he sent would be abused physically or sexually....he did not foresee the cruelty in human beings. ? Nellie and a few hundred girls and boys were put on a ship S.S. Corinthian approximately March 25th 1912 , my Mother would be about 13.... The ship arrived in Saint John New Brunswick on April 1st 1912. Nellie would never see England again , her Father , she guessed had died , and she would never go on another vessel that went on water, because of how ill she was during the

IN THIS EDITION

Special Christmas News!
The Home Children will be featured this Christmas Eve on the BBC One's Antique Road Show. Read about it in our Annual President's Message. Pg 3

Another wonderful column from our Andrew Simpson "Christmas in Care....The View from Britain" pg 4

The Lost Love poem by Grace MacCollum
Saint John, New Brunswick, pg 8

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our annual general meeting will be held on Sunday January 21st at 1 pm EST Ontario time. A zoom link will be sent out prior to the meeting.

This time was selected to enable members in different time zones to attend.



voyage. The girls were sent to Hazel Brae in Peterborough Ontario for more training and schooling until a placement could be found for them on a farm or in a home. ? These British Home children , had a code of SECRECY.....until a family member sent for their records from the Dr. Barnardo Organization , the families had no idea of the life their loved ones had suffered/lived.

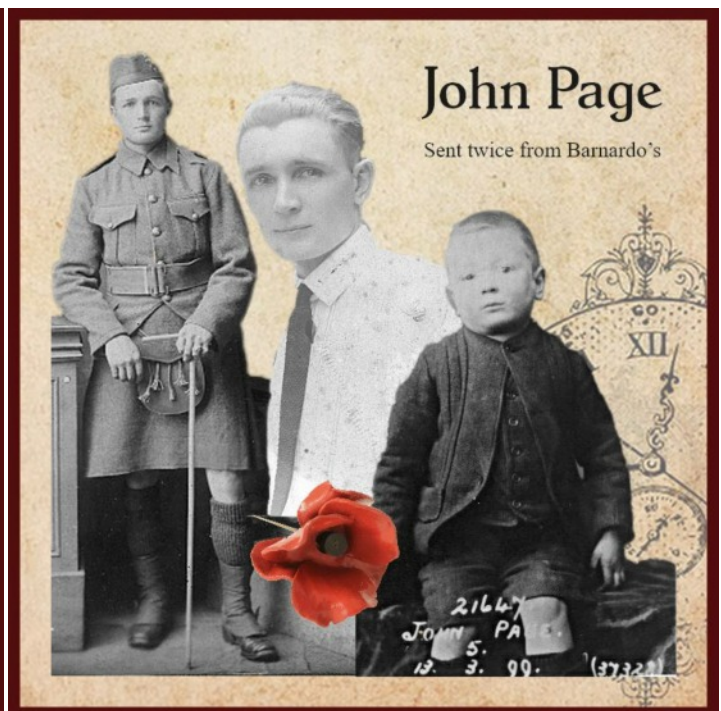
You see they were abused in their own Country and a great many of them were verbally , physically and sexually abused here by government and many citizens. Thus the code of silence , so afraid to say they were Home Children !!!

My Mother thought she was alone but a brother who also came as a home child , John Page, lived in the Toronto area and when the first World War broke out he enlisted with the Black Watch Regiment and was sent overseas to England . On a furlough he searched to see if he too was alone, and discovered that he had a sister in Canada . When the war was over he searched for her for many years and finally found her. He by then was married with a child and so was my mother married with a family.

When I received my Mother's papers from the Dr. Barnardo's Orphanage , she had never spoke to her children about her life. She passed away in 1983 and I sent for her papers in 2002 , it took me 3 days to finally finish reading them , through tears and shock of the life Nellie Page had in England . Even now I tear up at the sad plight all these thousands of children that came and the horror that some endured.

My Mom was a beautiful woman , patient , loving , kind, a loving wife to my Dad who died young and left her with still 2 young children at home.... a mother beyond any description and a grandmother that was loved beyond words....Not a word or a complaint about her life as a HOME CHILD.....

Our Note: Featured in this edition is Nellie Page, whose connection to our community is deeply rooted through her daughter, the dedicated and longstanding member, Mary Arnold. We first met Mary, in person, in 2014 when she actively participated in one of our events held at the Black Creek Pioneer Village. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Mary for her unwavering support throughout the years, and we want her to know how much her contributions mean to us. We can see a lot of Nellie's strengths and her loving ways in Mary.



Presidents Annual Christmas Message



This past year has marked yet another extraordinary chapter for Home Children Canada, reaffirming our commitment to excellence. Every Christmas, I find myself marveling at the question of how we can possibly surpass the achievements of the preceding year. Astonishingly, we not only meet but exceed expectations each time. As we bid farewell to 2023, I am thrilled to declare that the anticipation for 2024 is already brimming with excitement, featuring a lineup of sensational and impactful projects.

Our journey in 2023 commenced with an illustrious reception at the British Consul General's residence in Toronto, graciously hosted by the esteemed Greg Quinn. Thanks to Mr. Quinn, we had the privilege of extending invitations to influential individuals poised to contribute significantly to elevating the prominence of Home Children both in Canada and beyond. This collaboration has been nothing short of phenomenal, with the remarkable people we connected with during this event becoming invaluable allies in our mission. Their dedication and support have been truly awe-inspiring!

In November, MP James Maloney of Etobicoke—Lakeshore hosted a lobby day for Home Children Canada in Ottawa, Ontario. Throughout the day, we engaged in discussions with individual MPs to shed light on the issues surrounding Home Children. In the evening, we organized a reception for MPs and dignitaries, making the event a resounding success. This accomplishment was largely attributed to our members actively reaching out to their local MPs with invitations. Subsequent to the event, we diligently emailed all MPs in Canada. Following this, our petition for an official apology was presented in the House by Etobicoke MP Yvan Baker - in early December. These two important events have served to raise our profile with influential people who are working with us to raise the profile of the Home Children, not only in Canada, but also across the UK.

Once again, my gratitude knows no bounds for our exceptional team of researchers. In the midst of our Facebook group thriving with increased activity, their unwavering dedication allows them to consistently deliver valuable information to our growing community of families. As the group becomes increasingly bustling, their ability to keep up with postings and provide invaluable insights showcases their commitment and expertise. Their efforts are instrumental in fostering a rich and dynamic environment, ensuring that our platform continues to serve as a valuable resource for all.

The support we've received from our cherished paid members and generous donors has been truly invaluable in propelling our growth. Thanks to their unwavering commitment, we've been empowered to undertake remarkable initiatives, such as hosting our Member of Parliament. Your financial contributions have played a pivotal role in enabling us to expand our reach and create impactful events that bring our mission to life. We extend our deepest appreciation to our dedicated supporters, whose belief in our cause has been a driving force behind our achievements.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to each and every one of you who played a part in sharing the impactful story of the Home Children. Your collective efforts and dedication are the true driving force behind our success. It is through your passion, hard work, and commitment that we continue to make a significant impact and bring attention to the important cause we champion. You are the pillars of our success, and we are immensely grateful for your unwavering support.

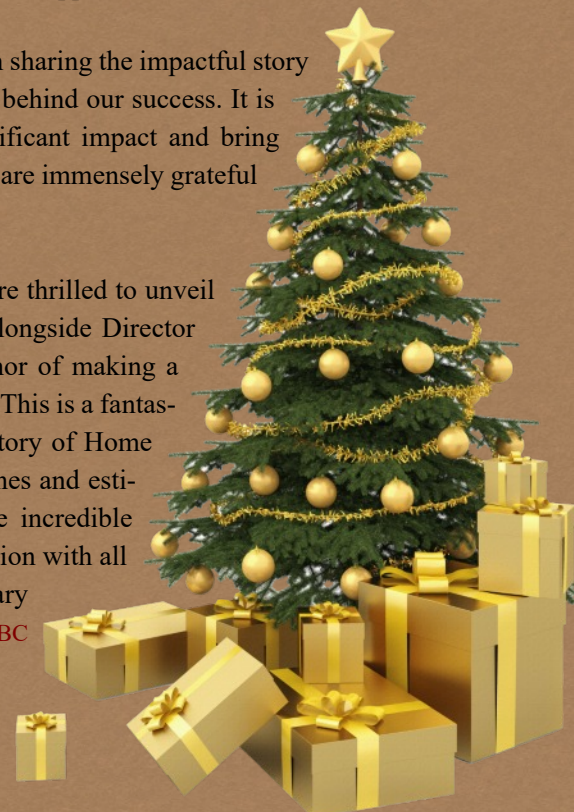


ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

As we draw the curtains on this remarkable year, we're thrilled to unveil an exciting surprise for everyone. On December 24th, I, alongside Director John Jeffkins and member Janice Savini, will have the honor of making a special appearance on BBC ONE's Antiques Road Show. This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase our mission and bring the story of Home Children to a broader audience. This program reaches and estimated five million people! It's a testament to the incredible journey we've had throughout the year, and we can't wait to share this momentous occasion with all our supporters. Tune in to the BBC ONE's Antique Road Show for this extraordinary highlight as we close out the year on a high note! 7 pm in the UK / 2pm EST - Ontario. **BBC**

ONE Antiques Road Show

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas - Lori Oschafski



Christmas in care the view from Britain

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

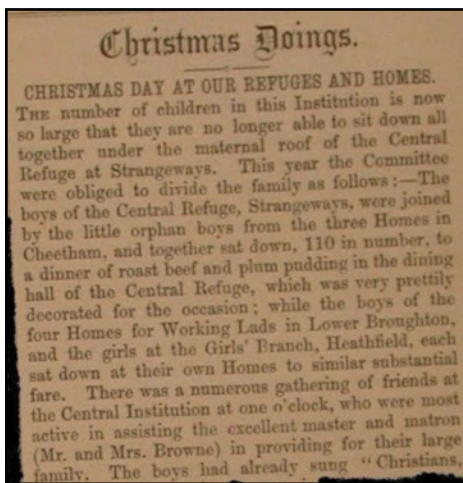
British Home Children the story from Britain

Visit Andrew's Blog: <https://chorltonhistory.blogspot.com/>

Just how young Home Children celebrated or experienced Christmas in the farms of Canada, the sheep stations of Australia or in domestic service across the old Empire will have been as varied as their own backgrounds.

And to plot those experiences across a century and more will be difficult. Sometimes because the records are scant, the anecdotal evidence inconclusive or just that those young children didn't always talk about Christmas half a world from where they grew up.

But we can be more certain of what they could have expected in Britain in either the institutions run by the Poor Law Unions or the homes of the children's charities.



Christmas Doings, 1880

My own field of study has been into the workings of the Manchester and Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges which was established in 1870 with the purpose of lifting 12 destitute boys each night from the streets of the twin cities, providing them with a warm bed and hot meal before turning them out in the morning. Within a decade it had morphed into a large organization which cared for girls and as well as boys in a number of Homes, ran industrial training centres, migrated some to Canada and offered annual holidays by the sea.

It maintained a series of magazines which along with the records from their archives offer up a picture of just what Christmas in care was like.

I have chosen to fasten on the first few decades of the charity's existence and again in the early years of the Second World War.

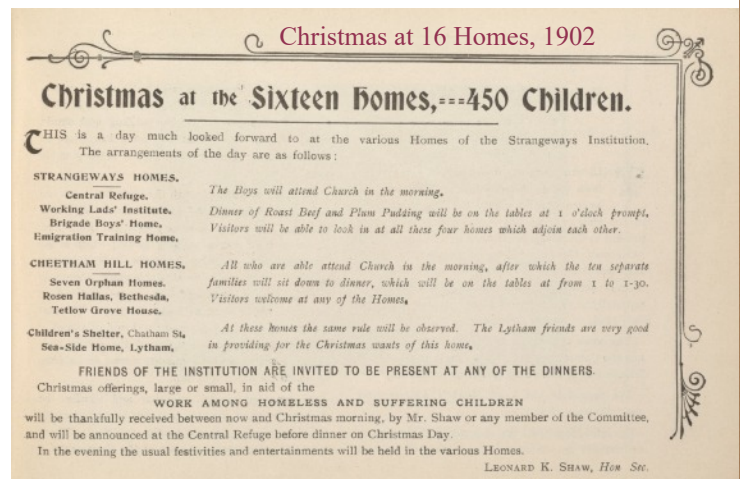
At the turn of the century the Refuge celebrated Christmas with a series of parties and special events stretching over several days and which included the distribution of presents.

In 1907 in all the homes associated with the Refuge, Christmas dinner was on the table at one o'clock and there were evening entertainments. One of these was the Christmas tea party and entertainment given by the Refuge boys at the central buildings in Strangeways. "The boys themselves arrange the festival bring in the guests literally from the highways and hedges, provide them with a substantial meal and give them an evening's entertainment afterwards.

On Thursday January 2, the young men living in the lodging-house have a party and entertainment in the gymnasium. On Sunday January 5, there will be an anniversary service at Bethesda. The Messenger Brigade annual tea party takes place on Wednesday January 8 when prizes will be distributed. On Sunday January 12, old boys assemble at the Young Men's Institute at 5 o'clock and after tea will attend an anniversary service in the Refuge."¹

Much of the festivities were funded through appeals to the public with one Christmas appeal specifying itemised gifts

¹ Strangeways Refuges, Manchester Guardian, December 24, 1907



ranging from “body belts and boxes of chocolates to “a muffler, gloves or a toy according to age.”

The outbreak of war in 1939 made for more challenging Christmases, but there were still presents to hand out and parties to be organized against a backdrop of rationing and the imminent threat of bombs.

That said the Charity had taken the decision in 1920, on a new course which would take them out of the Manchester and Salford to a new site in rural Cheshire.

These war time Christmases would be difficult to organise, but the charity managed to “put on a good show”.

And thanks to a unique oral history project which over the last few years recorded the memories of those young people in care in the 1940s it is possible to glimpse that degree of success.

When asked to remember their time at Christmas former residents talked of how “they used to have plays”, and “all of you got a pair of gloves, which was useful. And we used to have a nice Christmas tree”.

And in the preparation, “we made paper chains. Which were glued strips of paper and we licked them and stuck them together, and perhaps one or two games like I-spy. Nothing, very exciting but it was that little bit different”.

And in addition, for some there would be the opportunity to spend part of Christmas Day off the estate at the home of a family.

But, if there was one memorable moment it was the nights of the Manchester Blitz, which occurred at Christmas 1940.¹

“Well, the thing I remember about Christmas was the Christmas of the Blitzwhen Manchester had a blitz. We didn’t used to hide under the stairs when there was a warning. We had mattresses along the side hall and we all went there.

And this Christmas blitz time, we were trying to fill stockings and so on, Miss Ashcroft and Miss Naylor and the older ones of us were filling stockings to put up for Christmas. And it was a bit tricky really because we were there and to bring everybody down into the hall, you’d got to do it sort of, behind a cloak so they couldn’t see what was going on. And you could see the glow in the sky from the fires in Manchester. And they had barrage balloons”.

In the same way as well as offering up special events to cheer up the children at the Belmont home, the Charity also put on shows for “evacuated children living in the district” and matched these with a “new venture in our carol singing [in December 1942] with a performance to the staff of the National Fire Service Headquarters at Cheadle.

We sang to them in their headquarters, taking our own piano on that ancient chariot, the Belmont handcart, which is a rather singular thing, and was originally the old Refuges Fire tender and must be 50 years old”.

And of course, Christmas remained an important event at Belmont and while they became quieter affairs as the War dragged on every effort was made to maintain a festive feeling. The first Christmas of the War had been celebrated with “Christmas trees, turkeys and plum pudding as usual, and Christmas carols under the big tree on the grass between the four homes”.

It remained the centre piece of the winter activities, and 1941 seemed a high point with the charity’s magazine

¹ Manchester was attacked by German bombers on the night of 22-23 December and again the following night, 23-24 December. In total 467 tons of high explosive bombs were dropped along with 2,000 incendiaries.

Dinner time 1921



reporting, “Christmas in all the Homes has been a happy time” with staff working hard with the old boys back from the Forces who together “helped to make things bright and to forget the horrors of war for the time being.

Outside friends, associations and churches have been good to our Homes everywhere. Toys, chocolate! Sixpenny pieces, 50 lbs raisins.... Turkeys were conspicuous by their absence, but pork and beef sausages, and other things, took their place, followed by plum puddings”.

The reference to “Old Boys now in the Forces” became a regular feature of all the reports during the War, and the Charity went into detail to

include the comments of those who had been in Belmont and were now serving in both the military and the civilian support services.

“We have had visits from a number of our old boys on leave. One of them tells me of his experience at Dunkirk. He could not swim, but a couple of Guardsmen held him up between them and they all safely made the journey from the beach to the boat, which could not be approached closely. (Moral – all boys and girls should learn to swim.)”

Nor was it just children at Christmas, because the charity had since 1887 also engaged in providing a sort of festive offering to newly released prisoner.

The charity’s prison gate mission was consistent with its principle of offering hope and alternatives to those in difficulty along with the practical one of assistance as the prisoners walked out of the prison door.

It helped that the headquarters of the Charity was close to Strangeways prison and so every morning discharged prisoners were met and offered a simple breakfast of coffee, bread and butter at the Mission Room, along with advice about jobs and accommodation.

For those released at Christmas, the Charity made a special effort. In 1914, of the 50 prisoners who were discharged on the morning of December 24, 39 took up the offer of breakfast, which included a “bag of cake, an orange, and a Christmas card. In addition, the ten women were given packets of tea and the men tobacco and pipes. Seven of the men were also provided with articles of clothing of which they stood in need.”¹

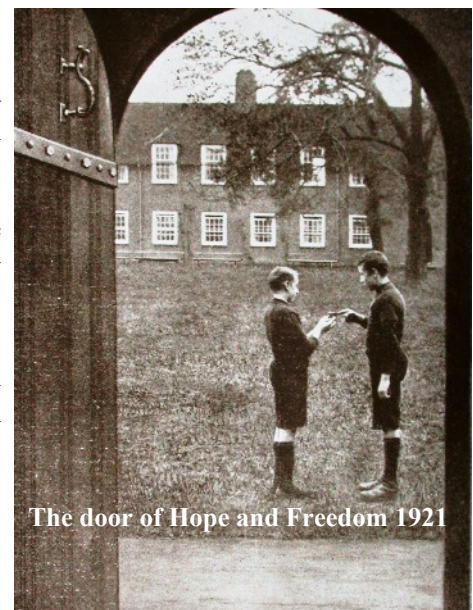
In the 23 years of its existence 265,959 men, women and children were helped before the work was taken over in 1915 by the Manchester City Mission.

So, for some at least Christmas in care or on the other side of the prison walls was made a little bit better by the work of the Manchester and Salford Boys’ and Girls’ Refuges which as the Together Trust continues to work.

Pictures, courtesy of the Together Trust

A

¹ Breakfast for Discharged Prisoners, Manchester Evening News, December 24, 19142



Lost love

As you celebrate your Christmas Eve
In the traditions of your own way,
Take a moment to pause and remember
How sad it was for a home child that day.

A hundred thousand British children
Set sail toward Canada's shore,
To be tagged and shipped to farmers
Seeing their Moms and Dads no more.

To a land called milk and honey
These children went to live.
Their little hands became calloused
From the hard work they had to give.

How sad a Christmas Eve would be
To a home child so far from home and family.
As the carolers sang "Silent Night,"
Tears fell as he cried with fright.

At Christmastime a child should be
Gathered around his Christmas tree,
Not way off in a distant land
Made to live and work like a man.

Christmas bells are ringing
Around this time of year.
Families gather merrily
To spread their Christmas cheer.

Take time out this Christmas
To think back on the past.
And remember all the home children
Whose lives were shattered like broken glass.

Grace MacCollum
Saint John, New Brunswick
Canada - 1998

Vintage prints from the Dr. Barnardo Magazine "Our Darlings"



From HCC vintage magazine collections : 1890 Our Darlings, Barnardo magazine.



From HHC's vintage "Our Darlings Collection" c1880

Who is Santa Claus?

From the 1883 "Our Darlings" edited by Dr. Barnardo



Probably most of our little readers can make a pretty good guess as to who is the "Santa Claus" in their own particular house. In the Editor's house (Dr. Barnardo) his own little people have begun to make very shrewd guesses as to the identity of Santa Claus with someone whom they love very much.

But talking of the subject reminds us of a story we once heard. A little boy, only five years of age, found every Christmas morning, as far back as ever he could recollect, and of course you know he could not recollect very far back, that his stocking was stuffed full of pretty toys and other good things. So he resolved that next Christmas Eve he would not close his eyes, but would keep them wide awake to see who Santa Claus might be. He carried out his intentions somewhat in this way: he kept awake as long as ever he could, then he went into a little doze, waking every minute or two suddenly

and looking round the room, saying, "Ah! I caught you!" but as there was nobody there, Herbert soon fell into a sound, fast sleep. This was not to be wondered at, nor is it very surprising that, as he had been thinking a good deal about Santa Claus when awake, he should continue to do so while asleep. That is how our dream came. So Herbie slept and dreamt.

He dreamed that he saw Santa Claus. She looked very beautiful, like an angel with strong powerful wings, and in her arms were such quantities of toys; and he thought he saw Santa Clause fly over the streets up far in the sky, where nobody could see her but himself. Suddenly she stopped, and hovering over a poor house in a narrow street, that looked as if everybody who live in it must be very poor indeed, she emptied a large quantity of toys down the chimney top. How happy, thought Herbie in his sleep, they will be when they wake in the morning, and he thought he could look inside the room and saw two little children lying in a corner near the cold, cheerless fire-place. After a while they awoke, and in the gloom of a cold Christmas morning he beheld their delight and surprise as they gathered the beautiful gifts that Santa Clause had so mysteriously sent. At this very moment Herbie thought he would tell the little boys how these had come when he suddenly awoke...

The sun was shining brightly through the window, and causing the snow which covered the ground and housetops, the trees and shrubs, to glisten again in the glorious light. Turning round in his bed, there by his side he saw his own stocking filled as full as ever it could be with delivered gifts. Santa Claus had been and gone!

The pleasure his toys gave him was soon checked by the thought that all he had seen in his sleep was but a dream, and he had no comfort until Mrs. Barker told him that he might prove to be "Santa Claus" to many poor boys and girls if he would give something from his own rich store of gifts to those who had none. It was a happy suggestion. How heartily Herbie carried it out, and with what delight he himself packed that very afternoon a large parcel to be carried to the Children's Hospital, we need not describe' only this much we will say, that the best gift that "Santa Claus" conferred upon Herbie that year was the wish and power to make other little folks as happy as he was himself.

The spirit of giving is the cornerstone of our work
Merry Christmas to all our members