

# British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association

April 2015  
Newsletter

Written by Lori Oschefski with special column by Andrew Simpson  
and member submitted story by Susan Glousher

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



## BHCARA News:

- Beryl Young, Author of "Charlie" will be speaking at the Alberta Geological Conference in Edmonton. This conference is being held on April 18th and 19th at the Chateau Louis Conference Centre, 11727 - Kingsway, Edmonton, Alberta! If any of our West Coast members are in the area it would be GREAT to have you out to support Beryl! [Click here to view the event information](#)
- Our event season started off with a resounding success at the Barrie, Ontario Legion with our biggest turn out ever for a community event.
- We are thrilled to announce that John Sayers of BIFHSGO British Home Child Project will be with us for British Home Child Day Celebration, September 27 at the Black Creek Pioneer Village. He will be on hand all day to share information and to answer questions.
- Tickets for our first Descendants Tea being held June 13 in Orillia, Ontario are now

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available for sale at [www.britishhomechildren.com](http://www.britishhomechildren.com). This will also be the launch date of Lori Oschefski's first book "Bleating of the Lambs - Canada's British Home Children".

• MP for British Columbia, Southern Interior Alex Atamanenko will be taking on some of our signatures on the Apology Petition for presentation in the House of Commons. Alex raised this motion in the House in February 2015. The BHCARA's quest for an apology is now in its third year and had been presented three times.

**F**acebook Tip - the "other" message box - Many Facebook users are not aware of the "other" message box. When users who are not on your friend's list send you a message it is often placed automatically in a different folder marked "other". When your message page is opened, the word "other" appears. If there are messages in there it should be indicated. Click on "other" to open these messages.



## The Mintram BHC & the Titanic Connection

In an interview with Rosina Broadbere, daughter of Rosina Hurst (nee Mintram), it was recorded that her Grandfather, William Mintram, had perished in the sinking of the Titanic and as a result of his death, her mother Rosina was forced into service and her three brothers were sent to Canada as Home Children and became farm workers. Intriguing to say the least! Yet researching this story uncovered a very different set of circumstances.

Rosina Mintram was born February 12, 1887 to William Mintram and his new wife Eliza Veal. Just prior to her birth, William had been convicted of unlawfully wounding a person, whose identity remains unknown. Following Rosina's birth, four more children were born to this couple.

On October 18, 1902 a quarrel broke out between William and his wife. Both having been drinking, the quarrel turned physical during which Eliza slapped William. He then stabbed her with a knife, Eliza succumbing to the wound. Although William testified the stabbing was accidental, he was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment.

Three of their children, Charles in 1903, William in 1905 and George in 1909 were sent to Canada by the Dr. Barnardo Homes as British Home Children. Rosina remained in England where she married Walter Hurst.

William, released from prison sometime between 1911 and 1912, came to reside beside his daughter and her husband. Walter helped to get his father in law a job on the ill fated Titanic. Both men were on board when the ship sank on April 12, 1912 and only Walter survived.

The Titanic was a White Star Line ship and sailed to New York. That shipping line was not used to transport British Home Children, therefore there were none on board the Titanic. A former Barnardo boy, Frederick Humby, from the homes in England was. Frederick had entered Dr. Barnardo's at age nine and had left their Watts Naval School in 1910, aged 15. Frederick was only 16 when he took a job as a plate steward on the Titanic. His story is found at [www.goldonian.org](http://www.goldonian.org).

The full story of the Mintram family will be available in the soon to be released book "Bleating of the Lambs - Canada's British Home Children



Rosina Mintram receives the telegram with the news of her Father's death

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## Open to the public BHC event:

April 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, 7pm  
Mono Mills United Church  
60 Richmond Street  
Caledon, Ontario

Speaking: Lori Oschefski with guest  
speaker Dallas Boudreau

**T**he Guest Children - Often when asking people if they have heard of the British Home Children, the answer is "yes, they were the children who came over because of the War". Children in England at the beginning of the Second World War were brought to Canada to live with strangers to keep them safe from the ravages of the War. Officially the immigration of the BHC ended in July of 1939 when the last party of Barnardo Children arrived in Canada. Negotiations between Canada and Britain started in June of 1940 to bring evacuee children to Canada. The very next month, a year to the month after the last official group of BHC were sent to Canada, the first Guest children arrived. Elected to the council for the Guest Children in Canada was Charlotte Whitton; at the time the Director for the Canadian Council on Child Welfare. It was Charlotte who was mainly behind the 1925 legislation, limiting the age of unaccompanied children into Canada to 14. She had concluded that the Home Children, a form of cheap labour, approached perilously close to a form of slavery. Charlotte is often said to have been the one who brought an end to the immigration of the BHC. When an Order in Council passed, allowing the Guest Children into Canada all involved were determined, that this new juvenile immigration movement would avoid the abuses suffered by the BHC.



Guest Children rescued from the Volendam

Working closely with the Canadian Immigration Director, FC Blair, Charlotte tried to ensure that this would not be a revival of the BHC schemes, but that the children came to the Canadian homes as guests and not be expected to work for their keep. From the onset of the evacuation of the Guest Children, the dangers of crossing the ocean in war time was very real. On August 30, 1940 the Volendam, carrying 321 evacuee children was torpedoed off the west coast of Ireland. All children were quickly assembled into life boats and returned to the UK, shaken but alive. A little more than two weeks later, The City of Benares sailed from Liverpool carrying ninety evacuee children, including many children who had survived the Volendam torpedoing. At 10 pm on September 16, three days into their voyage, the City of Benares was torpedoed. This time, a heavy loss of life resulted. Some of the children were killed in the explosion, some were hurried into water swamped life boats. Within half an hour the City of Benares sank, taking some of the initial survivors with her. Many more children died of exposure during the eighteen hour wait in the sea for help. Six boys were discovered alive in a life boat eight days after the sinking. In total, seventy three of the ninety evacuee children on the City of Benares died. Oversea's evacuation came to an abrupt end.



Evacuee children leaving for the country side in England

## Evacuation of children during the Second World War in England

### By Andrew Simpson

I am of that generation which was born directly after the end of the last world war and so I missed the mass evacuation of children from our cities by less than a decade.

But growing up in London in the 1950s was to be constantly reminded of the Blitz.

We played on bomb sites, took for granted the gaps in rows of houses caused by direct hits and thought nothing of the painted signs on the sides of buildings announcing nearby "Shelters" and "Emergency Water Supplies."

A few of those EWS signs can still be found much faded but vital back in 1940 for the Fire Brigade in the event of bomb damaged water mains.

And a few old Anderson shelters have survived in back gardens. But that vital few years separate my experiences from those children who lived through the nightly bombing. For them, there were endless nights in shelters listening to the bombs fall and walking home the following morning through streets littered with shrapnel and broken glass.

Of course not every built up area received an air raid nor did they last the entire war but there were enough to make parents ponder on that simple dilemma of what to do about the children.

Since Guernica in the Spanish Civil War there was that powerful idea that the "bomber would always get through" and so even before the outbreak of war preparations were made for the mass removal of children and expectant mothers out of the danger areas.

The evacuations began in early September, experienced a lull during the Phoney War when some children returned home and picked up again after the Fall of France and the beginning of the Blitz.

But there were enormous regional variations with cities like Manchester and Liverpool evacuating large numbers of children while other urban areas sent fewer to neighbouring towns and villages.



I cannot begin to think how I might have reacted to waving my three off to an unknown destination for an indefinite length of time.

All of which was difficult enough but pails when I consider the momentous decisions faced by some to send their children half way around the world.

From the outset there were private arrangements being made and the Government was responsible for evacuating 2,664 most of who went to Canada, and smaller numbers to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and some to the USA. There had been some official displeasure at the idea of sending children out of the country but in the wake of those private schemes in 1940 after Dunkirk and the real possibility of an invasion the Government approved the policy. The cost was to be met by the Government with parental contributions based on a sliding scale determined by a means test.

It has I suppose echoes of the much bigger migration of children during the late 19th century to Canada and into the mid 20th century to Australia.

And as someone whose own great uncle made that Atlantic crossing as a BHC I have mixed feelings about the programme and wonder what decision I might have taken

As it was the sinking of two ships carrying children and the loss of 77 young people in September 1940 led to the abandonment of the policy although private evacuations continued.

It is a story that only occasionally surfaces and has been eclipsed by the better known accounts of those children who remained in this country.

All of which brings me to that odd term Guest Children which like British Home Children hides so much. Guests they certainly were compared to those who were migrated by charities and the Guardians of the Poor Law and the nature of their stay and their experiences will have been different as were the circumstances of their migration. But here in Britain their story has fared no better than that of British Home Children.

I doubt that there will be many detailed accounts of who they were, what happened to them and what they thought of the experience.

Over here I have come cross one account and that is Canadian\* all of which leaves some descriptions in a handful of

books, reports in Hansard and references in the National Archive.

But then that doesn't surprise me given that little is really known about the history of British Home Children and what coverage exists has been mainly about the more recent migrations to Australia. So perhaps it is time for more to be done on this side of the Atlantic.

Picture; Don't do it Mother, Ministry of Health, 1940, and was scanned and released by the Imperial War Museum on the IWM Non Commercial Licence

\*"Guests" not "Refugees:" Child Evacuees, to Canada during World War II

<http://www.cst.ed.ac.uk/Events/Conferences/documents/SmerdonCPaper.pdf>



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Visit Andrew's blog at  
[www.chorltonhistory.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.chorltonhistory.blogspot.co.uk)

## Member submitted story by Susan Gloucher

**R**euben John Jeffery, known as John in later years, was born in 1903 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England. He was the third child of Alfred William Jeffery from Bembridge, Isle of Wight and Emily Surridge from Romford, Essex. He had a sister Constance who died as an infant in 1892 and a brother Alfred, also a BHC, born in 1893.

His father Alfred William rose to Petty Officers rank in the Royal Navy and retired in September 1900 with a pension.

At that time Alfred William took employment as an engineer at Miss Thomson St. John's St. Laundry in Tunbridge Wells and the family settled into a red brick home on South View Road.

IN 1904 the first of two tragedies befell the family with the death of Emily from consumption in 1904. Within a few months Alfred senior remarried Alice Goodman, who had been acting as his housekeeper since Emily's death, and she assumed the role of the boy's stepmom.

Then in 1907 Alfred William Jeffery the elder died suddenly of Bright's Disease leaving the family destitute and Alice without means to support them or herself. She turned Alfred over to the care of the National Children's Home and Orphanage in Farnborough and Reuben John to the Barnardo Society in order to "go back into service". Records show Alice to be concerned about the boys welfare, writing the homes and the boys even after they had left for Canada. It is thought her belief that the boys would be better off emigrated was genuine.

Reuben was admitting into the care of Barnardos on June 7, 1907 and entered the Receiving House, Stepney Causeway, East London. At the age of 4 years 4 months. He was said to be obedient and well behaved and of clean habits. For the next five years he was boarded in and out of homes in England. His experiences in these homes were not good ones.

This is a brief summary of placements:

- June 24, 1907- February, 1910 Boarded out to a foster home in Helmington, Suffolk.
- February 10, 1910 Returned to No. 10 Receiving House
- February 19, 1910- February 15, 1912 Boarded out to a foster home in Hartest, Suffolk.
- February 15, 1912 Went to Leopold House, East London, a home for boys.
- March 14, 1912 Sailed to Canada on the SS Corinthian.



Alfred William Jeffery senior with Reuben on his knee & Alfred Jr. standing

● March 30, 1912 Arrived in St. John

Reuben JOHN Jeffery arrived Canada as a Home Child in 1912, at the age of nine. He went to live on a farm with a brother and sister named Walter and Mary Swallow, in Leadbury (near Walton), Ontario. They were very good to him and on his annual visits, in accordance with the Child Immigrant Scheme, the Visiting Officer reported John "as he was now known" was doing well. He was described as healthy and strapping and well thought of in the

neighbourhood.

John stayed on the farm, long past the time he could have left, eventually running the place until the time of Walter and Mary's deaths in 1929. At that time family came in from other parts of Canada and the US and he was evicted from his home of 17 years.

At that time John moved to Goderich, Ontario. On the last Visiting Officer's Report, which remarkably was still being done on an annual basis, it was written "October 23, 1929 Employed Grain Elevator, Goderich, Ontario. Visitor was informed that John's old employer had passed away and the farm had changed hands. He married about a month ago to a young lady named Miss Ellacott, a farmer's daughter, and they reside in Goderich".

John had married Evaline Ellacott, and they had two children Harold John and Eleanor Florence. John eventually became a carpenter in the town of Goderich, Ontario and there many fine examples of homes he built in the town today.

In 1947 he opened John Jeffery & Son Planing Mill with his son, Harold at his side and expanded the business. They eventually became so busy in the mill that they gave up building homes and the business evolved into a lumber and building materials supply. JOHN JEFFERY AND SON, LUMBER AND BUILDING SUPPLIES continued to operate in the same location it was established until it was hit by a tornado that devastated Goderich in August of 2011..

John's interests included trains, cars, vegetable gardening and steam engines. He built working model engines as a hobby and owned a steam engine that he would drive in local parades. It is now on view in the Huron County Pioneer Museum, located here in Goderich.

John also loved British Columbia and Canada's west coast and took the train across the country to visit the area 9 times.

John Jeffery died in 1981 and was predeceased by his wife Eveline (1959) and his daughter Eleanor (1970). He left behind his son Harold and his wife Norma and 9 grandchildren.

My Grandfather never spoke of his circumstances except to elude to his bad experiences in homes in England and that he had no love for his birth country as "it never did him any favours". He spoke fondly of his family the Swallows who seemed to love him very much.

In 1995, when Barnardos first started to make records available and before it became law, my father sent away to the After Care Society for information on the events of grandpa's life that led him to Canada. The findings were quite a revelation and started me on a journey of discovery that has returned me to Isle of Wight and reconnected me with family there.

Throughout all his moves and 76 years of life John kept a clutch of family materials which included a few pictures as well as his travel trunk. In this were a couple children's books as well as his Traveller's Guide and Historical Tales for Young Protestants stamped with his sailing date and inscribed by someone London, England March 1912.

On his death everything went to his son Harold for safekeeping where they remain. The rather battered edition of Ups and Downs, which includes an account of his trip, was also in the trunk and it wasn't until I was invited to join the British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association facebook page that I realized it's significance and how important it may prove to be to others on the same journey. I am glad to make this small contribution on behalf of my grandfather Reuben John Jeffery.



## Barnardo's Canadian Magazine

### "Ups and Downs"

These magazines were published by the Dr. Barnardo Homes at Toronto, Ontario, usually quarterly between 1895 and 1949. Over the decades there

were more than 200 issues printed, some, or many of which numbered in the thousands of copies. Many Home children subscribed to the magazine, many thousands did, partly to keep in contact with their surrogate families of other children from the Homes, partly to maintain their spirits in a time of their young lives when many gained little emotional support from the families with whom they were placed.

These magazines contain many short snippets and occasionally longer excerpts from letters sent by the children to the Homes offices in Toronto, attributed to the child writer by name; and many photographs sent by children with the intention of their being published as well. All photos are identified by name. When letters were published, the geographic location of the writer is sometimes provided. There are many references to the Russell Manitoba Training Farm.

Many issues also contain lists that give the names of about 100 boys in recent immigration parties, their employers' names and the postal addresses of these first placements. Also in these magazines are statements of policy and of practice of the homes, descriptions of the daily rituals and seasonal chores of the workers and executives of the organization, an informative description of the busy-ness involved handling thousands of cases in their various stages of maturity, of deaths of children and events such as Christmas parties and such.

These magazines shaped the lives of the children who subscribed. They offered moral advice and examples, news on distant past companions and provided some relief from the loneliness and isolation that many of them endured.

-taken from notes by Brian Rolfe - Barnardo's Canadian Magazine "Ups and Downs" as published on the BHC Mailing List.

**Searching the Ups and Downs:** There are now two primary sources for searching the Ups and Downs for mentions of your British Home Children. The British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa in 2014, published a comprehensive index of the names of children mentioned in these magazines. This index is found at [www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca). If your child's name is found, there are two options. Most issues between 1895 and 1903, May 1910, May 1913, May and August 1912 are published in full on the BHCARA Research site "[British Home Children in Canada](http://www.bifhsgo.ca)." Other articles can be accessed by contacting BIFHSGO directly at: [queries@bifhsgo.ca](mailto:queries@bifhsgo.ca). Of over two hundred editions published over the years, approximately one hundred and seventy five have been found and indexed through the work of John Sayers and the Library and Archives Canada. In 2012 the BHCARA purchased copies of the earlier years and have published them for free on their web site. With many thanks to Susan Gloucher's family an un-found edition has now been added to the index and to LAC. John Sayers has determined that this newly found edition is the missing May 1912 edition, the first published after the sinking of the Titanic. In this edition, Barnardo's gives their thoughts on the disaster. We are pleased to be able to present this article in this Newsletter.



The boys, we well know, are not angels, nor the girls seraphs. The devil will be just as busy in their hearts and lives as he is with others ; but when the times come—as they will—when they are inclined to hearken to the voice of the tempter, or to weary in well-doing, we hope that the knowledge that their careers are being watched with so much kindly interest will serve to keep them from what is wrong and unworthy, and to stimulate them to follow that which is true and pure and of good report. We have great pleasure in adding that there is every likelihood of our dear friend, Mr. Hind Smith, coming out himself this summer to visit as many as possible of his "School" boys and girls, so that he may carry home news of them to their young friends in England. We hope and expect that his visit, and what he sees of the lives and surroundings of our boys and girls in the new country, will be a great encouragement and help to him, as we are sure it will be a great pleasure to those he is able to see to renew their acquaintance with him.

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"ARRIVED SAFE. ALL WELL." The scores of times we have sent this message is recalled to us by the late appalling disaster on the Atlantic. We think of the number of times we have passed through the ice-track, both in clear weather and dense fog ; of the close quarters at which we have been with icebergs, and the narrow escapes we have had of collision with these uncanny monsters. We remember an occasion when, in the Straits of Belle Isle, we counted no less than 210 large and small bergs in sight at one time, and we can hear, in imagination, the grinding of the ice against the side of the ship, as our vessel has slowly pushed its way through heavily packed field-ice in the Gulf of St. Lawrence ; and yet for thirty years

our parties have come through safe and unharmed, and no ship in which we were travelling has met with serious disaster. We would offer the tribute of praise and thanksgiving to our God, Who has thus preserved and protected us from the perils of the deep, and brought us through dangers seen and unseen.



#### Honour the Brave

We cannot but also add our tribute to the wonderful nerve and skill on the part of the many Captains and Officers who have piloted us through the dangers of the North Atlantic. We often think of the position of a Captain as one of peculiar difficulty and hardship. There could be no greater strain upon body and mind than the charge of a ship during darkness and fog, in the region of ice or in narrow waters. At such times an enormous responsibility rests upon a commander's shoulders. On the one hand, he is expected to keep his time ; on the other hand, if anything goes wrong the blame rests on his shoulders. We can well imagine, from long experience, how things would have been on the *Titanic* if Captain Smith had done what all the wise people—after the event—say he should have done—that is, have stopped when he found himself in the region of ice, and waited motionless until the fog had cleared off. Loud and long would have been the grumblings and protests. The big financiers who were hurrying over to attend important meetings of companies, and had allowed themselves just time enough to reach their destination ; the musical and theatrical people who were booked to fill engagements ; the clergymen who were to preach for special functions, or the professors who were to give lectures ; the passengers who were to sail on Pacific boats from San Francisco or from New York to South American ports, and who would miss their passages if



the *Titanic* was delayed, would all unite in a chorus of complaint of the Captain's lack of nerve. If they had only been on such-and-such a ship they would have got through; if they had had such another captain in charge, he would not have been afraid to venture. The unfortunate skipper would have been rated as an "old woman," wanting in nerve, "a back number," only fit to command a cargo or cattle ship—and all the rest of it. No one would have praised him for saving their lives, but many would have grumbled at him for losing their time, and no congratulations or thanks would have awaited him on reaching his destination thirty-six or forty-eight hours overdue. It would have been far easier, and more agreeable, for Captain Smith and his officers if, instead of straining nerve and energies to get his ship through, he had stopped her quietly and gone to his bed for a good night's rest and only started her engines when the fog had cleared up. But he did what he believed his duty required of him—the same thing as hundreds of others have done before him, and will be expected to do again, when the present panic has expended itself and people have forgotten—as they soon will—about the *Titanic* and her fate. The risk of life was greater for himself than for anyone else, as well he would know that in the event of disaster he would be the last to be saved. He played his part like a man and went to his death like a hero, and as such we honour him. "England expects every man to do his duty," and assuredly, as Britishers, we may congratulate ourselves and feel proud of the way in which our British seamen did their duty in the face of disaster and death as the *Titanic* was sinking into those icy waters.

#### A National Loss

WE deeply deplore the loss, in the wreck of the *Titanic*, of Mr. Chas. M. Hays, President of the Grand Trunk Railway. We have not done business for thirty years with the Grand Trunk Railway, both before Mr. Hays' time and since, without realizing his masterly executive ability and powers of organization. Without being in any way obtrusive he was essentially a strong man, and, we believe, as straight as he was strong. We had the pleasure of crossing the Atlantic with Mr. Hays several years ago, and succeeded in enlisting his interest in the work of the Homes. He had intended to have been at the farewell meeting in London of the following emigration party, and was only prevented by other engagements. We always felt, however, that we had a good friend in Mr. Hays and in the management of the Grand Trunk. His death is an irreparable loss both to the Company and to the country, but he died as a brave man, to whom the call had come from earthly work and service to the long rest.

#### Aid to the Sufferers

ONCE again Dr. Barnardo's Homes are stretching out the hand of help to the needy and bereaved. We observe that a public announcement has been made through the English press that the Homes will receive any children who through the loss of the *Titanic*, are left in want or destitution. The death of so many members of the crew must have deprived many families of their support, and we have no doubt that not a few bereaved and fatherless little ones will be grateful to seek the shelter of the Homes. We are sure it will be a gratification to those of our readers who have recently made donations to the Homes to know that their money will thus be used to give help and relief, in the most