

British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association

This month's featured child:
Ronald Chamberlain
A second, special Mother's Day story on page two

Special two page
Mother's Day edition

May 2014 Newsletter



Ronald Chamberlain

Although Ronald Chamberlain lived in Canada since he was sent here by Barnardo's at the age of ten, served in the Royal Canadian Air Force in the Second World War, married and had children in Canada, it wasn't discovered until much later in his life that he wasn't a Canadian Citizen. He had to apply

for and finally received his Citizenship in 1976.

Ronald's father and his mother, Maud's fiancée Jack Bradshaw, was a British soldier who was killed in action during the First World War. Maud, who already had another child and was not receiving child support ordered by the court from the father, was forced to live with her parents. They lived in abject poverty – the only means of support was her 73 year old father's old age pension. Maud was only able to get occasional odd work.

Maud applied to Barnardo's for admission of Ronald, so that she could seek work as a domestic.

And although Martha, Maud's sister, who was married and had family of her own, was willing to raise the boys along with her sons, she was denied.

Ronald had good and bad experiences on Canadian farms. Before finally ending up in a place where he was considered to be like family, he was treated like a farm hand, at best. On one farm in particular, he was not given socks which caused him to have trouble with his feet his whole life.

Ronald served in the Second World War as a Wireless Operator and Gunner in the RCAF and was shot down over Germany in April, 1944. He parachuted out of the plane, landing on railroad tracks injuring his hips and back. He remained a Prisoner of War until his liberation in May, 1945.

Ronald's brother Reginald was sent to Australia and they never met again. They missed seeing each other during the war when they both visited the home of their aunt Martha, apparently within five minutes of each other.

Ronald and his wife, Beatrice had six children and seventeen grandchildren. They were married for over fifty years.

Doreen Young, Ronald's daughter, has donated many of her treasured keepsakes of her father to the BHCARA Display, including his Barnardo Bible and his Second World War Flight Log book.

BHCARA News

Don Cherry to speak

We are pleased to announce BHC Descendant Don Cherry of CBC Hockey Night in Canada fame will be a guest speaker at our First World War Commemoration service on July 28th. Don Cherry's grandfather, Richard Palamountain, served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

The July 28th First World War Commemoration Service

Tickets for this event can be reserved by calling customer service at Black Creek Pioneer Village at 416-736-1733 or on the Black Creek website starting May 5th: www.blackcreek.ca. Please note doors will be open at 9:30 am. Service starts at 9:50 am. Admission \$11.

May 24th Doors Open Ontario Event - Orillia Public Library

Members of the BHCARA will be on hand at this event to do a presentation on the BHC who served and died in the First World War. There will be a spectacular display of BHC military artefacts.

Walter Goulding's Birthday

Executives of the BHCARA visited BHC Walter Goulding to help celebrate his 106th birthday. BHC George Beardshaw, who will also be attending the July 28th event, was also present.

Black Creek Pioneer Village Exhibit

BHCD Joe Pether has loaned the BHCARA, among other things, his Grandfather's First World War diaries, in which he chronicled his search for his siblings.

Cecil Bennett Collection

Wilda Hay of Cavan, Ontario has loaned the BHCARA artefacts and documents for BHC Cecil Bennett whom her grandfather Benjamin Johnston had on his farm. This collection documents Cecil's life in Canada starting with the original application form and three dollar application fee Mr. Johnston submitted for a boy. Cecil was sent to Mr. Johnston in 1907 where he was well cared for and considered a member of the family. Cecil died on April 9th 1917 in the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Events scheduled for May

May 1 West Toronto Junction Historical Society, Toronto

May 7 Probus Club of Old Oakville, Oakville

May 24 Orillia Public Library, Orillia

May 27 Canadian University Women's Group, Cornwall



A loving mother's letter to her sons

To My Dear Sons

Just a few lines on your start out on life's journey, wherever you go take pride, courage, and self reliance with you. Whatever you do, do it to the best of your ability.

Whoever you work for always treat with respect and obedience or you will never make a master yourself and above all be honest and truthful in all your dealings and may God help you to face and overcome all the troubles, trials and temptations that will beset you on Life's Highway and may your prove a credit and respected man to whomsoever's guardianship you may be placed in.

Also they in their turn, do their duty towards you in every respect to help you stand alone on your own feet when old enough. Our paths are far apart, and we may never see much of each other, if ever, but this is your Mother's daily prayer for her absent boys, Cyril and Dennis Waterer.

From your Mother, Gertrude Waterer
July 1926

Joseph Cyril & Dennis Edward Waterer

Not until after her death, did Joseph (Joe) and Edward Waterer, find out that their mother, Gertrude, had written a poignant letter to her sons – meant to show them how much she deeply cared and to offer her motherly advice one last time. It had been entrusted to one of their sisters who had remained with family in England, and for unknown reasons, decided that it was not to be shown to Joe and Edward while their mother was still alive.

Their father, a market gardener, died of TB in the workhouse leaving Gertrude pregnant with Edward and Joe just a year old, as well as five other children. Some of them were sent to live with relatives but not much is known about the struggles of the two brothers until Joe was sent to Canada by Barnardo's in 1927 followed by Edward two years later.

Joe worked for four years on a farm in Orangeville, Ontario. While there, he had no contact with his family in Prescott, England nor any money. Edward was abused by the farmer he'd worked for and swore he'd kill him if he ever saw him again. The brothers didn't see each other, even though they were on farms only a short distance apart.

However, fate played a hand in reuniting the brothers twenty years and a world war later. One day in 1948, Joe who had opened a photo shop in Barrie, Ontario, was commissioned to photograph a golden wedding anniversary. He didn't have a car, and was given a lift by farmer who said he knew someone by the name of Waterer. It turned out to be Joe's brother Edward.

Neither brother talked much about their experiences but Joe did return to England, once as a soldier stationed in Surrey during the war and later in 1964 with his two daughters. On both occasions he met two of his sisters who were living in Preston but he never saw his mother again.

Joe's daughter said that she thought if her dad had seen the letter his mother had written to her sons, they would have met again. "She must have been devastated to send her children away and for her two boys to have been separated...I can't understand why that (the meeting) didn't happen." Joe passed away in 2007, surrounded by family and holding the hand of his beloved wife, Violet, of 67 years.

