



# Anglo-Celtic Roots

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## *Anglo-Celtic Roots*

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Province of Canada, 1849

Source: Library and Archives Canada (<https://web.archive.org/web/20181018150312/http://www.colleotionscanada.gc.ca/confederation/023001-5004-e.html>)

### *From the Editor:*

This issue begins with the second-place winner in our 25th Anniversary Writing Competition, Lynda Gibson. She takes us on the journey her great-great-grandparents made from Scotland to Canada and explores what the experience was like for those who lived it.

Dianne Brydon, the second of three honourable mentions in our writing competition, takes us into the asylums of Ontario from 1877 to 1910 with her sad story of Mary Brydon.

In "We Shall Remember Them," Sheila Dohoo Faure recounts the story of Corporal Spooner, who died at the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station after the war had ended. His tale is also unusual because his father served in the same unit.

Next, we learn of an exhibition to celebrate Sir John Middlemore's work, the value of the BIFHSGO Home Children indexes to researchers and the project's untiring champion, Patricia Roberts-Pichette.

Finally, we have the Minutes of the 2019 annual general meeting (AGM) in preparation for this year's upcoming meeting on June 13th.

Barbara Tose

## From the President



I would like to offer everyone a warm welcome to the new year, 2020.

It was certainly an interesting winter, a real mix of warm

and cold temperatures. But that is behind us and we can now look forward to increasingly warm temperatures and more time away from our computers. I hope that the winter allowed for some excellent genealogical research into your ancestors and a few broken brick walls.

The winter season is also a time to get together with family, to celebrate and discuss family history and lore. If your family is like mine, they had a raft of suggestions of further genealogical projects for you to do. I now have a long list of people to research and write about. I may be seen more frequently at the special interest groups—British Colonial America, DNA, Scottish and Writing—in an attempt to complete some of the suggestions.

We have had one change to the Board. Allan Cutler, who stepped forward to volunteer as Education Director last June, found that his other commitments prevented him from completing the director's

tasks to his satisfaction. Thank you, Allan, for trying. Fortunately, into the breach stepped Maureen Amey, who has agreed to become our new Education Director. Thank you, Maureen for coming forward and volunteering. Welcome to the Board!

We revert to our country-themed conferences this year with “Irish Lines and Female Finds: Researching Your Irish Roots and Female Ancestors”. Watch the BIFHSGO website for news on the program, a line up of excellent speakers and topics.

In closing I would like to remind you that the Society is always in need of volunteers. Without you, BIFHSGO cannot continue to produce the program and content that assists you (and genealogists worldwide) in your research. Not all positions require huge amounts of time, nor do they require you to “know it all”. Enthusiasm goes a long way! Speak to any Board member if you would like to help your society. Please, volunteer now.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Duncan Monkhouse".

Duncan Monkhouse

## Family History Research

# John and Grizzel's Epic Adventure to the Land of Milk and Maple Syrup



BY LYNDA GIBSON

*Lynda's story of her Gibson ancestors' immigration to Canada is the second winning article from BIFHSGO's 25th Anniversary Writing Competition. Interested in family history for many years, she was intrigued by her grandparents' stories which her mother had typed in the 1970s. Lynda is a retired federal government employee who took up genealogy as her main interest almost seven years ago. In addition to this article, she presented how she used family lore to find her Gibson ancestors in Scotland and Ireland at the January 2020 meeting (which members can view on our website).*

**W**e know our ancestors came from far away to make new lives in Canada, but have you ever given a thought as to what it was actually like to take that massive step, to leave everything they knew behind, to travel over a turbulent and often violent ocean to an unknown and undeveloped land? My great-great-grandparents, John Gibson and Grizzel (Grace) Gardner, did just that in 1853, traveling from Carluke, Lanarkshire, Scotland to Arthur, Wellington County, Ontario with a small baby and another on the way. How could they ever have been prepared for this epic adventure?

John Gibson and Grizzel (Grace) Gardner were living in Carluke when they married 4 August 1850.<sup>1</sup> Grace had been born 3 July 1825 in Carluke<sup>2</sup> in the middle of the nine

children of John Gardner and Grizzel (Grace) Letham. It was a huge surprise to me that John had been born in Northern Ireland, not in Scotland as family lore suggested, when I discovered he had been born 22 February 1813 in Saintfield, County Down. He was the second last of eight children of John Gibson and Agnes Blakely.<sup>3</sup> We don't know when or why the Gibson family returned to Scotland, but family lore had the family leaving the Highlands of Scotland for Ireland in 1580 and returning to Carluke in 1798 (yes, the lore included specific dates! But that's another story.) Still, the Gibsons were staunchly Scottish, despite having spent the previous two centuries in Northern Ireland.

In Carluke, as a younger son, John became a shepherd, living in a small bothy<sup>4</sup> with his collie sheepdog.

Once a week John was supplied with fresh buttermilk and oatmeal with which he made scones and bannock. It must have been a lonely life, and probably one without a bright future. His older brothers and at least one sister became farmers in Carluke, but John and his younger brother Hamilton would not have had good prospects. Land lot sizes were diminishing as generations passed, and being newly returned to Carluke, the Gibson family would not likely have had choice land to farm.

But still, I wondered, why did John and Grace leave their home and large families to take this treacherous journey to become pioneers in the distant and untamed Province of Canada?<sup>5</sup> (Cover photo<sup>6</sup>) Could it have been that others had gone before them and painted a viable picture for their future without regard for class or status? Could it have been the free land grants to be issued to industrious pioneers?

I'll never know for sure, but other family members had already made the decision to travel to the Province of Canada. In 1850, John's youngest brother, Hamilton, had recently been ordained as a Presbyterian minister in Glasgow and then married. Just days after his marriage, he and his wife Margaret travelled to Galt, Waterloo County, Ontario, where Hamilton had been assigned to be the minister at St. Andrew's Church.<sup>7</sup>

Grace's father, John Gardner, had passed away prior to 1841, which must have made it difficult for her mother to raise the large family, the youngest of which was born in 1832. Interestingly, several of the children remained in Carluke, but their mother Grace must have had an adventurous streak which seems to have been shared by her daughter Grace. As a result, mother Grace and four of her nine children (Robert, Daniel, John and Margaret) immigrated to Canada around 1849. Daughter Grace may already have met her future husband and decided to emigrate with him, but she did not accompany her family.

The Gardner family took up residence in the town of Ashburn, Whitby Township, Ontario which is east of Toronto but about 290 km (as the crow flies) from Arthur, where John and Grace subsequently settled. We don't know why the Gardner family chose Ashburn, but they quickly came into contact with William Heron and Jane Crawford, my third great-grandparents. They had immigrated to the area from the Parish of Dailly in East Ayrshire, Scotland. The families quickly merged in 1850 when Robert Gardner married William Heron's daughter Jean,<sup>8</sup> and later, in 1887, when John and Grace's son Robert (my great-grandfather) married Jennie Heron,<sup>9</sup> Jean Heron's niece. Clearly, the distance between the

families was not an impediment to visits.

We can only guess why John and Grace made that decision to emigrate, perhaps following their family or desiring those free land grants were a draw. But I wanted to think about what it really was like, this epic adventure: crossing the wild Atlantic Ocean for a month, travelling across the sparsely populated United States of America through Indian territory to reach New London (now London, Ontario), and then making their way to Arthur to commence their new life in almost uncharted territory. They arrived in New York City on 7 May 1853,<sup>10</sup> so at least they were not facing winter immediately, but Grace was already three months pregnant with a child to be born in October.

A book entitled *From Then Till Now, A History of Arthur Township, 1850–1985*<sup>11</sup> gave me some insight into their journey. It includes a copy of a letter, dated February 1851, from a recent settler to his family back home in Scotland. This is around the time that John and Grace would have been preparing for their adventure. The author of the letter, Mr. Smith, expressed his concern that his family prepare for the voyage “as for death, for you do not know what will happen, and it is your daily duty to prepare for eternity.” Talk about optimism!

Mr. Smith described the provisions that the travellers must acquire, including a “good sizeable chest” for their food, like the one shown in Figure 1,<sup>12</sup> and including a good lock to protect against the awful thieves on board. Separate clothing trunks would be put down in the hold and would only be accessible every couple of weeks for a change of clothing.



**Figure 1: Trunk similar to the one described by Mr. Smith**

Source: *From Then Till Now, A History of Arthur Township, 1850–1985*

Within the trunk, they had to include their “victuals” for a period of at least two months. Although the crossing should only have taken about a month, it could be longer due to calm or stormy weather, and after they reached the port in New York they still had to travel to New London.

Mr. Smith described the type and amount of food and liquids to bring for a family of four including: eight stone (51 kg) white biscuit, not hard sailors’ biscuit; two bottles of good English brandy to settle a sick

stomach; four bottles of white wine; six bottles of porter; several hams, not too lean; and four pounds of tea. The diet would make them costive (constipated), so they needed “plenty of opening pills, and if you run out of them, drink sea water.”

Each passenger also needed a basin for washing and to vomit into; Mr. Smith needed his close by throughout the trip. He recommended a cap or bonnet that would hold in high winds, thick drawers, and for each male four flannel shirts to lick up sweat and protect from cold and dampness. And finally, Mr. Smith recommended that they must wait until the beginning of May to depart “for it is horrible to be cold on the deck of a ship and cannot go down for sickness.”

After that rather intimidating list of

requirements, and hints of difficulties, and after making the actual journey successfully to New York, the young Gibson family still had to get to New London.

The map below (Figure 2) shows the terrain from New York, lower right, to London which you can just make out above the middle of Lake Erie. This map depicts the terrain a few decades before John and Grace’s trip so perhaps there were a few more roads and railroads available, although these, especially railroads, were still in their infancy. The map shows that the area where Arthur now exists is within the “Great Tract of Woodland.” It also shows roads throughout the United States, up to Lake Ontario. Perhaps John and Grace followed those roads in coaches, then took a boat west to

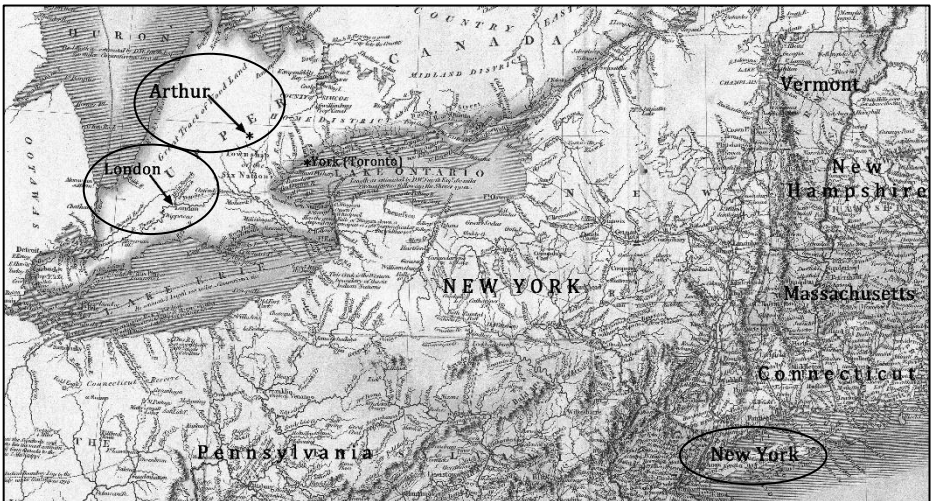


Figure 2: 1806 Cary Map of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Virginia

Source: *Wikimedia Commons*<sup>13</sup>



where Hamilton is now located, before heading west again to London. That is a distance of about 875 kilometres on today's roads, but most of it would likely have been travelled by horse-drawn wagons or coaches. From London to Arthur is now a distance of about 128 kilometres. Considering the year and the distance, this part of their travels must have added a couple of weeks to their travelling, so they probably did not arrive in Arthur until late May.

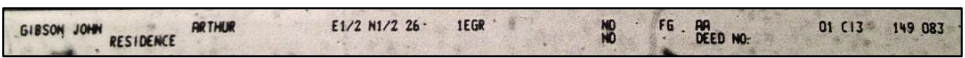
But what awaited them when they arrived in Arthur? Frankly, not very much but huge forests, streams and ravines, although a basic road had been cut and the land had been surveyed. Certainly, it would have been beautiful, but I can imagine how overwhelmed they may have been when faced with the immensity of the task ahead of them.

Arthur Township was named after Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington and was established in 1840. The Township is in the midst of a 30-mile wide circle with the lowest number of heat units anywhere in southern Ontario. That temperature and the generally clay-loam soil supports barley and canola, but not corn, which was a staple at the time. When the settlers first arrived, the

land was heavily timbered with beech and maple on the higher parts and elms, birches and hemlock on the lower parts. There were many creeks, ravines and rivers, certainly not the undulating open farms we now see.

Early settlers were given 50 acres of land on a road with the option to buy the back 50 acres provided that within 18 months five acres were cleared and a 5.4 by 6-metre shingled house was built.<sup>14</sup> In 1860 John Gibson was granted 50 acres of land just outside the town of Arthur. Land grants were distributed under regulations made by Crown representatives. By 1795 there was a complex system of land titles and ownership regulations which changed over time. John would have submitted a petition to the Crown. On being successful, he received a grant from the Crown to settle the land. Once the conditions were met, the land was granted. The second 50 acres could be similarly earned.

Figure 3 is an extract showing John Gibson, of Arthur Township, being granted the opportunity to settle in the Township of Arthur on the east half of the north half of Lot 26, Concession 1. This portion of the land abuts the Arthur-Luther township border. There is no date (ND) for



**Figure 3: Extract from Ontario Archives Land Record Index**

Source: Ontario Archives Land Record Index, Alphabetical Listing by Name of Locatee, G 18, Page 4550

this transaction, although another document shows the transfer of ownership of 50 acres on 18 November 1860. Generally, the first date is when the land was given for settlement and the second was when ownership was finally transferred after the conditions were met. This was a free grant (FG) which does not transfer ownership, but proves the person qualified for this privilege. The AA indicates that John was considered destitute by a government board and/or had all of his administrative fees waived. The final numbers are references to obtain microfilmed documents.

In the Arthur Township survey map from 1881 (Figure 4), John's land (in light gray) is on the lower right side just off the main colonization road which cuts diagonally across the map. That road had been commenced in 1840, so by 1853 when John and Grace arrived, the area at least had a viable road and a small town (the darkened area in the lower right) in which they could acquire food, tools and implements.

Mr. George Cushing, son of one of the original settlers described the plight of the initial settlers:

Imagine a settler from the

Old Land, without the knowledge of clearing land, unskilled in the use of the axe, no keen lance-toothed saws to be had like those we have at present, commencing to clear a fifty or a hundred acre lot of the dense and mighty forest. Many stories there are of hardships endured in the old log shanties without proper doors, and of wolves howling in the forest; no flour in the house for six weeks and potatoes the only bill of fare; the carrying on the back of sacks of flour all the way from Fergus; men shouldering their heavy grain cradle and walking thirty miles and more to Guelph in a day, to get work at the earlier harvest.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 4: Arthur Township survey map**  
 Source: *From Then Till Now, A History of Arthur Township, 1850-1985*, p 406

Another article, "God Bless our Home 1800's," tells about the day to day life of the settlers:

...usually there were 8 to 10 children, but usually a third of them were in the local churchyard ...grand-mother rocking in her chair. She did wake up with one of her rheumatic pains, but she has just taken a dose of her favourite patent medicine and she feels a lot better. She is a strong temperance woman, but she little realizes that the medicine she has taken is pure spirits....Father has just cut himself in the barn. He fears lockjaw as well he might, but he has no real worries. He knows a strip of salt pork wrapped around the wound will do wonders....Long skirts often caught fire...Alum was added to wash water in a primitive attempt at flame proofing clothing...Spinning was done at home and the dyeing of the yarn was a home chore too. Many varieties of flowers and vegetables were used to dye with, also walnut shells and onion skins....Wash day was awful. The room ran with water and everything became steamy. Some writers suggested women learn to read the clouds and tell the weather. After all, there was no point in all this laundry being started if the rains came....Ice boxes were sold as early as the 1840's. Some were lined with lead...lead poisoning resulted...Sugar was bought in white sugar cones, weighing from 15-20 lbs each. They were bought wrapped in deep blue paper. This blue paper was used to make a pretty blue grey dye ... Walnut shells were soaked for hair

dye...also for moustaches and beards...Meat was tenderized by being fed a spoonful of vinegar just before killing...Indians showed the first settlers how to get maple syrup, also how venison was dried and how corn, beans and pumpkin were compatible crops to be sown together...there was not always enough food as famine and poor harvests were frequent.<sup>16</sup>

In the late 1840's, as the settlers streamed in, it became necessary to establish schools. Commencing in 1850, five schools were built, equally spaced between Arthur and Mount Forest. The schools were made of log. The roof was made of halved logs hollowed out. The first layer was laid with the trough facing up, while the second layer was placed upside down, fit into the middle of the troughs facing upwards, much like Mediterranean tile roofs are placed. Most schools had between 60 and 90 students, especially in winter when the older boys attended.

There were also toll roads, owned by private companies. In 1860 the Owen Sound Road (essentially the colonization road) was gravelled and toll gates installed. The toll gates were three to four metres high and local farmers, who were the toll keepers, would have to unlock the gates to permit passage. The charge was five cents for a one-horse vehicle and ten cents for a two-horse vehicle. The County bought

back the road between Arthur and Mount Forest in 1863.

Prior to the building of the Toronto, Grey and Bruce railroad, this road saw large teams hauling supplies. Early settlers recalled that teams could be seen half a mile long in the winter season. Naturally, there were fifteen taverns within fifteen miles along this road, providing entertainment, rest and refreshment for man and beast.

But year by year life became easier for these adventurous pioneers. By 1848 a postal system was operating along the colonization road, until 1871 when the railroad was completed. Taxes were collected on land as early as 1848. One resident of Arthur Township in 1858 described the taxes as: "Our taxes is small, about 27 shillings for school tax, Government taxes about 20 shillings, and 10 shillings for the highway, but that we do statute duty for."<sup>17</sup> Residents could add gravel to maintain the road and forego paying their highway taxes. By 1886 there was a Bell long distance telephone line from Walkerton to Mount Forest, Arthur, Fergus,

and Guelph. In just a very short period of time, less than four decades, Arthur had changed from a great tract of woodland to a thriving community.

I find it fascinating to imagine what it was like for our ancestors. They had lived through so much turmoil, upheaval, persecution, famine and disease in Scotland and Northern Ireland. By comparison, in so many ways our lives are so simple; our comfort taken for granted. Our ancestors endured subsistence living, although by the time John and Grace arrived in Arthur with baby John and James on the way, the town of Arthur was perhaps a small community and there may have been some basic comforts more readily available. The main roads would have existed, but they were still faced with clearing acres of trees, planting their subsistence garden, and building their small shanty. But, bit by bit, they cleared the land and expanded their family and their crops. My grandfather described his grandparents in a way that I think shows their characters.

Of John, my grandfather wrote:

He was a kindly man, highly respected by all and was in demand as a peacemaker in neighborhood or family disputes. He had one of the largest funerals ever held in Greenfield Cemetary. Rev. Thom was the minister assisted by Father Doherty of the Roman Catholic Church, who in his eulogy said that John Gibson had acted as pall bearer for more Catholics than any man in Arthur.

Source: the author's files

Of Grace, my grandfather wrote:

Like her husband she was a staunch Presbyterian and always had a sympathetic shoulder for the lonely and worried women of the neighbourhood, especially the brides and newcomers.

I wonder what John and Grace had expected when they set out in 1853 for the great unknown. Did they find their dreams fulfilled? Their

### Reference Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> "Scotland, Select Marriages, 1561–1910," John Gibson, *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 29 December 2018).
- <sup>2</sup> "Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564–1950," Grizzel Gairdner, *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 29 December 2018).
- <sup>3</sup> "Ireland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1620–1911," John Gibson, *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 29 December 2018).
- <sup>4</sup> A bothy is a Scottish word for a hut or cottage, especially one for housing labourers, *Canadian Oxford English Dictionary*. They are usually found in remote areas of estates in Scotland and are used today as overnight hikers' shelters.
- <sup>5</sup> From 1791 to 1841, the area of southern and eastern Ontario was called Upper Canada. In 1841, Upper and Lower Canada (part of current Quebec) were unified into the Province of Canada, a British colony.
- <sup>6</sup> Library and Archives Canada (<https://web.archive.org/web/20181018150312/http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/confederation/023001-5004-e.html>; accessed 29 Jan 2020).

challenges are hard for us to even comprehend over 160 years later. But along with their neighbours they contributed to building a community from its inception, a community of compassion and inclusion. Theirs was an adventure richly rewarded, perhaps not with money, but with love, family, faith, community and, I'm sure, some maple syrup as well.

- <sup>7</sup> David Whyte. *A Dictionary of Scottish Emigrants to Canada before Confederation*, Vol. 1, (Toronto: Ontario Genealogical Society, 1986).
- <sup>8</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928," Robert Gardner, *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 March 2019).
- <sup>9</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928, 1933–1934," Robert Gardiner Gibson, *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 March 2019).
- <sup>10</sup> "New York, Passenger Lists, 1820–1957," John Gibson, *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 29 December 2018).
- <sup>11</sup> Campbell Cork, editor, "Memories of Arthur Township," *From Then Till Now, A History of Arthur Township 1850–1985* (Durham, Ontario: I. B. Printing Company Limited, 1986), 24.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 93.
- <sup>13</sup> "File: 1806 Cary Map of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Virginia – Giographicus – NYVTNVA-cary-1806.jpg," *Wikimedia Commons* ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1806\\_Cary\\_Map\\_of\\_New\\_England,\\_New\\_York,\\_Pennsylvania,\\_New\\_Jersey\\_and\\_Virginia\\_-\\_Geographicus\\_-](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1806_Cary_Map_of_New_England,_New_York,_Pennsylvania,_New_Jersey_and_Virginia_-_Geographicus_-)

\_NYVTNVA-cary-1806.jpg: accessed 29 December 2018).

<sup>14</sup> Campbell Cork, editor, "Introduction," *From Then Till Now, A History of Arthur Township 1850-1985* (Durham, Ontario: I. B. Printing Company Limited, 1986).

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Walker Wright, "Townships Near Mount Forest: The Township of Arthur," *Memories of Mount Forest and surrounding townships, 1867-1927*, (Mount Forest, Ontario:

Confederate Mount Forest, 1928) 140-146.

<sup>16</sup> Campbell Cork, editor, "God Bless our Home 1800's," *From Then Till Now, A History of Arthur Township 1850-1985* (Durham, Ontario: I. B. Printing Company Limited, 1986), 29.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell Cork, editor, "Letter Home, Kenilworth, Nov. 2nd, 1858," *From Then Till Now, A History of Arthur Township 1850-1985* (Durham, Ontario: I. B. Printing Company Limited, 1986), 27.

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## Who's Crazy?

# The Sad Tale of Mary Brydon and Mental Health in 19th Century Ontario<sup>©</sup>



BY DIANNE BRYDON

*Dianne received an honourable mention in the BIFHSGO 25th Anniversary Writing Competition with this article about the life of Mary Brydon, née Oliver. Dianne is the current program director on the BIFHSGO Board.*

It was a bleak Christmas in 1857. Mary Brydon (née Oliver) was suddenly widowed at the young age of 35, on her own with two daughters, aged four and seven, and a baby on the way. How had it come to this?

At the age of six,<sup>1</sup> Mary had made the long journey from the British Isles<sup>2</sup> to Canada with her parents and three brothers. They had settled in 1830<sup>3</sup> on farmland south of Galt, Ontario, along the Grand River, with many hopes for a better life in a new land.



**Figure 1: Mary Oliver Brydon**  
Source: Collection of Carol Bray

When Mary was ten, her father, Edward Oliver, had purchased a portion of the adjoining lot to the south<sup>4</sup> and the Brydon family bought the remainder. The shared lot featured hills, forests and tumbling streams. When they had time, children of the area engaged in sleigh riding on the hills and used the woods for games of fox and hounds.<sup>5</sup> But six more brothers and sisters had come along,<sup>6</sup> which left little time for play.

Mary had grown to know John, the youngest Brydon son working the land, and they had married in 1848.<sup>7</sup> She was 24 and he, 34.

Mary and John had settled further south along the Grand River, on the north half of the Brydon's original property, which John had inherited from his father in return for an annuity to support his parents. The land was stony glacial till, but it was gently rolling, and well drained. By the time they were married, at least 60 acres of the original hardwood forest had been cleared, leaving a decent woodlot.<sup>8</sup> In short, it was an established farm.

But all was not rosy. John Brydon had a problem. Beginning in 1841—before he was married—he had been called in front of the Church Session for intoxication. This occurred right up until his death—he would be expelled from the church community, plead for and be granted reinstatement, only to

relapse into the sin of intoxication or continue his “evil ways.”<sup>9</sup>

John's problem with the bottle might have been the reason why he sold the farm in 1854—half of the property that his family had worked so hard to clear and farm since arriving in Canada 25 years previously.<sup>10</sup> At the time of the sale, John and Mary had two children: Mary junior, aged four, and Janet, aged one.

Mary's younger brother, George Oliver, bought the property, possibly to help his sister and her children.

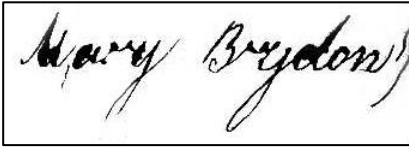
Tragically, three years later, on 21 December 1857, John died suddenly at the age of 43.<sup>11</sup> Had he passed out along the road and frozen to death? Not that it mattered—he left Mary to fend for herself with two small children and a baby on the way. She gave birth to her son, John Junior, three months later.

Mary moved into a small log house near the river,<sup>12</sup> on the farm where she had grown up, now owned by her brother Thomas Oliver. Locals still remember a wooden house where it is said she lived with her children.

Mary did not probate her husband's estate for several years. We do not know why she waited, nor what made it necessary to proceed in 1863. The value of the estate was estimated at \$2000 and her

brothers Thomas and George put up guarantees against her debts—a whopping \$2000 each.<sup>13</sup>

Mary's signature on the document is blotted. What was happening with her at the time? Hesitancy? Or emotional stress?



**Figure 2: Signature of petitioner Mary Brydon [24 April 1863]**

Source: Archives of Ontario, RG 22-211, File:196, GS 1, Reel 377

Mary fell into a depression lasting about nine years, during which “for years she did not speak.”<sup>14</sup> We can only imagine how her children—Mary twelve, Janet nine and John five—coped with their mother's mental illness. Eventually, eldest daughter Mary earned money for the family by working as a tailoress.<sup>15</sup> Her mother, Mary, never fully recovered.<sup>16</sup>

Soon Manitoba and the opportunity for good, cheap land beckoned and daughter Mary and her new husband, Duncan McLaren answered the call. They moved west to Neepawa in 1877.<sup>17</sup>

The prospect of losing her eldest child led Mary to experience a mental breakdown—she “dreaded them leaving.” At the age of 53 it is likely Mary could have physically

made the trip to Manitoba, but it seems she was not mentally able to do so. The family had no choice but to commit her to an insane asylum (as they were known then). Mary was assessed on 3 May 1877, accepted on 29 June and admitted on 6 July.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout most of the 19th Century, mental illness was divided into one of four types: mania, melancholia, dementia and idiocy. The patients themselves, however, were categorized in one of only two groups—dangerous and harmless.

By the time of Mary's commitment, Ontario had lunatic asylums in Kingston, Toronto, London and Hamilton. At the end of the century, almost 20 percent of the provincial budget was allocated to them.

Treatment for patients followed “moral therapy” which attempted to cure patients with kindness.

Patients were separated according to gender, condition and social class, and daily activities were organized around work, recreation and worship. Physical labour was intended to occupy the mind and retain self-respect. It also helped that operating costs could be reduced by using patients to farm, garden, sew their own clothes and work at carpentry.<sup>19</sup>

The London Asylum attempted to stimulate inmates' senses by organizing sporting and cultural activities, such as drama clubs, musical concerts and field trips for



1. Name in full. *Ms Mary Brydon*
2. Age. *Fifty three (53)*
3. Sex. *Female*
4. Married, single, or widowed. *Widow*
5. Number of children, if any. *Three*
6. Occupation. *House Keeping upon a farm*
7. Where born. *Scotland*
8. Present residence and county. *North Dumfries County, Ontario*
9. Religious persuasion. *Presbyterian*
10. Habits of life. *Temperate*
11. Whether first attack. *It is not the first attack*
12. Number of previous attacks, and their duration. *Once about 18 years ago - about ~~three~~ three years*
13. Duration of present attack. *About three months*
14. Propensities, delusions, &c. *To wander - to leave - or restlessness - <sup>delusions</sup> no particulars*
15. Is the patient epileptic, or has epilepsy ever been known in any relative. *It not - It has not*
16. Supposed exciting cause. *The prospect of her daughter leaving soon for Alaska - she had never known <sup>before</sup> when well - over delusions about her children*
17. Has any relative ever been insane; if so, state name and relation. *None*
18. Has the patient ever attempted to injure *her* self or others. *Has not attempted injury but had threatening injury to herself*
19. Has any change in articulation of speech been noticed. *There has been no change in her speech but for years during <sup>or</sup> her ~~some~~ attacks she did not speak*
20. What degree of education. *Very limited - can read ~~write~~*

Figure 3: Mary Brydon – Patient History (Intake Form) [3 May 1877]

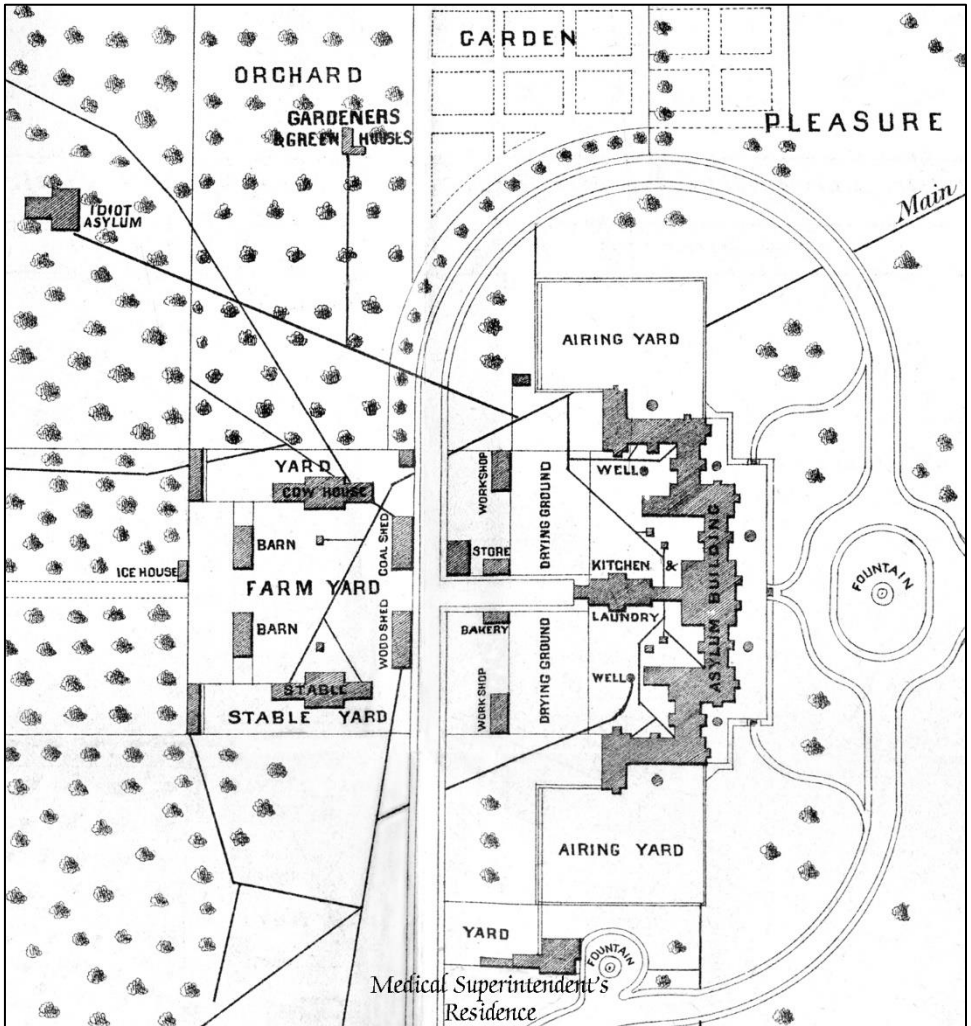
Source: Archives of Ontario, RG 10-270, File No. 9627. Used with permission.

those who were capable of partaking. All patients were encouraged to take walks around the grounds of the Asylum for fresh air and exercise.

Patients were served meals of bread, meat, vegetables and fruits, much of it produced on the

Asylum's own farm. On special occasions, meals consisted of turkey, plum pudding, ale, nuts, candy and raisins.<sup>20</sup>

Mary arrived at the London Asylum at the same time as Superintendent Maurice Bucke. He abolished mechanical restraints and imple-



**Figure 4: Sketch of the London Asylum**

Source: Ivey Family London Room, London Public Library, London, Ontario, Canada

mented the prevalent therapeutic approach of fresh air, work, amusement and religion. He also came to embrace the Victorian belief that there was a connection between "damaged" or "displaced" female reproductive organs and insanity. He performed over 200 surgeries on women in the Asylum in hopes of "curing" their insanity.<sup>21</sup> We don't know if Mary was one of those patients; it is possible she left the Asylum before Dr. Bucke implemented this therapy.

Mary's condition was assessed and recorded in simple, curt notations year after year. At the beginning, the notes describe her as "quiet, indus-

trious and tidy". It's clear her time in the Asylum did not improve her mental condition as her habits deteriorated over the years, while she remained strong physically.<sup>22</sup>

After fifteen years in the London Asylum for the Insane, Mary was transferred to the Mimico facility in Toronto in 1892.<sup>23</sup> Having opened only two years earlier, it was new in terms of age and design, the inmates being housed in brick "cottages" around the main building to make it feel more like home. The philosophy of moral therapy was similar to that in London.<sup>24</sup>

Mary was described as feeble and

Reg. No. 477	Mary Brydon
History unimpaired	68. Scotland. Presbyterian widow. In London Asylum Feb. 6, 1877. Transferred to Mimico April 18, 1892
Jan 15 - 94	No change
April 24	"
Feb 24/94	Physical health failing mentally no change
July 16. 94	" " " " " "
Oct 5 - 94	No Change
Dec 11/95	Becoming more feeble
Nov 14/95	Failing stupidly.
Apr 15/96	Failing slowly.
Jan 3. 97.	Has improved somewhat.
June 29-97	In feeble health
Jan 6-98	Very feeble & demented
1899 Jan 11-99.	In feeble bodily health unchanged mentally Jan 10. 00 unchanged.
Jan 3. 1901.	Unchanged. Will not keep her shoes on. Dec 14 01. Gradually failing
May 3-02.	Failing Nov. 20 1902. Good bodily health. No mental change

Figure 5: Title: Mary Brydon - Patient history, Reg. No. 477 (page p. 229) [1892-1906]  
Source: Archives of Ontario, RG 10-270, File: # 9627. Used with permission.

frail throughout her period at Mimico. By 1904, despite her apparent frailty, the medical case notes report Mary was “constantly walking about, never sits down, normally sleeps sitting up and sometimes falls asleep while standing.”<sup>25</sup> She was, at that time, 80 years old.

Two years later in 1906, overcrowding caused Mary to be transferred yet again <sup>26</sup> to the Toronto Asylum, known as the Mercer Complex. It had opened in 1872 with a dual function—incarceration for those with mental health problems and a reformatory for young, wayward women.

Mercer’s philosophy was to instill in women the virtues of the Victorian ideal woman—domesticity, servility, and perhaps above all, obedience. Inmates performed the domestic duties such as cooking, baking, sewing and knitting, all under the close supervision of the female staff.<sup>27</sup>

Mary’s medical file contains no details regarding her condition at Mercer, nor if she was required to perform these activities. She was, quite simply, an old lady and when she was 85, after 32 years in an institution, the doctor actually suggested Mary be moved by train to Manitoba to live with her children.<sup>28</sup> In the end, she never left.

What of Mary’s children throughout this long period? By 1881, with

Mary’s first daughter living in Manitoba with her husband, second daughter Janet, aged 17, lived with Mary’s brother and mother on the Oliver family farm; and young John, aged 14, boarded with a family down the road from where he had grown up, and worked as a farm labourer.<sup>29</sup>

Mary’s children eventually all left for Manitoba and settled in Neepawa. Janet Brydon followed her sister in 1881 and married in 1882;<sup>30</sup> while John Junior married and lived in Galt for several years before migrating sometime after 1891.<sup>31</sup>

Through it all, daughter Mary hoped her mother would recover. She wrote to the Asylum doctor in May 1909 saying “we looked after [Mother] for eight years before she went to the Asylum. I did not like to see her go. I was always in hopes she would get better but she never got better and I don’t think she will now.”

Over time and over the miles, the family stayed in touch with their mother. Mary’s elder daughter wrote frequently to the doctor asking about her mother’s condition.<sup>32</sup> Mary’s children packed up clothes and supplies and shipped them to the asylums and, on occasion, made the long journey east to visit their mother.<sup>33</sup> On their last journey to Ontario in February

1910, her daughters made arrangements for their mother's funeral.<sup>34</sup>

Mary Brydon died at the Mercer facility in 1910, at the age of 86, following 32 years of incarceration. The hospital advised daughter Mary that they had "dressed [her mother] as nicely as possible in the clothes which she had." Her paltry list of remaining personal effects included "2 wrappers, 1 underskirt, 2 prs drawers and 1 neck scarf."<sup>35</sup> A telegram notified her next of kin, George Oliver: "Mary Brydon died

this morning. Please remove remains."<sup>36</sup>

George organized the funeral for Mary Oliver Brydon in Galt 32 years after she left the area.<sup>37</sup> It took place two days after she died with no mention in local newspapers of her death or the service. Her children did not attend. She was buried in an unmarked grave in Mount View cemetery.

A very sad ending to a life full of sadness.

Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 1910  
Dr Clark  
Dear Sir  
We have got as far as Winnipeg on our journey back we have been quite anxious about Mother Mrs Mary Brydon since we came back I hope she is keeping better whatever you wish for her let us know and we will get it for her if she gets sick if you think she is serious let me know and I will come please let us know as soon as convenient and of course  
Yours Truly  
Mrs D McLaren  
Neepawa man

## Reference Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mary Brydon can be found in three Canadian censuses, the first two with her three children who help to identify her. In 1861 she was recorded as "Mrs Brydon", aged 36, making her birth year about 1825. In 1871 Mary Brydon was listed clearly as still only 37 years making her born about 1834. In 1901 her age was given as 77 years, thus making her birth year about 1824.

<sup>2</sup> Although each Canadian census in which Mary appears records her place of birth as Scotland, the obituary for Mary's mother, Mary (Middlemiss) Oliver, reported that Mary's mother was born in Scotland and moved to England after she married, suggesting that her daughter Mary (Brydon) was born in England (*Galt Reporter*, 31 August 1888).

**Figure 6: Handwritten letter, to Dr. Clark from Mrs. D McLaren (daughter of Mary Brydon) [19 February 1910]**  
Source: Archives of Ontario, RG 10-270, File: # 9627. Used with permission.

- 3 Ontario Archives, William Dickson family fonds F541, Land Ledgers, 1825–1838, D-7, MS499, folio 329 (5 October 1830).
- 4 Cambridge Archives, William Dickson Papers, Correspondence 1834.
- 5 Turnbull, William C., *Reminiscences from the East River Road, North Dumfries*, Waterloo Historical Society, 37th Annual Report, 1949, p. 29.
- 6 Mary (Middlemiss) Oliver obituary, *Galt Reporter*, 31 August 1888.
- 7 United Church Archives, Toronto. 1995.122L, 1-1, Marriage Record, Brydon–Oliver. 1848.
- 8 Ontario Archives, Gore District fonds F 1679-13, Dumfries Township Census and Assessment, 1842, MS700, reel 1. At the time Dumfries Township was located in Gore District.
- 9 United Church Archives, Toronto. 1995.122L, 4-4, 4-5, Session minutes re. Intoxication. 1841–1857, various dates.
- 10 Ontario Archives, Waterloo County Land Registry Office, Abstract Index Books, Dumfries (North) Township, c. 1805–1890, RG 61–58, GS2971.
- 11 Dumfries Reformer, 23 December 1857.
- 12 Regional Waterloo Archives, County of Waterloo assessment roll, 1858 CW 27A/5/1.
- 13 Ontario Archives. Ontario Court of Probate and Surrogate Court Records: Wills and Estate Files, Folio 354, No. 196, 24 April 1863.
- 14 Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, Patient History, 3 May 1877, London Asylum for the Insane.
- 15 1871 Census of Canada, Library and Archives Canada, entry for Mary Brydon, age 20, tailoress. Item no. 781132, District: Waterloo, Sub-District: North Dumfries, Digital image no.: 4396613\_00651 (accessed 12 Feb 2020).
- 16 Mary's daughter Mary described caring for their mother for eight years before her commitment in 1877.
- 17 "Obituary", Janet (Brydon) Dark (sister of Mary (Brydon) McLaren), *Neepawa Press*, 24 May 1927: "The late Mrs. Dark. came west in 1881 from Galt, Ont., to join her sister Mrs. D. McLaren, who had preceded her about four years..."
- 18 Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, Patient history, 3 May 1877, London Asylum for the Insane.
- 19 Study on medical and social ideas that helped shape Ontario asylums in terms of physical setting and approaches to therapy, unpublished, p 3. (provided by its author).
- 20 Museum London and St. Joseph's Regional Mental Health Care London (RMHCL), *Restoring Perspective: Life and Treatment at the London Asylum*, digital exhibit, <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/archives/virtualexhibits/londonasylum/index.html>.
- 21 Study on medical and social ideas that helped shape Ontario asylums in terms of physical setting and approaches to therapy, unpublished, pp 30-34; and Museum London and St. Joseph's Regional Mental Health Care London (RMHCL), *Restoring Perspective: Life and Treatment at the London Asylum*, digital exhibit, <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/archives/virtualexhibits/londonasylum/femsurgery.html>.
- 22 Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, patient history, 1877–1892.

- <sup>23</sup> Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, patient history, 18 April 1892.
- <sup>24</sup> Rheume, Geoffrey, *Remembrance of Patients Past: Patient Life at the Toronto Hospital for the Insane, 1870-1940*, University of Toronto Press, 1997, pp 12 to 14.
- <sup>25</sup> Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, patient history, 16 February 1904.
- <sup>26</sup> Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, patient history, 24 July 1906; and letter, 6 September 1906.
- <sup>27</sup> Rheume, Geoffrey, *Remembrance of Patients Past: Patient Life at the Toronto Hospital for the Insane, 1870-1940*, University of Toronto Press, 1997, p 7.
- <sup>28</sup> Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, letter, 28 May 1909.
- <sup>29</sup> 1881 Census of Canada, Library and Archives Canada, entry for John Brydon, age 23, farm labourer. Item no. 4139972, District: Waterloo South, Sub-District: North Dumfries, Digital image no.: e008196288 (accessed 12 Feb 2020).
- <sup>30</sup> Manitoba Vital Statistics, certificate 1882-001234.
- <sup>31</sup> 1891 Census of Canada, Library and Archives Canada, entry for John Brydon, age 32, teamster. Item no. 2894380, District: Waterloo South, Sub-District: Galt (Town), Digital image no.: 30953\_148177-00202. (accessed 12 Feb 2020).
- <sup>32</sup> Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, various letters, 1906-1910.
- <sup>33</sup> Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, letters, 17 Dec 1907, 28 May 1909, 19 February 1910.
- <sup>34</sup> Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, letter, 2 February 1910.
- <sup>35</sup> Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, letter, 29 July 1910.
- <sup>36</sup> Ontario Archives, RG 10-270, File No. 9627, telegram, 27 July 1910.
- <sup>37</sup> Interment record, 29 July 1910, T. Little Funeral Home, Cambridge, Ontario.
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# We Shall Remember Them

BY SHEILA DOHOO FAURE

*Sheila coordinates the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station research project and authors many biographies. She assists with BIFHSGO's communication activities at our monthly meetings and online. She also responds to email and phone queries.*

## Corporal Launcelot Gange Spooner<sup>©</sup>

**Regimental Number: 1015830**

**72nd Canadian Infantry Battalion**

**born: 22 September 1898—died: 15 November 1918**

Corporal<sup>1</sup> Launcelot Gange Spooner was born on 22 September 1898 in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, the son of Francis Woodbury and Clara Gertrude Spooner.<sup>2</sup> His parents were both new immigrants to Canada.

His father, Francis Spooner, was born on 22 June 1873 in Inglesham, Wiltshire,<sup>3</sup> the son of George Woodberry Spooner (an Anglican vicar)<sup>4</sup> and Mary Ann (née Wheeler).<sup>5</sup> In 1890, Francis was bound as an apprentice for five years in “fitting and turning” on the Great Western Railway.<sup>6</sup> After his apprenticeship he immigrated to Canada in 1895,<sup>7</sup> settling in Saskatchewan. On 18 June 1895, *The Prince Albert Times* identified him as one of the most recent arrivals from England.<sup>8</sup> A few months later, he was looking after cattle to help a neighbour and was described as lonely.<sup>9</sup>

Launcelot's mother, Clara Gertrude Gange (who was also called Daisy),

was born in Cotham, Gloucestershire, in 1869,<sup>10</sup> the daughter of Edwin Gersuch Gange, a Baptist minister, and Annie Hackett.<sup>11</sup> In 1888, Clara married Harry [Henry] Weston in Bristol<sup>12</sup> and had two sons—Norman Ewart, born in 1889,<sup>13</sup> and Stephen Lawrence Mortimer (known usually as Lawrence), born in 1890.<sup>14</sup> The family moved to Hammersmith, London<sup>15</sup> and were living there when Henry, a draper, died on 31 January 1893 at the British Hotel in St. Helier, Jersey.<sup>16</sup>

Clara also immigrated to Canada in 1895<sup>17</sup> and her father Edwin visited her in Canada in August 1896. It is not clear whether Francis and Clara immigrated together, but it is likely that the families knew each other before leaving for Canada, since in 1891 Francis was boarding in the house next door to Clara's two brothers, Edwin and William Gange.<sup>18</sup> William, like Francis, was an apprentice with the Great Western Railway. In any case, the



couple did not marry until 18 September 1898 in Red Deer Hill, Saskatchewan.<sup>19</sup> Launcelot was their first child, born in 1898 in Saskatchewan, and a second son followed three years later. Alan Ronald was born on 6 May 1902, also in Prince Albert.<sup>20</sup>

In 1901, Launcelot was living in Red Deer Hill with his parents and two half-brothers, Norman and Lawrence. His father Francis was a farmer and Clara's brother William was living with them.<sup>21</sup> Five years later, the family had moved 60 kilometres away to Rosthern, Saskatchewan.<sup>22</sup> Launcelot's half-brother Norman was still at home, but Lawrence was no longer there; he was working as a hired man on the farm of Robert Morran.<sup>23</sup>

In 1910, the family returned to England<sup>24</sup> and the following year was living at 81 Chesterfield Road, Bristol.<sup>25</sup> Francis was working as a bacon curer and both of his sons were in school. Launcelot's half-brother Norman had returned with the family and was living with his grandmother Amelia Weston in Cotham, Bristol, where he was working as a printer's clerk.<sup>26</sup> His other half-brother Lawrence had remained in Canada and, in 1911, was living with his uncle William Gange in Prince Albert.<sup>27</sup>

The family went back to Canada in 1914. Francis left from Liverpool and arrived in Quebec on 28 May

1914.<sup>28</sup> Clara and the two boys followed, sailing from Liverpool and arriving in New York on 9 October 1914.<sup>29</sup> This time they appear to have settled in British Columbia, where Francis was a painter. Norman remained in England.

When Launcelot enlisted at the age of 18 in August 1916, he was a bank clerk and was living with his family at 1120A Pender Street in West Vancouver.<sup>30</sup> He was 5 feet 8¼ inches tall, with a fair complexion, light hair and blue eyes and was considered fit for service with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force (CEF). His father, Francis, then an engineer, enlisted the same day, at the age of 43.<sup>31</sup> He was about the same height and colouring as his son and had previously served for five years with the Duke of Edinburgh's Second Wiltshire Regiment.

Both father and son left Halifax on 10 April 1917 to sail to Liverpool. From there, they spent some time at the Canadian camp in Seaford, East Sussex before transferring to the 72nd Battalion (Seaforth Highlanders) of Canada and going to France on 23 May.

The Seaforth Highlanders were formed in 1910 in Vancouver by people of Scottish descent as the "72nd Highlanders of Canada." The unit was subsequently renamed the 72nd Regiment Seaforth Highlanders of Canada in 1912. The

Highlanders left for France in 1916 as the 72nd Battalion of the CEF and served at Vimy Ridge and at Passchendaele.<sup>32</sup>

Francis was appointed a lance corporal in November 1917. In late December, both Launcelot and Francis were granted 14 days leave in England. They went to visit family in Bristol where, unfortunately, Francis' brother had the mumps. As a result, both were quarantined in the home until 26 January 1918 and did not return to France until 27 January; they rejoined their unit the following day.

Both father and son continued to progress in the army: Francis was appointed a corporal in March 1918, and Launcelot was made a lance corporal in August and then a corporal on 3 November 1918.

On 12 August 1918, Francis received gunshot wounds to his left leg. The damage was slight, but he was admitted to the General Hospital in Trouville. He rejoined his unit in mid-September.

When the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, the 72nd Battalion was near Valenciennes in northern France. The news of the Armistice was received with elation by the men, as they contemplated the end of hostilities and an early return to Canada.<sup>33</sup> However, on 12 November, the unit received word that the Canadian Corps would be part of the army of occupation and

would soon begin the march to the Rhine. Training continued to ensure that everything would be in order when the time came. But the war was over for Launcelot.

Launcelot was wounded, perhaps as early as 1 November, and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 12 November 1918 with shrapnel wounds to his left leg.<sup>34</sup> No. 1 CCCS war diaries recount the great efforts made to save Launcelot's life:

Concentrated ATS [anti-tetanus serum] required for Sgt Spooner and very difficult to get. This Sgt was slightly wounded at the same time as his father also a Sergeant. The father went to the dressing station and received the ATS. The son did not and developed tetanus. The bulk of our supply had been called in. We used what we had and applied to every Adv Depot Medical Stores and CCS within reach. None had it. Was then discovered that No 1 CCS (British) had obtained the last from the stores. This CCS was then found to be proceeding towards Mons. With difficulty during the night the 12 Bde (near Valenciennes) were reached by phone with request to send a D.R. [despatch rider] to Mons to find 1 CCS and get the serum. As the Bde Mjr knew both Sgts (fater [sic] and son) he despatched the D.R. Serum was received about 8 AM 15th after a very long and adventurous ride by the D.R. Also he had been held three hours under arrest in Mons through some misunderstanding. Serum arrived

before dose was due but unfortunately was of no avail.<sup>35</sup>

Launcelot died on 15 November and was buried the next day in the British Military Cemetery at Auberchicourt (Plot 1, Row A, Grave 16) with the Canadian chaplain W. O'Neill Fisher presiding.<sup>36</sup> His father, who was identified as his next of kin, was possibly there. Francis was granted two weeks leave to the UK the day his son was buried.

Launcelot was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre). His father received the same medals, however, he also received both the Military Medal and the Distinguished Conduct Medal. The MM was awarded in January 1919 and the DCM in April 1919, for actions just before the death of his son:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty near and in Valenciennes on 1st November 1918. During the attack he established an observation post on the high ground immediately the attacking troops had passed through, and maintained this with telephone connection under heavy enemy shell and machine-gun fire. His reports were exceedingly valuable in directing the attack, and it was due to his splendid example that the post was

maintained. 25.2.20.<sup>37</sup>

Lancelot's father was appointed as a temporary lieutenant a few months before he returned to Canada. He sailed from Southampton and arrived in Halifax on 13 June 1919. By 1921, Francis and Clara were living at 5789 Pyfesse Street, Point Grey, near Vancouver.<sup>38</sup> Francis was a stationary engineer. Clara died in August 1945 in Victoria, British Columbia<sup>39</sup> and Francis died in Saanich, British Columbia in April 1967.<sup>40</sup>



**Figure1: Gravestone for L. G. Spooner, Auberchicourt Cemetery**  
Source: Author

Launcelot's brother Alan Ronald was too young to serve in the CEF. He became a bank manager.<sup>41</sup> He married (Hilda May) and died on 23 January 1989. He was buried in Shady Creek Church Cemetery in Saanich.<sup>42</sup>

Launcelot's half-brother Lawrence also served in the CEF, signing up before both Launcelot and his father.<sup>43</sup> He was a teamster when he enlisted in June 1915 in Vernon, British Columbia, and joined the Canadian Army Medical Corps (regimental number 400179). He arrived in England in September 1915. He had two bouts of illness— influenza and bronchitis—a few months after he arrived; they were followed by two disciplinary offences, for overstaying his leave and being absent from duty because he was drunk. He did not go overseas until September 1917 and joined the 11th Canadian Field Ambulance the next month. He probably stayed with this unit until April 1919. He sailed home to Canada in May 1919 and was discharged in Toronto on 2 June. He probably met his future wife, Ellen Winifred Pocknall, in England during the war, because she immigrated to Canada in 1920 and they were married on 18 August 1920 in Vancouver. In 1921, they were living in New Westminster, British Columbia, where Lawrence was a farmer.<sup>44</sup> He died on 24

August 1973 at the Shaughnessy Hospital in Vancouver.<sup>45</sup>

Launcelot's other half-brother Norman remained in England even after the family returned to Canada. It does not appear that he served in the Great War. In 1916, he was living in Bombay, India, where he joined the Truth Lodge of the United Grand Lodge of England Freemasons. He was employed as a commercial representative.<sup>46</sup> Whether he had been there for a long time is not known. He travelled back from Bombay after the war, arriving in London on 7 February 1919.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps he caught an illness while in the subcontinent, because he died soon after his return. When he died at Avonwood House in Clifton, Bristol on 27 February, he was described as an "eastern traveller."<sup>48</sup>

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## Reference Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station chaplains' journal in which Launcelot's death is recorded and the No. 1 CCCS war diary both indicate that he was a sergeant. The war diary also records his father Francis as a sergeant at the time of his son's death. However, there is no evidence in their CEF service files to suggest that either had been promoted to sergeant by November 1918. Launcelot was promoted to a corporal less than two weeks before he died and Francis to corporal in March 1918.

- <sup>2</sup> “1911 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Francis Woodbury [sic] Spooner, Registration district: Bristol, Registration district number: 319, Sub-registration district: Ashley, ED, institution, or vessel: 9, Household schedule number: 258; Piece: 15067; “Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914–1918,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Launcelot Gange Spooner.
- <sup>3</sup> “England & Wales Christening Records, 1530–1906,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2016), entry for Francis Woodberry Spooner; “1881 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2020), entry for Frank Spooner, Registration district: Highworth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 2014, Folio: 125, Page: 5.
- <sup>4</sup> “1881 England Census,” entry for Frank Spooner.
- <sup>5</sup> “England, Select Marriages, 1538–1973,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 13 January 2020), entry for George Woodberry Spooner, FHL film number: 870051.
- <sup>6</sup> “UK, Railway Employment Records, 1833–1956,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Francis Woodberry Spooner in the Register of Apprentices and Prospectives 1864–1891.
- <sup>7</sup> “1921 Census of Canada,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Francis Ward Gorg Spooner, Province or territory: British Columbia, District: Vancouver South, District number: 23, Sub-district: Point Grey (Municipality), Sub-district number: 3, City, town or village: Municipality Point Grey.
- <sup>8</sup> “Red Deer Hill,” *The Prince Albert Times*, 18 June 1895, p 1, “Peel’s Prairie Provinces,” *University of Alberta* (<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/>: accessed 20 August 2016).
- <sup>9</sup> “Red Deer Hill,” *The Prince Albert Times*, 29 October 1895, p 4, “Peel’s Prairie Provinces,” *University of Alberta* (<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/>: accessed 13 January 2020).
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## Techniques and Resources

# Celebrating an “Invaluable Resource”— the Middlemore Project

BY PATRICIA ROBERTS-PICHETTE AND CHRISTINE JACKSON

*Both Patricia and Christine are long-term active members of BIFHSGO, who have previously contributed articles to Anglo-Celtic Roots on a variety of subjects*

### Preface

(by Christine Jackson)

Many readers are aware of the sterling work done by volunteers in transcribing and indexing information about the 5,200 children brought to Ontario and New Bruns-

wick between 1873 and 1932 by the Middlemore Children’s Emigration Homes of Birmingham, England. In 2001, volunteers began working under the guidance of BIFHSGO’s then associate director, Research and Projects, Patricia Roberts-



Pichette; they spent countless hours extracting the names and some details of the children from the microfilmed source documents held in Library and Archives Canada (LAC)'s Collection MG 28-I-492—the Middlemore Children's Emigration Homes fonds. By the time the extraction process was finished, more than 50 volunteers had been involved, most of them members of BIFHSGO.

Perhaps you thought the project was finished by now?—after all, we've heard about a number of developments over the years since then: an index of all the children's names has been available on the BIFHSGO website since 2008; project coordinator Patricia Roberts-Pichette has contributed numerous in-depth articles on the history and context of the Middlemore agency's work to this journal—an introductory account in 2002, followed by a series of eleven more articles between 2004 and 2007; and Global Heritage Press published Patricia's book *Great Canadian Expectations: The Middlemore Experience* in November 2016.

Furthermore, Patricia has filled a steady flow of requests to BIFHSGO from researchers at home and abroad for details regarding their Middlemore home children relatives. Until the Index with references went on line in 2019, it

usually took two hours to find and organize the references for a specific child or children, respond to any questions and possibly explain any background context, before sending the information and the LAC request and access forms to the researcher. It sometimes meant a trip to LAC to check on something specific, or in the early days, to get copies of the microfilmed documents to send to the researcher—a time-consuming task performed at little or no cost to the researcher. (As none of the Middlemore source documents are available online, researchers can request access to, or obtain copies of documents from microfilm reels held at only three locations—LAC, Library of Birmingham, where the original documents are archived, and the National Archives of Australia.)

So, following the publication of her book in 2016, Patricia turned to expanding the online nominal Middlemore Index to make it easier for researchers to go straight to the correct source and conduct their own research. Singlehandedly she added all the (legible) documentary references found in the LAC records for each child brought to Canada by the Middlemore agency—a substantial task. The updated Index was then posted online in February 2019 along with the comprehensive

*Guide to the Middlemore Index and Sources.*

So, you still think the Middlemore Project is finished?—you couldn't be more wrong! As we know all too well, family history research is never really finished. Patricia has had—and continues to have—a lot more up her sleeve. More on that later, but first let's hear Patricia's account of how she recently found herself unexpectedly immersed in an exciting Middlemore-related project that was underway in Birmingham, England. Serendipitously it all occurred just as the new improved Middlemore Index was being prepared for posting on the BIFHSGO website.

### **Exhibition: The Lost Children of Birmingham**

(by Patricia Roberts-Pichette)

It was in early July 2018 that I first heard about the Balsall Heath Local History Society (BHLHS) project they called *The Lost Children of Birmingham*. (Balsall Heath is today an inner-city neighbourhood of Birmingham, England.) It was to be a study of the children who were taken to Canada for settlement by three different juvenile emigration agencies: Middlemore's Children's Emigration Homes, Father Hudson's Homes and the Fairbridge Society, which together emigrated about 6,000 children from Britain to Canada. The project was to focus on

the Middlemore agency as the oldest, biggest and most well-known in Birmingham.

Having worked for years with the Middlemore archives here in Canada, I was intrigued and pleased to know that a British organization was showing interest in researching the Middlemore agency and children from the British perspective.

After several exchanged emails, I participated by Skype in a workshop discussing the detailed project plans and learned that my book *Great Canadian Expectations: The Middlemore Experience* was being used as a primary resource. The exhibition would include the stories of several Middlemore home children, so I agreed to help in any way possible, letting the organizers know that early in 2019 the online Middlemore nominal index on the BIFHSGO website was to be expanded to include all legible references relating to each Middlemore child brought to Canada.

The research and plan evolved, with the decision being taken to open *The Lost Children Exhibition* as part of Birmingham's Heritage Week, usually held each September. I was invited to give a presentation during the exhibition and in late spring 2019 I learned it was set for Saturday, 14 September, a week later than originally forecast. I

dismissed the thought of canceling due to Canadian commitments starting September 16—the opening of *The Lost Children Exhibition* was just too important to miss. I soon received the full plan for the exhibition’s opening ceremony and, a surprise for me—I was also to be part of the official opening ceremony, one of three speakers on Friday, 13 September.

So, having arrived in London a week early to get over jet lag and do some family history research and a little sightseeing, I took the train from Euston Station on Wednesday, 11 September, accompanied by a very heavy suitcase containing copies of my book. I was met at Birmingham’s New Street Station by my host, Val Hart, Secretary of the BHLHS. She had been the driving force behind *The Lost Children Project*, including the successful application for financial support made to the

National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Val invited me to that evening’s official opening of Birmingham Heritage Week at the Tram Shed, a heritage building in Birmingham’s jewellery sector. (*The Lost Children Exhibition* was to open on the Friday.) There I met Rowena Lyon who had kept me informed about the BHLHS’s study and about a dozen others involved in *The Lost Children Project*. One other Canadian was present—Pat Skidmore from British Columbia, whose mother was a Fairbridge child sent to the Middlemore Emigration Homes at Selly Oak (Birmingham) to be readied for emigration to the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School near Duncan, BC. Both Pat and I were each taken aside by a local radio host for interviews, the results of which were broadcast the following Monday, 18 September.



**Figure 1: Volunteers from Balsall Heath Local History Society who assembled and installed *The Lost Children Exhibition*.**

Source: All photos from author’s collection.

My original plan was to use the time before the Friday evening opening of the exhibition to visit the Library of Birmingham (where the original Middlemore archive is located) and take photographs of records that we do not have in Canada. But it was just too complicated to arrange. Instead I spent Thursday and most of Friday helping set up *The Lost Children Exhibition* at the Birmingham Midlands Institute (BMI). BHLHS volunteers (see Figure 1) were doing a variety of tasks: preparing old picture frames to receive photographs of home children and their surroundings in Birmingham and Canada; getting three by five-foot and larger panels ready for hanging on display stands; arranging the display of various 19th and early 20th century everyday artifacts; and hanging up strings of dried and pressed maple leaves across the windows of the Canada Room.

And what an exhibition it turned out to be!

It was set up in two rooms entered from a wide corridor with photographs and short quotations on the walls and a small anteroom furnished as a typical small middle-class sitting room with fireplace. First came the Birmingham

Room, filled with huge panels describing the lives of children in both text and photographs, with extracts from Middlemore documents, and information on the backgrounds of other juvenile emigration agencies including those of Father Hudson, Fairbridge, Annie Macpherson and Maria Rye.

To further illustrate the times, a life-sized skeleton was hung with some 20 tags naming the common diseases of the day, while tools and typical household items of the late 1800s and early 1900s were all laid out to illustrate life in the poorest parts of Birmingham.

Since the mothers of many Middlemore children took in laundry to earn money, a clothesline was rigged up from which hung child- and adult-sized garments—dresses, trousers, and underwear.



Figure 2: “Hambags” (on the left) hanging on a clothesline

Included was a pair of “hambags”, a woman’s undergarment (see Figure 2) and something I had never before seen, although in my childhood had heard my mother, aunt and grandmother discussing. It was a pair of long-legged cotton underpants with fancy trimmings and an open crotch. I think I was the only one who had a name for them. In fact, the Homes Committee minute book after the First World War contains a report of a discussion implying that in future all girls’ undergarments would no longer be open, thus creating what became known as “bloomers.” A table and chair were set up just inside the Birmingham Room with copies of my book and bookmarks, where I could meet people and answer any questions.

Between the Birmingham Room and

the second, or Canada Room, a very short entrance hall was lined on either side with long silvery blue, shiny plastic strips to represent the ocean, along with a photo of one of the Allan Line ships that brought Middlemore children to Canada. In the Canada Room (Figure 3) were lots more photographs and more panels telling the stories of home children in Canada—some sad, some excited and most satisfied. To make sure people recognized the room as representing Canada, two very tall spruce trees were set up and spruce branches fixed above the doors. The room smelled wonderful. Time did not allow me to read all the panels or stories presented, but I did take photographs to read at home.

The most recognizable person among the crowds from 5 pm Friday through till closing time on Saturday was Richard Albutt. Dressed as “Sir John Middlemore, Bt” (Figure 4), he was the MC for Friday evening, the actor in a video produced to introduce a dramatic lecture to take place on Saturday, and also a participant in the dramatic lecture.

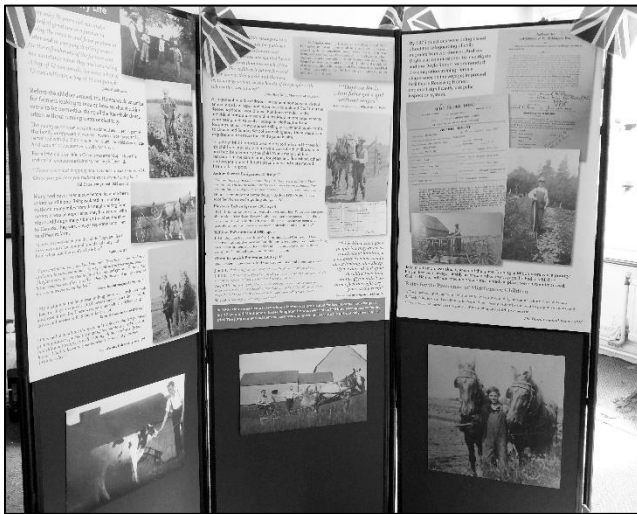


Figure 3: Panels in the Canada Room

The opening ceremony of *The Lost Children Exhibition* was held in the BMI Theatre on Friday evening. “Sir John Middlemore” introduced the three speakers: the Vice Lord-Lieutenant of the West Midlands, Dr. Beverly Lindsay, OD, OBE; the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Mohammed Azim; and myself. “Sir John” introduced me as “Dr. Roberts-Pichette, a lady who knows more about me than I know about myself”, which sent a ripple of laughter through the audience of about 50 to 60 people.

Our three short speeches were followed by the official reception,



**Figure 4:** Richard Albutt as Sir John Middlemore, Bt.

although it took some time for me to join it, as I was immediately surrounded by people asking questions. The first to approach me were two members of the Middlemore Trust—so happy to hear something positive being said of Middlemore and both wanting books.

I did make it into the reception in time to speak and be photographed with the Vice Lord-Lieutenant and the Lord Mayor (Figure 5). What I found amazing, and I think appropriate, was that we three speakers were all immigrants— appropriate when I think of the children we were honouring.

I then took up my position beside the table with my books. The rooms quickly became packed as people passed through, many stopping to talk to me and ask questions.



**Figure 5:** Patricia with (L) Dr. Beverly Lindsay, OD, OBE, Vice Lord-Lieutenant of the West Midlands, and (R) Councillor Mohammed Azim, Lord Mayor of Birmingham

Saturday was the big day: children singing at New Street Station and

parading to the BMI with more songs at its entrance; a dramatic lecture prepared and delivered by Val Hart and children and adults from a local amateur theatre group; and my Middlemore presentation which closed the day. Taking my place back at the book table I was delighted to meet and to have the support of Dr. John Dickenson from Liverpool, who some readers may recall has attended two BIFHSGO conferences. He is currently researching Mrs. Louisa Birt and her agency which took children from the Liverpool Sheltering Homes to Halifax, NS before establishing her Knowlton, Quebec home.

A last-minute mission of mine had been to try and find someone (preferably male) who could speak well and who would read the children's letters I was including in my presentation. I asked Val if she knew anyone who would be prepared to do this with little or no rehearsal and her immediate response was "Richard will do it". Once I knew about him and his role in the celebrations, I could think of no one better. After all, most of the letters in my presentation were written to Middlemore. Richard agreed, although we didn't actually have time to do a complete run through.

Val gave me a very generous introduction. The ovation we received was tremendous, in spite of the

potential danger of Sir John and me tripping over all the wires around the one lectern, some technical problems involving the changing of my PowerPoint slides, and my laser pointer giving up the ghost. There were apparently some 150 to 200 people present (the theatre held less than 250). I was quite overcome and found the audience reaction almost overpowering. Then, as I was leaving the lectern, a man approached me, took both my hands in his and almost reverentially thanked me for what I had said about Middlemore. Later I learned he was from the Middlemore Trust—the CEO, I believe. I was particularly moved by his response when I learned that there is a vocal group in Birmingham, much as there is in Canada, which believes the child emigration movement was wrong, that children should have been left with their families, and that it was a terrible thing to take children away from their families and settle them in another country, even when a parent was begging for help after the loss or imprisonment of a spouse, the loss of work, or the death or injury of a breadwinner.

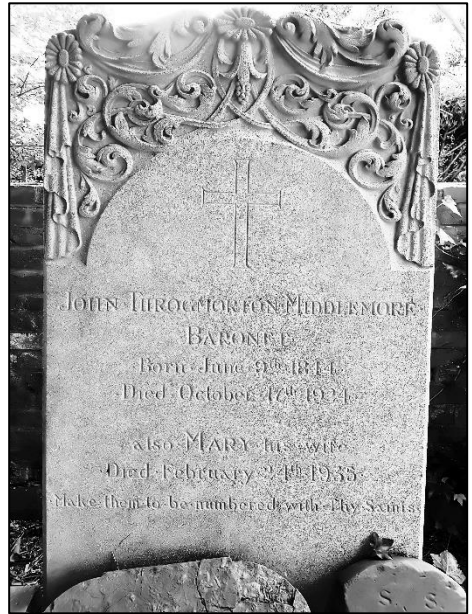
The exhibition closed after my presentation. Back at Val's we had a glass of sherry, and I sent some brief emails home to Canada to let friends know how well I thought it had gone. I was on a very high "high"!

Val hosted dinner that night with friends who had worked very hard in preparing and setting up the exhibition. It was a lively, thoroughly enjoyable evening, and for me the end of a very productive and exciting four days with hospitable Birmingham people. More importantly, it was the launch of the BHLHS's work in telling the story of Birmingham's home children. Sunday morning, still on a high, I said goodbye to Val at the bus station for my return to Canada and the arrival of my guests.

The exhibition closed at the end of Birmingham Heritage Week but went on to open at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Bull Ring for a month, where I understand it was well attended. Val and other participants in the project were invited to tell the story of the home children at different places, and they also gave a workshop on home children research. Furthermore, on 28 September, Birmingham joined in the celebration of Canada's British Home Child Day, marked this year across Canada by the "Beacons of Light for British Home Children" event which was organized to mark the 150th anniversary of the arrival in Canada of the first British home child. The Library of Birmingham and other buildings were lit up, as was the spire of the Church of the Holy Trinity at Belbroughton,

Worcestershire, where Sir John Middlemore, Bt was buried (Figure 6).

The last, and perhaps most important part of the project has yet to be completed—the preparation of a book setting out what was done and how—it will become the report to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



**Figure 2: Gravestone of Sir John Middlemore**

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate all who were involved in *The Lost Children of Birmingham* Project. And, I would like to issue a challenge to my compatriots: the production of a similar project *here in Canada*. I am convinced that a fascinating and worthwhile travelling exhibition could be



organized on this side of the Atlantic with the cooperation of home children societies in the provinces where children (also known as assisted juvenile immigrants) were settled, and of others interested in Canada's social and immigration history, and in the contributions made by home children in building Canada.

### **So What's Next?**

(by Christine Jackson)

Well, if Patricia's challenge is successful, a Canadian travelling exhibition will be produced to tell the story of British home children in Canada, their lives and contributions to Canada. Stay tuned.

### **A new Middlemore index**

In the meantime, Patricia has been doing even more work on the Middlemore records—this time preparing a subject index of the contents of each of the 69 annual reports of the Children's (Middlemore) Emigration Homes, for the years 1872/3 to 1939.

Patricia has always believed that there is valuable information in the annual reports that would be of interest to people who want to know about the background and context of their home child ancestor, or about assisted juvenile emigration in general. By this she means descriptions of the transatlantic voyages, the actual settle-

ment process and the visits Birmingham staff made to children when in Canada. Until now, few people would know such descriptions existed unless Patricia told them and included relevant documentary references in her responses. The reports also contain information about the way children were chosen for emigration, the policies and methods of the Homes, and the people who supported this private agency or who contributed specifically to the training and emigration of a particular child. Although the complete names of some of those children are in the annual reports, in many cases only their first name and/or initials were given. Patricia has been able to identify most of these children so the references to them in the annual reports will be added to the existing Middlemore Index.

This new subject Index gives the LAC microfilm reel numbers and volume, and the year and page number(s) where these types of details may be found in each report. It will soon be online at the BIFHSGO website—expect an announcement in due course.

### **A special “thank you” from Birmingham**

Before closing, I would like to share with you the letter of thanks sent by the Balsall Heath Local History Society in Birmingham to

BIFHSGO's President, Duncan Monkhouse. It is indeed gratifying to know that BIFHSGO's efforts to produce a free, publicly accessible

resource—and of course Patricia's hard work in that respect—are appreciated and considered to be "invaluable" by users:

*October 3, 2019*

*Dear Mr. Monkhouse,*

*As you may be aware, the Balsall Heath Local History Society in Birmingham, England was awarded a Heritage Lottery grant in 2018 to raise awareness of the work of The Middlemore Homes. Over the last 18 months we have held various events as well as a recent exhibition in Central Birmingham, which was attended by many hundreds of visitors, many of whom were relatives and descendants living in Birmingham.*

*The project has been an enormous success and we have been extremely fortunate that Patricia Roberts-Pichette has supported our research throughout. Her book has been a truly invaluable resource for us, as has the Middlemore Index compiled and made available online by your Society. We are hugely grateful to both Patricia and the Society for such in-depth research and collaboration. The whole project would have been far more difficult without these resources.*

*We are holding workshops for people wishing to research their own family histories connected to Middlemore and we are encouraging people to use the Index for themselves. People are very excited to discover such a resource, as indeed we were.*

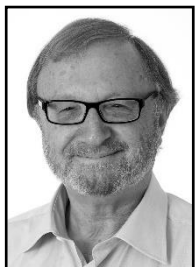
*Patricia flew over from Canada, at her own expense, to give a one-off talk which was very well attended and appreciated by hundreds of people. We are absolutely thrilled with her contribution which took our event to another level.*

*We credited the BIFHSGO in our publicity material but wanted to let you know the enormous impact both Patricia and yourselves have had on our project. Thank you.*

*Best wishes,  
Val Hart  
Secretary, Balsall Heath Local History Society  
Birmingham, England.*

# The Cream of the Crop

Top items from recent posts on the Canada's Anglo-Celtic-Connections blog



BY JOHN D. REID

Congratulations to the Ottawa Branch of Ontario

Ancestors (OGS) which celebrated its 50th anniversary at its monthly

meeting in January, along with a new website <[ottawa.ogs.on.ca](http://ottawa.ogs.on.ca)>. Its 35th Gene-O-Rama conference on 3–4 April will feature colourful Chicago genealogist Thomas MacEntee giving the Pat Horan Memorial Lecture “Privacy, DNA, and Genealogy: Handling the Double-Edged Sword” and three other presentations. BIFHSGO members Bruce Elliott, Ken McKinlay, John Reid and Glenn Wright are also presenters, along with Shirley-Ann Pyefinch.

## UK Prison History Online

You may not know it but there's a chance your 19th century UK ancestor spent time in a prison or lock-up. The *Prison History* website <[www.prisonhistory.org/](http://www.prisonhistory.org/)>, with resources on the practice and experience of imprisonment in the British Isles, hosts two datasets: *19th Century Prisons*, a database of 846 English prisons that existed between 1800 and 1899; and *Your Local Lock-Up*, an evolving collection of sites (mostly in England)

used for temporary confinement between 1500 and 1999. The search capabilities include a map with the sites pinned, extensive sources for many of those sites, and a reading list of additional material.

## Irish and Scottish Annual Civil Registration Updates

Releases of records that have moved beyond the legislated embargo period happen every year.

In early January *IrishGenealogy.ie* added birth register records for 1919, marriage records from 1944 and death register records for 1969. Over 15.5 million Irish register records are now available to view and research online.

Also in early January, *ScotlandsPeople* released just over 207,000 birth, death and marriage register entries: 106,268 births for 1919; 37,111 marriages for 1944; and 63,821 deaths for 1969.

## Scottish Town Plans

Last summer this column mentioned an online collection of town plans for 1820s Scotland from The National Library of Scotland (NLS)—over 60 town plans by mapmaker John Wood (1780–1847). If you're looking for something later, check out the Ordnance Survey's 1:500 town plans for the latter half of the 19th

Century and very early 20th Century covering most towns with a population over around 4,000 at the time of the survey—<https://blog.nls.uk/the-ordnance-surveys-1500-town-plans/>>. Having completed all the Scottish town plans, staff at the National Library of Scotland are currently scanning those for England and Wales.

## **Online Database of British and Irish Hills**

Your British and/or Irish ancestors most likely walked a lot—to and from school or work (uphill and against the wind both ways!), when courting or visiting friends and relatives, or simply to enjoy the countryside.

If you're in the latter category, you might want to check out the *Hill Bagging* database [www.hill-bagging.co.uk/index.php](http://www.hill-bagging.co.uk/index.php)>. It has information on 19,507 British and 1,451 Irish hills. Find out what's available by clicking on "Mountain Search" from the left-hand menu, scroll in and click "Show all hills within map bounds" from the text beside the map.

Two entries are for hills I climbed as a teen, to Captain Cook's monument on Easby Moor and Roseberry Topping in North Yorkshire, near the village where my grandmother lived. A *YouTube* video [youtu.be/GeaoGsJoEcE](https://youtu.be/GeaoGsJoEcE)> reminds us of how important it is for urban dwellers to

have the opportunity to enjoy the countryside in this way.

## **RAF Operations Book Records**

As we approach the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, expect to see record releases and local events marking the occasion. In February *TheGenealogist* released a major new collection of over half a million records, the first batch of RAF Operations Records Books fully searchable by name, aircraft, and location from series AIR 27 at the UK National Archives. Read an article about this collection at [www.thegenealogist.co.uk/featuredarticles/2020/raf-operations-books-build-a-picture-of-wwii-air-crew-ancestors-action-1231/](http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk/featuredarticles/2020/raf-operations-books-build-a-picture-of-wwii-air-crew-ancestors-action-1231/)>.

## **The Welsh in Canada**

The Welsh were here from the beginning of European settlement. Indeed, in 1497 John Cabot's ship *Mathew* may have had a Welsh master, Edmund Griffiths. Two great Canadian explorers, Thomas Button and David Thompson certainly had Welsh antecedents.

That's according to an article "The Welsh in Canada" by Muriel E. Chamberlain, published in 1998 in volume 19 of *The Welsh Historical Review*, starting on page 265. Another article in that volume is "Falling on Deaf Ears? Canadian Promotion and Welsh Immigration to the Prairies" by Wayne K. D. Davies, which starts on page 679. Volume 20 has an article "Send a

thousand Welsh farm labourers to Canada,” also by Davies, starting on page 466.

Twenty volumes of the publication, starting in 1960, are freely available online—just one of the many digital resources from the National Library of Wales <[www.library.wales/libraryresources/](http://www.library.wales/libraryresources/)>.

### **LAC's Theses Canada Program**

Across Canada, graduate students in history are diligently working at writing theses. That's not exclusive to history—most universities make e-copies of *all* theses available through their libraries but finding them is laborious. To facilitate the search, Library and Archives Canada provides a single point of access at its Theses Canada search portal <<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/services/theses/Pages/theses-canada.aspx>>. Harvesting new material had been halted during the last four years, but it restarted in mid-December. A full update with comprehensive search should be in place this spring.

### **Finding Canadian Prairie Homesteads on a Map**

This is one of the frequently asked questions in Canadian genealogy. You find a reference to section-township-range-meridian in a census or land grant and want to be able to find it on a modern map. When the question was asked again recently in this Society's Facebook discussion group, Ken McKinlay

quickly responded, then posted a more complete response on his Family Tree Knots blog. Find it at <[familytreeknots.blogspot.com/2020/01/converting-strm-to-lat-long-Canada.html](http://familytreeknots.blogspot.com/2020/01/converting-strm-to-lat-long-Canada.html)>.

### **What is the Best Version of the Canadian Census?**

This is another frequently asked question, but one not so easy to answer, as it depends on the enquirer's needs. Where are you searching? For what time period? Completeness, the accuracy of indexing, ease of use, cost . . . all are considerations. No doubt you can think of others.

I recently posted a year by year compilation of the Canadian census records available from the websites of five major organizations at <<https://anglo-celtic-connections.blogspot.com/2020/01/which-site-for-canadian-censuses.html>>—it's been my most popular post of 2020 so far. It shows the number of records available and whether the information is linked to an image of the original. More records does not necessarily mean they are more complete. There may be duplicates; some organizations may be counting corrections submitted as additional entries.

Overall, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) has coverage of all Canadian censuses and some earlier ones not listed, with images of the original available. And it's free.

*Ancestry* (\$) and *MyHeritage* (\$) both have complete coverage with image access, except for the 1926 Census of the Prairie Provinces. The value added by the commercial sites is the suggestions they make for other records of interest, based on the record found, and a more reliable website—LAC's was not reachable for a day when I was preparing my post. There are gaps in the coverage

of both *FamilySearch* and *Findmypast* (\$).

Not included in the table but worth considering is the website *Automated Genealogy* <automatedgenealogy.com>. This site has 5,665,421 lines for the 1901 Census—locally transcribed so likely to be more accurate, 802,230 for 1906, and 7,584,277 for 1911, with links to the images at LAC.

## BIFHSGO News

# Membership Report

BY KATHY WALLACE

### New BIFHSGO Members Nov 2019–Jan 2020

Member No.	Name	Address
130	Hilary Hay	Nepean, ON
2018	Mary Lee Ashworth	Orleans, ON
2018	Joel Ashworth	Orleans, ON
2019	Denise MacMartin	Langley, BC
2020	Brian Bullock	Orleans, ON
2021	Vivian Holland	Greely, ON
2022	Linda Tannis	Ottawa, ON
2023	Susan Woodhead	Ottawa, ON
2024	Bill Wood	Ottawa, ON
2024	Mavis Wood	Ottawa, ON
2025	Gary Milks	Ottawa, ON
2025	Sue Milks	Ottawa, ON
2026	Lynne Baxter	Ottawa, ON



26th Annual  
Family History Conference

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## *"Irish Lines and Female Finds"*

Researching Your Irish Roots and Female Ancestors

Featuring these and other great presenters

**Gerard Corcoran, Gena Philibert-Ortega**

🌀 *Expert Lecturers* 🌀 *Seminars* 🌀 *Pop-up talks*

🌀 *Marketplace* 🌀 *Research Room*

... with something for everyone!

# 25-27 September 2020

at Ben Franklin Place, 101 CentrepoinTE Drive, Ottawa

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Program information coming soon to

**[www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca)**

613-234-2520



# Minutes of the 25th Annual General Meeting of the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa

8 June 2019

The 25th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa (BIFHSGO) was held in The Chamber at Ben Franklin Place, 101 Centrepointhe Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, on 8 June 2019. The Notice of Meeting and the 2018 AGM Minutes were published in the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* Spring 2019 issue. The meeting announcement, along with the 2018 financial statements and the directors' annual reports, were also sent to members by email or postal mail at least 21 days in advance of the meeting. All the documents were also posted on the BIFHSGO website under "Activities/AGM."

1. The meeting was called to order by President Duncan Monkhouse at 9:06 am
2. Approval of the Minutes of the 2018 Annual General Meeting:

Motion to approve the Minutes of the 2018 Annual General Meeting (as distributed) proposed by Barbara Tose and seconded by Gerry Glavin. Carried.

3. Summary of the Directors reports (as distributed). Duncan Monkhouse highlighted the successes of the proceeding year, particularly with the creation of a strategic plan.  
The Board undertook the project of writing job descriptions for all the positions in the Society in order to provide those who volunteer guidance. These were posted on the Society's website.  
Lynda Gibson spearheaded the new members' welcome program; the Middlemore Children's database was completed; we partnered with the Ottawa Public Library's History Fair; we established a Speaker's Bureau; all are part of the Strategic Plan.  
Our monthly meetings have had a steady attendance. We have strong Special Interest Groups, and can now boast a new one—the British Colonial American SIG.  
Andrea Harding has resigned from her position on the Board as Program and Education directors. Jean Kitchen has resigned as editor of the ACR.
4. Financial Statements. Marianne Rasmus, Treasurer, discussed the Financial Statements (as distributed).  
Highlights: the overall revenue was \$69,096 and our expenses were \$71,823. Unusual expenses for the Society this year were the Ulster Day workshop and the Strategic Planning Session.



There was a net deficit for the year of \$2,727. Our assets are \$88,111.

5. The Auditor's Report stated: "Based on our review, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the financial statements do not present, fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa as at December 31, 2018, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations."

Motion to appoint McKay-Duff as auditors proposed by Marianne Rasmus and seconded by Darrel Kennedy. Carried

6. Presentation of Awards to:  
Best Before BIFHSGO: Dena Palamedes  
Best Talk by a Member: Marianne Rasmus  
Best Article in the ACR: Lynne Willoughby  
Hall of Fame: Jean Kitchen and Bertram Hayward
7. Nominating Committee Report by Barbara Tose. Thanks to the committee which included Jane Down, John Reid and Glenn Wright. Board terms and positions were explained.
8. Board Elections: Gillian Leitch, Secretary; John McConkey taking over the Research and Projects; Lynda Gibson is not seeking re-election; Andrea Harding is leaving the Education and Program Director positions a year early. Dianne Brydon is now Program Director.  
Seeking any nominations from the floor. None made.  
Acclaimed as candidates for the Board – Gillian Leitch, John McConkey and Dianne Brydon.  
Kathy Wallace and Mary-Lou Simac are now in their last year on the Board. Barbara remains past president but will not participate actively on the Board.
9. Other Business  
Next year's Nominating Committee will continue to be chaired by Barbara Tose.  
Question from the floor concerning the approval of the Financial Report by the Society – answered that the Report only has to be approved by the Board, and then presented to the Annual General Meeting.  
Question from the floor concerning the distinction between the Education Director and the Program Director – answered that the Education Director is responsible for the Before BIFHSGO and Discovery Tables.

Meeting adjourned 9:30 am.

# Notice of BIFHSGO Annual General Meeting Saturday, 13 June 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Take notice that the twenty-sixth Annual General Meeting of the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa will take place on Saturday, 13 June 2020, at Ben Franklin Place, 101 Centrepointe Drive, Ottawa, to receive and conduct business in accordance with the bylaws. Members are reminded that, in accordance with Article 11 of the Bylaws, they may appoint a proxy to attend the meeting and act on their behalf. The proxy holder must also be a member.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Approval of the minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting
3. Summary of the Directors' reports
4. Presentation of the financial statements for 2019
5. Appointment of the Public Accountant for 2020
6. Awards and presentations
7. Report of the Nominating Committee
8. Election of Directors
9. Other business
10. Adjournment

The normal monthly meeting will take place after a short break.

<b>BIFHSGO NEEDS YOU!</b>	
<b>President</b>	Two year term Leads the Board in all activities Delegates specific tasks to directors Chairs Board and general meetings
<b>Outreach Director</b> (formerly Publicity/ Marketing)	Two year term Reach out to potential members and community partners Participate in community events Provide information on membership and meetings Promoting BIFHSGO using various media

## **BIFHSGO Board of Directors 2019–2020**

President	Duncan Monkhouse	president@bifhsgo.ca
Recording Secretary	Gillian Leitch	secretary@bifhsgo.ca
Treasurer	Marianne Rasmus	treasurer@bifhsgo.ca
Research & Projects	John McConkey	research@bifhsgo.ca
Membership	Kathy Wallace	membership@bifhsgo.ca
Communications	Susan Davis	communications@bifhsgo.ca
Publicity	Mary-Lou Simac	publicity@bifhsgo.ca
Education	Maureen Amey	education@bifhsgo.ca
Program	Dianne Brydon	programs@bifhsgo.ca
Past President	Barbara Tose	pastpresident@bifhsgo.ca

### **Communications**

<i>Anglo-Celtic Roots</i> Editor	Barbara Tose	accreditor@bifhsgo.ca
<i>eNews</i> Editor	Vacant	newsletter@bifhsgo.ca
Webmaster	Michelle Hanson	
Queries	Sheila Dohoo Faure	queries@bifhsgo.ca
Photographer	Dena Palamedes	

### **Conference 2020**

Jane Down, Duncan Monkhouse

### **Public Accountant**

McCay Duff LLP

## **The Society**

The British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa (BIFHSGO) is an independent, federally incorporated society and a registered charity (Reg. No. 89227 4044 RR0001). Our purpose is to encourage, carry on and facilitate research into, and publication of, family histories by people who have ancestors in the British Isles.

We have two objectives: to research, preserve, and disseminate Canadian and British Isles family and social history, and to promote genealogical research through a program of public education, showing how to conduct this research and preserve the findings in a readily accessible form.

We publish genealogical research findings and information on research resources and techniques, hold public meetings on family history, and participate in the activities of related organizations.

Membership dues for 2020 are \$50 for individuals, \$60 for families, and \$50 for institutions. Members enjoy four issues of *Anglo-Celtic Roots*, ten family history meetings, members-only information on [bifhsgo.ca](http://bifhsgo.ca), friendly advice from other members, and participation in special interest groups.

# BIFHSGO Calendar of Events

## Saturday Morning Meetings

The Chamber, Ben Franklin Place,  
101 CentrepoinTE Drive, Ottawa

- 11 Apr 2020** **The Ragman's Children: A Story of 19th Century Economic Migration**—In August 1867, Christine Jackson's Dutch ancestors settled in the poor Jewish district of London's East End. Eighty years later, their descendants described them as successful merchants with large houses, servants and a cigar factory. In 2003, Christine and her cousin decided to unravel the family story. This is their tale of discovery.
- 9 May 2020** **Hitch, Hockey's Unsung Hero: The Story of Boston Bruin Lionel Hitchman**—is Pam Coburn's biography of her grandfather, Lionel "Hitch" Hitchman, who played hockey in the NHL for 12 seasons (1923-1934). During that time he played for the Ottawa Senators and Boston Bruins, winning two Stanley Cups. Pam's talk will focus on the research that went into the discovery of the Hitchmans' life in England, their move to Canada and the raising of a hockey superstar.
- 13 June 2020** **BIFHSGO AGM and Great Moments in Genealogy**—Great tales of genealogical discoveries by Marianne Rasmus, Jill Thompson, Sally Doherty and Brian Glenn.

## Schedule

- 9:00–9:30 Before BIFHSGO Educational Sessions: check [www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca) for up-to-date information.
- 9:30 Conversations & Questions
- 10:00–11:30 Meeting and Presentation
- 11:30–16:00 Writing Group

For information on meetings of the other special interest groups (Scottish, Irish, DNA, British Colonial America, TMG Users), check [www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca).

## Articles for *Anglo-Celtic Roots*

Articles and illustrations for publication are welcome. For advice on preparing manuscripts, please email the Editor, at [acreditor@bifhsgo.ca](mailto:acreditor@bifhsgo.ca). The deadline for submissions to the Summer issue is 25 April 2020.