



# Anglo-Celtic Roots

*Quarterly Chronicle • Volume 26 Number 2 • Summer 2020*

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**The Beginning of a Genealogical Journey**

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**BIFHSGO Database Review**



## *Anglo-Celtic Roots*

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*Four generations: Nellie Smyth (left), Emily Cole (centre) holding great-grandson Bob Hewens, Elsie Hewens (right)*

*Source: Collection of Mary Wilkie, cousin of Bette Smith.*

## *From the Editor:*

We begin this issue with the third and final winning article from our 25th Anniversary Writing Competition. In it, Bette Smith relates her great-grandmother's journey through the many changes that reshaped British agriculture and rural life in the latter half of the 19th century to her life in Canada in the first half of the 20th century. Along the way, we learn a good deal about the Poor Laws and union workhouses.

The last remaining article to receive an honourable mention in our Writing Competition comes from Carol Dillon. She describes the souvenirs in her father's trunk which helped her discover the remarkable stories of his life, culminating in a trip to the 1936 Olympics, and provided clues to her unknown family in Britain.

In *We Shall Remember Them*, Marcia Clement brings us the story of 2nd Lieutenant Charles James Ervine, a daring and valiant young man from Belfast, Ireland, whose death deeply affected all who knew him.

And finally, John McConkey, BIFHSGO's Research and Projects Director, provides us with an update on the resources available in the database section of our website.

I would also draw your attention to some corrections to the previous issue located on page 39. My apologies to Dianne Brydon for the errors.

Barbara Tose

## From the President



As spring moves towards summer, another season of BIFHSGO meetings draws to a close. It is a very different end to the year than the one we anticipated last fall.

We have had to make radical changes in the way we do business courtesy of the Covid-19 virus. Our AGM has been delayed until the fall and our conference, a staple of our genealogical year, has had to be postponed until 2021. We adapted, relatively smoothly, to delivering our program via Zoom and some of our Special Interest Groups have decided to continue meeting that way as well. Others have decided not to hold meetings for now. See our website for up-to-date information on meetings.

On the other hand, the situation has provided many new opportunities for genealogical learning and, for some, a lot more time to work on their family history. We continue to look for ways to connect with our members while we remain apart. And the ACR, despite all the closures, has arrived in your mailbox more or less on schedule.

As you know, our Society is run by an active group of dedicated volunteers. Thank you to each and every one of them. I would like to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of two Board members during their tenures as directors. Kathy Wallace has been the

membership director for eight years and her knowledge of our members and our corporate history is truly amazing. Mary-Lou Simac has been the director in charge of Publicity/Marketing/Outreach for eight years. Chances are, wherever you heard about BIFHSGO, it was due to the tireless efforts of Mary-Lou to promote the Society and recruit new members. Please join me in thanking them both for their years of service.

Technically, my term is up as well. However, due to Covid-19, we have had some difficulty recruiting a replacement, so I will remain as president until the AGM can be held. If you would like to join the Board or know someone who would be a good president or director, please contact me or past-president, Barbara Tose.

For now, though, it is time for all of us—even the Conference Planning Committee this year—to take a well-deserved break from our BIFHSGO work and dive into our own family history. It is also an excellent opportunity to reflect on this pandemic and wonder about how the Spanish influenza of 1918 or other pandemics affected our ancestors. Hopefully, we'll all return in the fall with lots of stories to share. Have a healthy and safe summer!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Duncan Monkhouse". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and connected.

Duncan Monkhouse

# Family History Research

## Emily Charts a New Course



BY BETTE SMITH

*Bette has been researching her family's English roots since 2010. In 2019, she took up a challenge to write and share a research story once a week for 52 weeks. Together with two of her sisters, she is now revising these stories to include in a family history book.*

The only photograph I have of my great-grandmother Emily Cole (see the front cover) was given to our family as a copy of a copy. The image is blurry, faded and over-exposed. It's impossible to make out any of Emily's features or personality. She is pictured seated in front of her daughter Nellie Smyth (on the left) and granddaughter Elsie Hewens (on the right) and holding her great-grandson Bob. The photograph was taken in Cumberland, Russell County, Ontario on Mother's Day 1922, when Emily was 78 years old.

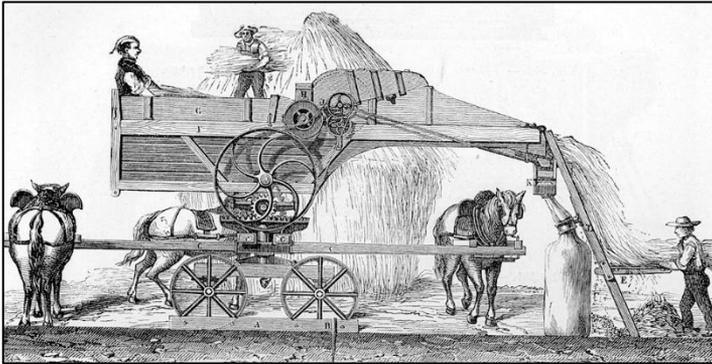
Emily's life was shaped by her place on the bottom rung of English society. She was the daughter of agricultural labourers and her ancestors were labourers as far back as I have been able to trace them. Her people were born and raised in small towns and villages located along the road between London and Colchester, and they worked on the surrounding

farmlands. Until the early 1800s, their way of life had not changed for centuries.

Emily Cole was born at 2:00 a.m. on 24 February 1844 in Witham, Essex, England, the daughter of John Cole, agricultural labourer and his wife Mary Doe. The registration record shows that her father, like many men of his class, could not read or write. For his signature on the birth certificate, he made an "x" as his mark.

John Cole was born in 1812 in the small village of Hatfield Peveral, at a time when the Industrial Revolution was transforming all aspects of British life. He married Mary Doe, herself the daughter of agricultural workers from Terling, Essex, on 21 July 1832 in Hatfield Peveral. By 1841, John and Mary had moved to Witham to raise their large family: Mary Ann (b 1835), George (b 1837), Hannah (b 1841), Emily (b 1844), John (b 1846), Sarah (b 1849) and Eliza (b 1855).

The changes that were taking place in Britain at the beginning of the 19th century would have a great impact on John and Mary's family. Their story is entangled with the bigger story of the industrialization of agriculture, the reduction in economic opportunity through women's cottage crafts, the harshness of the British Poor Laws, and the increase in geographic mobility.



**Figure 1: Horse-powered threshing machine**

Source: 1881 Dictionnaire d'arts industriels<sup>2</sup>

New agricultural machinery, such as the threshing machine, was introduced and came into general use in East Anglia after 1805 (Fig 1.) These machines saved on wages, could be operated by women and children, and compensated for labour shortages. Work which grown men used to do was taken from them and the farm worker's role in the business of agriculture was diminished. Agricultural labourers reacted with anger and action. "Food riots, machine breaking and the protests over tithes, wages and the Poor Laws were all public activities....One

group of machine breakers in 1822 was accompanied by a small band, and when they found a machine near Attleborough [in Norfolk] removed it to the town centre before breaking it up."<sup>1</sup> Rioting was a feature of rural life that continued well into the 1840s, although in Essex the main form of protest was destruction of machinery.

Traditionally, rural women had been able to augment the family finances by manufacturing textile and other craft items in their homes. Industrialization removed this source of income

as goods mass-produced by machines could be made more cheaply and quickly.

The 1834 *Poor Law Amendment Act* only added to the misery of agricultural workers. The Act prohibited any able-bodied person from receiving money or aid from the poor law authorities, except in a workhouse. The Act also required that conditions in the workhouses be harsh to discourage people from seeking help there.<sup>3</sup> This had a direct impact on elderly or disabled labourers who could no longer work, as well as those who were widowed, orphaned, deserted, sick or impoverished. It also affected

labourers whose seasonal work meant there would be times when they needed additional help from the parish.

Faced with adverse changes such as these, it's no wonder that, beginning about 1851, the adult children of agricultural labourers were moving in large numbers to industrialized areas, where they were promised better wages and more social opportunities.<sup>4</sup> Geographical mobility and the rural exodus were greatly aided by new railway lines. In Witham itself, a section of rail and a station were opened in 1843.<sup>5</sup>

This is the Britain that Emily Cole experienced growing up in Essex. The 1851 Census<sup>6</sup> showed that Emily was living with her parents and siblings in Chipping Hill, a very small village just on the outskirts of Witham. The seven children listed in the Census all lived to adulthood and must have been of hardy stock, as Witham in the mid-1800s was known for its squalor. The death rate for children under the age of five was about 30 percent. A government investigator was sent to the village in 1849 at the request of Witham ratepayers and he found that life expectancy in Witham was five years less than that of West Ham, a similarly crowded and unhealthy location. But the ratepayers were cheap and the village went without drains until 1884. The homes of the workers were described as "in such a state that

affluent people would disdain to stable their horses in them."<sup>7</sup>

As an agricultural labourer, Emily's father most likely had the use of a small worker's cottage. With two adults and seven children, the space would have been extremely cramped. A typical cottage in Witham, used by the poor of the parish, was about 10 by 15 feet, with no water or drains.<sup>8</sup> It is likely that Emily was encouraged to move out of the family home as soon as she was able to support herself.

Unfortunately, Emily's "career choices" were few. She was living in a small village. Cottage crafts had been swept away by big industry. Her education would have been casual at best, as the children of agricultural labourers were often used by farmers as cheap labour at harvest time, thus interrupting their schooling. The farmers resisted any efforts at educating these children, as education only caused problems for the farmer. It wasn't until 1873, many years after Emily had grown up, that laws were passed to make education mandatory and restrict the age of children working in the agricultural sector.<sup>9</sup>

Emily ended up in domestic service, a very common occupation for young women such as herself. By 1861, aged 17, Emily was working and living at the Albert Hotel (Fig 2), located at 2 Chipping Hill Road, just down the road from her family

home. In the 1861 Census,<sup>10</sup> the hotel was run by Robert Salter, a widower, who lived there along with two employees: a barmaid and Emily Cole, a domestic servant. This establishment still exists, although it's now a pub and has gone through several name changes. Currently, it's called "The Railway" and appears to have a fine rating, should you choose to visit.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps it was the 1834 poor law that most adversely affected members of Emily's immediate family. In 1861, Emily's grandfather Thomas Cole and Emily's sister Mary Ann Cole are listed on the census as two of the 156 inmates at the Witham Union Workhouse.

Emily's grandfather Thomas spent his entire life as an agricultural labourer but sickness finally prevented him from working any longer. He died at 75 years of age of prostate cancer in the workhouse.

Mary Ann's story is less clear. She was nine years older than her sister Emily. At the age of 23, Mary Ann Cole had an illegitimate son who was raised by his grandparents, John and Mary Cole. At some point, Mary Ann became a pauper inmate

at the Witham Union Workhouse, with the notation "formerly a cook" written beside her name on the 1861 Census.



**Figure 2: Albert Hotel, Witham**

Source: John Askins, by permission.<sup>12</sup>

<https://pubwiki.co.uk/EssexPubs/Witham/albert.shtml>

Life in workhouses has been written about at length. Most of these institutions separated the sexes, irrespective of marriage or family ties. Men were housed in one wing and women and their children in another. Movement in or out of the workhouse walls was controlled. Inmates were required to perform menial work. It was very much like being in prison. Emily would have been well aware of her grandfather's and sister's situations and, I'm very sure, would have been angered and troubled by this. Witham Union Workhouse itself was abolished in 1883, following allegations of abuse levelled against

the master and matron. The building has been repurposed several times, ending with its current incarnation in 2002 as a hospital. The photograph of the former workhouse (Fig 3) clearly shows an arched entry which was the controlled entrance and exit.

east of London, where he was employed as a general labourer. Sometime between 1861 and 1866, Emily also moved to West Ham. With the expansion of a national railway system in the 1840s and the building of a station at nearby Stratford, West Ham was rapidly



**Figure 3: Former Witham Union Workhouse**

Source: Historic England Archive, © Mr Mike Hurst.<sup>13</sup>

It was geographic mobility, the final change affecting the Cole family, that had the most profound effect on my great-grandmother's life. While it's not certain why Emily left Witham, it was unlikely she saw any future for herself in her home village. Like many of the rural poor, she headed towards the city where she hoped to find better work for better wages. Only one of Emily's siblings, John, remained all his life in Witham and the surrounding agricultural community. Her other siblings moved to various small towns in Essex. Emily's brother George moved to West Ham, just

becoming a major London suburb.<sup>14</sup> Industry and workers were moving in and opportunities for employment were better than in small rural towns like Witham.

It was in West Ham that Emily's fortunes began to climb, although this did not happen immediately. In December 1866, Emily was living at 35 Forest Lane, Forest Gate, West Ham, Essex, having just given birth to her daughter Alice Booth Cole. The child's father is not named on the birth certificate (though one might presume his surname to be Booth, a likely candidate was not

found nearby) and there is no indication Emily had married. There was a pub called "Albert House" (a popular name for pubs in Victorian England due to Prince Albert being the Queen's consort) located at 39 Forest Lane, just a few doors away from Emily's lodging. It's entirely possible that Emily was working at this pub as a means of supporting herself and her child.

At some point following her move to West Ham, Emily met James Samuel Hawkins Sell. He was a young man, one year her senior, who had been widowed in 1867 but had no children by this marriage. He was employed as a "white smith" (a metalworker who does finishing work on iron and steel) and his people were master craftsmen from London, as well as ship owners and customs officials from Colchester. At the time of their marriage on 30 July 1869 in West Ham, Emily was still living in Forest Lane, but the couple moved soon after, first to Wanstead and then, ultimately, to Walthamstow, both originally small Essex towns but both being rapidly developed as London suburbs.

Emily and James had nine children together over the course of their marriage (one daughter died at the age of five and a son died as an infant). There is no indication that Emily's daughter Alice was treated as anything other than James Sell's daughter and subsequent documents show that she went by his

surname. By 1884, Emily and James were living in Walthamstow, Essex with children Alice, Annie, Nellie, James, William and Dorothy. The marriage appears to have been very happy.

Emily's husband James had a varied occupational past. He shows up on official documents as a brush maker (1861), white smith (1869), police constable (1871) and carpenter (1881). I've had no luck finding personnel records for James while he served as a police constable. I found one tantalizing newspaper article from 1873 that mentioned a Police Constable Sell working in Wanstead, the location where James was living with Emily at the time. Whether or not it is my great-grandfather, the news item shows that the life of an ordinary constable on the beat was not easy:

A Violent Drunkard—Thomas Lawrence, 34, labourer, of Park-road, Leyton, was charged with being drunk and incapable in the New-road, Wanstead, and assaulting P.c. Sell; was fined 20s. and costs or one month.<sup>15</sup>

Marriage to James was a definite step up the social ladder for Emily. Both James and Emily belonged to the lowest social class—the working class. However, James and his family were proud of their position as skilled labour, which was well above Emily, whose family were all unskilled labourers. While Emily and James may have been happy

together, his family was apparently less than thrilled with the marriage. James's first wife had been the daughter of a bookseller and had been a teacher before their marriage. A family story has it that James Sell's family was so upset by his marriage to Emily, a vulgar woman much beneath his own artisan class, that they paid for James, Emily and their children to emigrate to Canada. I can well believe this to be true. My Uncle John, Emily's grandson, had known Emily when he was a boy and told the family that Emily smoked a cob pipe and had a very, ah hem, "salty" vocabulary. Her language, he told us, would make a farmer blush. Certainly, her husband's family would have been scandalised by Emily's own father, who died in May 1874 by falling off a wagon while drunk, with the entire sad affair splashed across the *Essex Standard* newspaper:

WITHAM

Fatal Accident—Last Friday morning an inquest was held at the White Horse Inn, Chipping Hill, before Mr. W. Codd, Coroner, on the body of John Cole, 63 years of age, a farm labourer, in the employ of Mr. T.S. Shoobridge, farmer and miller, Witham, whose death occurred on the previous day under the following circumstances.—

Deceased, with another man named Green, were sent to Maldon for oilcake, each having charge of a waggon and two horses. Having procured their loads they proceeded homewards, stopping, however, at Langford, where they got some drink. Cole, who was with the first waggon, went as far as the bridge, and evidently fell from the top of the load, breaking three or four ribs, which, piercing the right lung, produced internal hemorrhage, and thus caused death. On the other waggon coming up the horses refused to go further, and Green descended and found his mate lying insensible in the road. Thomas Barker, who had seen deceased pass in the vehicle, heard of the accident, and Mr. Wood, of Langford Hall, and his servant, coming up at the time, and seeing the condition of the two men (they were both intoxicated), sent to Heybridge for Police-Constable Moore, who provided a spring cart and took the poor fellow home to Witham, calling on Dr. Gimson, who ordered him to be taken to his home, at Chipping Hill, as quickly as possible; this was done, and Mr. A.G. Proctor attended him, and found him to be suffering from the injuries described above. He died a short time afterwards.

The Jury returned a verdict of "Accidental Death."<sup>16</sup>

Growing up, I heard the family story that Emily was a Cockney, born within the sound of London's Bow Bells. My research has shown this to be untrue, as she was born in Essex and brought up well outside London. I expect her rural Essex dialect may have led to this story. My Dad told us that he couldn't understand much of what she said.

The rural Essex dialect is somewhat similar to Cockney. However,

Essex people generally pro-nounce the letter H correctly; but there is nevertheless a tendency to drop this letter when prefixed by T, as now and ten, for now and then.

Occasionally words are prefixed by S, such as scringing for cringing and some words appear to have been formed by imitation of sound, such as bob-bery and bonx. The old plural in en also occurs, as housen for houses.<sup>17</sup>

I found one audio file for the older Essex dialect from a recording of a poem made about 1905 or 1906 entitled "These New Fangled Ways" and available through the Essex Record Office.<sup>18</sup> I admit I can understand perhaps one word in ten spoken by the narrator.

In 1886, James, Emily and six of their children set sail for a new life in Canada. Daughter Alice had recently married and remained in England with her new husband. Emily's son William told family

members that the six children, all between fourteen and two years of age, had the run of the ship. I'm not sure what the parents were doing with their time, but I do know that when Emily crossed the Atlantic, she was pregnant with her ninth child. Daughter Hester Mabel was born in Rockland, Russell County, Ontario on 11 November 1886. A final child, Florence Ethel, was born three years later.

I can't find any indication why Emily and James chose to settle in the Ottawa Valley, and why they did not instead follow the great migration to the newly opened Prairies. Living in Rockland, James declared himself (according to my Uncle John) to be a "gentleman farmer," although he was a Londoner with absolutely no agricultural background or knowledge. Uncle John described James's farm as consisting of "just a bunch of old scrawnies" (i.e., very thin and bony cows). The 1891 Census<sup>19</sup> records James's occupation as "carpenter," so perhaps farming had not worked out as planned. I'm sure Emily found herself at home in this rural area, but James did not flourish and died of heart failure at the age of 53, some eight years later on 17 April 1896.

The 1901 Census<sup>20</sup> shows Emily as a widow, farming, and with five children still at home ranging in age from 12 to 24 years of age. It also shows that she no longer declared herself as "Church of England," as in

previous records, but as "Presbyterian." Given her propensity for swearing and smoking, I wonder what the pastor and congregational members of Rockland's staid Presbyterian Church made of Emily.

Emily remained a widow for 21 years following James's death but then married Edouard "Ned" Larocque on 15 February 1917 in a Roman Catholic ceremony in Ottawa.<sup>21</sup> Ned, a farmer born in Rockland, was a French Roman Catholic widower. The parish register for Notre-Dame Cathedral, Ottawa notes that a special dispensation was granted by the Archbishop of Ottawa, as Emily wished to remain a Presbyterian. Mention was made of the fact that both Emily and Edouard were 67 years of age, and the Ontario registration of marriages also gives both their ages as 67. They were actually 72! I found it interesting as well that Emily signed the Cathedral register as "Mrs. James Sell," showing that she could write and that she set great store by her previous married name. A proud woman.

Emily's second marriage to Ned Larocque was allegedly unhappy.<sup>22</sup> I have wondered how Emily and Ned communicated. She could not speak French. Ned could speak both French and English, but Emily's rural Essex accent was difficult to understand, even for English speakers. At the time of Emily's death (1931), she and Ned were

living apart. Ned died in 1933 but had been living since 1928 at the House of Refuge in L'Orignal, Ontario. He is buried in Cassburn Cemetery.

Emily's later years were not without loss. Her eldest daughter Alice, who had remained in England, died at the age of 35 in 1902. Two of her grandchildren, Annie May and Willard Smyth died of tuberculosis as young adults in 1918 and 1924 respectively. Her daughter Nellie died in 1928 at the age of 53. It must have been difficult for her to outlive so many of her family.

Emily died 13 May 1931 at the age of 87 in Rockland, Ontario, where she had been living since 1928. While I don't know exactly where Emily is buried—the death registration entry indicates only that her burial was in Cumberland—were I to make a guess, it would be that Emily is buried in Dale's Cemetery, Cumberland, Ontario beside or near her first husband James Sell.

In many ways, my great-grandmother's story is bound up with the massive changes that reshaped British agriculture and rural life. While the Industrial Revolution and the Poor Laws limited Emily's future in Witham, new possibilities existed in the city. Emily Cole, being the spirited woman she was, left her rural home, charted a new course for herself and never looked back.

## Reference Notes

- 1 Paul Muskett, "The East Anglian Agrarian Riots of 1822," *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol 32 (1984), 1.
- 2 Image of horse-powered thresher. This work is in the public domain in its country of origin. Source: cropped image from 1881 Dictionnaire d'arts industriels ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Batteuse\\_1881.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Batteuse_1881.jpg): accessed 29 May 2019).
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- 12 Image of the former Albert Hotel, photographed in 2000 by John Askins and published on *Pubshistory.com*. Image used with written permission of the website owner.
- 13 Image of former Witham Union Workhouse, copyright Mr. Mike Hurst. Source: Historic England Archive. Used with permission number 7266, issued 30 May 2019.
- 14 W.R. Powell, editor, *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 6* (London: Victoria County History 1973), at *British History Online* (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol6>: accessed May 29, 2019).
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- <sup>19</sup> 1891 Census of Canada, Ontario, District Number 115, Russell, S. District G, Rockland Village, p 46, Family Number 210, entry for James Sell et al., *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 29 May 2019).
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- <sup>21</sup> Ontario, Canada, Catholic Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1802–1967, entry in Ottawa, Basilique Notre Dame 1829–1948, 15 February 1917, for Edouard Larocque and Emelie Cole (Sell), *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 April 2020).
- <sup>22</sup> This assertion was made by my cousin May Hewens in light of comments from her mother Elsie (Emily's granddaughter).

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## My Father's Trunk: The Beginning of a Genealogy Journey



BY CAROL DILLON

*Carol has been collecting family stories since she was a child and has researched her family's history intermittently over the years. BIFHSGO's 25th Anniversary Writing Competition encouraged her to start writing down what she has learned. Her entry garnered her an honourable mention.*

In the house I grew up in, at the top of the stairs, there was a closet and in that closet was my father's trunk. I recall being restless one rainy day and my mother suggested, "Why don't you go up and look in your father's trunk?" So, I dragged it out into the hallway and was fascinated by the clasps that slid sideways and made the locks pop open. The contents didn't have a lot of interest for a child of six: a couple of old sweaters, some newspapers, a scrapbook, a piece of tin with a number on it, a package of postcards, scattered business cards and other ephemera. But in the



Figure 1: My father's trunk  
Source: Author

bottom, I found a sharp pencil and stenographer's notebook which I claimed and took away to draw pictures in. Many, many years later, after the passing of our parents and

preparing the family home for sale, my sister and I each made a list of what we would like to keep from our parents' lives. At the top of my list was "father's trunk," because in the intervening years I had learned that the two old sweaters were actually Olympic jerseys, the tin with a number was a racing number, the scrapbook was a record of my father's sporting career, one business card was a key to our British heritage, and the postcards were from the Canadian pilgrimage to the unveiling of the Vimy Memorial. Father's trunk contained more questions than answers but provided a rich beginning for genealogical exploration.



Figure 2: The contents of the trunk  
Source: Author

My genealogical research has been sparse and intermittent over the years, but as I approach my 80th birthday, I have realized that I will never know the whole story and will never feel fully ready to record what I know. The BIFHSGO Family

History Writing Competition has galvanized me to at least capture what I think I know at this time. In this bold quest, I have been fortunate in several ways: first, my father's trunk that was such an enigma to me as a child but has proven to contain many insights and links to our family's history; second, an informal account of family stories written by my father's sister for her grandchildren in 1987 as she approached her 75th birthday;<sup>1</sup> third, the blessing of being an only but inquisitive child with a big ear and a good memory, who often listened to the adults' conversations;<sup>2</sup> and finally, of course, the possession of nascent genealogical research skills. Aided by those elements and personal qualities, here is the story that emerges from my father's trunk.

My father's parents, James Crompton and Susannah Greenwood, were among the many British immigrants who came to Canada seeking better opportunities. They arrived in 1910 and settled in Fairbanks, York—a suburb of Toronto. My grandfather came first, to seek work and lodgings, and my grandmother followed with their three children: James aged 5, Elizabeth, 2, and David at 9 months.<sup>3</sup> According to my aunts, the family arrived at the Toronto West train station and they walked with their luggage and small children to their new home, a distance of many miles.<sup>4</sup> The family soon grew

following the birth of two more children: my second aunt, Susanette, born in 1911 (who wrote the account in 1987) and my father, George, born in 1913.<sup>5</sup>

Family lore tells this story about my father's birth. As his mother advanced through her at-home labour, a female neighbour said to Jim, "Take the children for a walk as your mother isn't feeling too well." Jim did as he was told, but on arriving back he was told, "No, take them for a longer walk." So he took the children out again and apparently walked a distance of several miles, the youngest in tow being just two years old. At that point there was likely some crying and refusal to continue. A neighbour saw the distressed little brood so far from home and gave Jim the money to take them on a streetcar to shorten the trip home.<sup>6</sup>

When my father was just 6 months old, his mother found herself expecting another child. To put this event in perspective, she was 27 years old and experiencing her seventh pregnancy (one child had died in England).<sup>7</sup> Her youngest child, my father, was still an infant. No one knows the exact circumstances of her life, but we can imagine the stress of having five children, another one on the way, no family to help, and probably no money to hire help. She chose what women sometimes did as a solution and tried to abort the pregnancy.

Unfortunately, she died in the process and was buried in a pauper's grave with no marker. I remember overhearing my aunt speaking of seeing the neighbours dragging a blood-soaked mattress into the backyard and setting fire to it.

At first, my grandfather tried to cope on his own, using those neighbourhood women to care for the children during the day while he worked, and doing the family domestic work in the evenings. As this proved to be an overwhelming task, he reluctantly decided to place the four youngest children in institutional care—an orphanage. Jim, who was old enough for schooling, was kept at home.

At first, my father was in an infants' home and then joined his brother David in the boys' home. Very little is known about their experiences during these years as my father rarely spoke of

them. However, one day, when I was balking at some food, my father told me that, in the boys' home, you had to sit at the table until you finished



**Figure 3: George entering the boys' home**

Source: Collection of the author

your food and that whenever they served turnip soup he would sit there until well into the night because he disliked it so much. He also said his father would come to visit on Sundays and would push candies through the fence for him. My father was institutionally raised until the age of 13 to 14, when he was old enough to leave. I have yet to explore this aspect of my father's life through the Toronto Archives.

After leaving the orphanage, my father first lived with his father, but soon left because, as my aunt said, "they didn't get along." A search of *Might's Directories* for Toronto at that time showed that my father lived as a boarder and sometimes shared a room with his brother David, but he seemed to change locations often. To support himself in this independent life, my father made friends with the young men who delivered telegrams for Canadian National Telegraphs.<sup>8</sup> The messenger boys would sit on a bench outside the office waiting for a commission to deliver a telegram. One young man offered to lend his bicycle to my father to deliver telegrams at night, and that generosity led to a fortuitous change in my father's life.

My father described how at night there was little traffic on the roads, so he could speed through the streets as he delivered night telegrams. He would force himself to go as fast as he could on the borrowed

bike in order to deliver more telegrams and earn more money that way. A small daily logbook found in his trunk shows meticulous noting of trips, distance, time and payment. His earnings averaged two to three dollars per day.



**Figure 4: Messenger boys, George is second from the left**

Source: Collection of the author

One night, an organizer with the Canadian Wheelsman Association saw my father racing through the streets and stopped him.<sup>9</sup> He told father that they held races for boys at the Toronto Exhibition Park on Saturdays and invited my father to attend. My father explained that he didn't own a bicycle and thus couldn't participate, but the organizer told him, "You show up and I'll arrange for you to have a bike to ride."<sup>10</sup> And the rest, as they say, is history.

My father began to participate in the boys' races and must have exhibited talent and determination, because he began to win at the local level

and eventually acquired a bicycle of his own. Cycling and cycle racing were very popular in the 1930s and received much coverage in the press, as shown in father's scrapbook. A simple Google search revealed a website dedicated to stories about cycling messengers both current and past and has been a useful source of information about cycling.<sup>11</sup> The site also contains several articles about and photographs of my father. The newspaper articles pasted into my father's scrapbook have also added to a more complete understanding of his cycling career. It shows that he began to compete in other cities and had much success, culminating in 1936 when he was chosen for the Canadian cycling team to represent

Canada that year at the Berlin Olympics. Quite an accomplishment for a poor boy raised in an orphanage.

Researching historic Canadian Olympic participation is not for the faint-hearted. There is no central Canadian Olympic archive and records are scattered across the country. The records for the 1936 Olympics are held at McGill University in Montreal and arrangements can be made to view them.<sup>12</sup> In his lifetime, my father had occasionally talked of his time at the Olympics, but typically we didn't ask enough questions or the right questions. He often spoke of the highlight of the Canadian team's participation—a long road race through a forest and



**Figure 5: 1936 Canadian Olympic Cycling Team; George Compton second from right**  
Source: Collection of the author

a race in which the Canadian team thought they had a chance of making a good showing. The Canadian team strategy was to initially keep with the pack and then draft their best sprinter who would sprint to the finish line. Unfortunately, during the race a massive spill occurred just ahead of them and, with the trees lining the road, there was no possibility of going around it. They were stopped for seconds, but seconds count. No one behind the spill had any chance of winning. The four-man team decided that they would cross the finish line together and in the large Olympic record book that I examined at McGill, it shows the four Canadian men's names separated by commas, whereas the names for all the participants who crossed the finish line individually are separated by semicolons. This very small evidence gives substance to my father's story and faith in the value of good punctuation!

The trunk, which lingered in our upstairs closet for so many years, was the one father took with him to Germany. On the outside of the trunk are many travel stickers and notices that reveal that he not only went to Germany but

visited France and England as well. One of the items in the trunk that raised questions was a folder of souvenir postcards of the Vimy Memorial. I often wondered why they were there, as most of the contents related to my father's cycling career. This question was answered by a sticker on the outside of the trunk. Recently, I discovered an article on the Canadian War Graves Commission's website about the Vimy Memorial Dedication Ceremony on 26 July 1936.<sup>13</sup> The article describes the Canadian "... pilgrimage to France for the unveiling ceremony. ..." and lists the five ships that left the port of Montreal carrying 6,000 pilgrims. One of the ships named was the SS *Duchess of Bedford*. A quick search of the stickers on father's trunk revealed one for the *Duchess of Bedford* dated 17 July 1936. Was my father one of the "... 100,000



Figure 6: Trunk label for the SS *Duchess of Bedford*  
Source: Author

people present at the ceremony"?<sup>14</sup> The sleeve of postcards suggests that perhaps he was, but I don't recall him, or anyone else, ever mentioning it.

A small business card found in the bottom of the trunk at first seemed inconsequential, but proved to be an important link to our English heritage. My father's mother died when he was an infant and he had no memory of, or stories from, her. Shortly afterwards, their first family home in Canada suffered a severe fire and any photographs or mementos from England were lost.<sup>15</sup> As four of the five children were institutionally raised, they did not hear the stories that families tell that help them to learn of their heritage. Thus, there has been very little to connect the Canadian family to its British roots. The business card was printed for my grandfather's Canadian business, noting his decorating specialties of "imitating woods and marble and texture painting in pleasing effects."<sup>16</sup> However, on the reverse of the card are three names with addresses and the captions "Aunt Edith," "Aunt Maggie" and "Aunt Molly." The tiny business card revealed not only the addresses for these "aunties," but their married surnames! This is an important discovery because the card was probably written in 1936 and the married surnames could provide a link to the descendants of these

women. Discovering this tiny card at the bottom of the trunk was genealogy glory.

Using the names of the three aunts, plus the name of my father's mother, I searched British census records to narrow the search among many who had the same name. This had been a "brick wall" in the past—which 'Susannah' was our Susannah? As father's mother was approximately 27 years old in 1914, I decided to try the 1901 Census—old enough to have younger sisters and young enough to be still living at home. Bingo! The 1901 Census<sup>17</sup> shows a family with four daughters: Edith, aged 17; Susannah, 16; Elizabeth, 7; and Maggie, 6. To further confirm that this was the right family, the family address in 1901 was 10 Stafford Street—the same address given for Aunt Maggie in 1936! However, the trunk did not come into my possession until the late 1990s when these clues were over 60 years old. Nevertheless, using the married names to search through *Ancestry*, I did find a distant link to a family tree on the Isle of Wight. On this tree, my father's mother Susannah is shown, but with no marriage or descendant information. I was saddened that her extended family didn't seem to know about her marriage, immigration, 5 children, 17 grandchildren and many great grandchildren. I accept the challenge to change this.

However, perhaps the most important item in father's trunk is the original letter from my father to his father, written in the Olympic Village on Olympic stationery.<sup>18</sup> As one of the few remaining primary sources from my father's life, the letter provides some useful and interesting insights. For example, it is well-written. It reflects that, while my father was delivering telegrams by night and training as a cyclist on weekends, he was motivated to complete his schooling by day and took 'stenography'—composition, typing and shorthand.<sup>19</sup> This explains the pencil and notebook that I purloined from the trunk as a child. In the second last line of my father's letter to his father, he writes, "On August 28 we sail for home from Liverpool and will try to see the folks in Manchester before I leave."<sup>20</sup> Are these 'folks' the aunties listed with addresses on the back of the business card? The letter ends with the words, "Thanks again for making this trip possible," which suggests that whatever differences he and his father had earlier in life, his father had contributed financially to his participation at the Olympics.<sup>21</sup> The text of the letter is in an appendix and shows that it foreshadowed the next phase of my father's life.

While participating in the Olympics, and travelling to Germany were

seen as a 'once in a lifetime' experience for my father, world events caused him to return to Germany again in 1945 as a member of the Canadian Army, part of the Army of Occupation.<sup>22</sup> Although he had some memorabilia from that part of his life, it was somewhat scattered throughout our home. I believe the cycling and Olympic memories remained together because it happened at a time when he was single with no permanent address. I can imagine that, as he moved from boarding house to boarding house, he moved the trunk with him and his memorabilia remained intact. And his descendants are fortunate that it did.

Father's trunk has provided family history and raised questions about it. New genealogical research into the 'aunties' and their descendants is needed. Research into the Canadian experiences needs to be done, such as the orphanages into which the children were placed, and my father's father. According to family lore, this grandfather not only decorated the lobby ceiling of the Royal York Hotel in Toronto but was responsible for choosing the cream and maroon corporate colours used on the Toronto Transit Commission's streetcars and buses.<sup>23</sup> But those are stories yet to be explored.



August 14<sup>th</sup> 1936

Dear Dad.

This travelling sure is educational and well worth the hard work spent to make it. We landed at Le Havre France and from there we went to Paris. We visited many historical places and also some very beautiful churches. I thought Paris a wonderful city but it did not compare at all with Berlin. The exchange on French money has fallen with the result that tourists are forsaking France for Germany where they secure a more favourable rate of exchange. With the falling tourist trade Paris has been sorely neglected and is now badly in need of a clean up.

Berlin on the other hand is, very clean city with very wide roads and even wider sidewalks. The people here are great walkers and to accommodate them there are sidewalks easily as wide as Yonge Street.

There is a military atmosphere here and everyone seems to be in some kind of uniform. Despite this the people are generally happy and really do worship Hitler.

Both the French and German countryside are very pretty and I noticed that all the buildings have red tiled roofs.

Figure 7: Letter from George Compton to his father from the Olympic village

Source: Collection of the author

It is one of the greatest regrets of my life that I never explored the trunk and its contents with my

father, to share his memories and extend our understanding and appreciation of his life, his cycling

career and Olympic experiences. I don't think my father ever looked in his trunk in his later life; perhaps with some encouragement he would have. One of the saddest memories contained in the trunk is a tiny scrap of a two-line classified advertisement. It reads, "For Sale: Racing bicycle, chrome plated, B.S.A. parts, spare

wheels and parts. Bargain." The ad is from a 1940 newspaper when father sold his racing bike to buy a baby carriage for me.<sup>24</sup> Father's trunk was a treasure tucked away in a closet for over 60 years. And aren't we lucky that no other six-year-olds were given licence to play with father's trunk on a rainy day!

## Appendix

Transcription of letter written by my father to his father from the Olympic Village.

OLYMPISCHES DORF, den  
August 14th, 1936.

Dear Dad,

This travelling sure is educational and well worth the hard work spent to make it. We landed at Le Havre France and from there went to Paris. We visited many historical places and also some very beautiful churches. I thought Paris a wonderful city but it did not compare at all with Berlin. The exchange on French money has fallen with the result that tourists are forsaking France for Germany where they secure a more favourable rate of exchange.

With the falling tourist trade, Paris has been sorely neglected and is now badly in need of a clean up.

Berlin on the other hand is a very clean city with very wide roads and even wider sidewalks. The people here are great walkers and to accomodate [sic] them, there are sidewalks easily as wide as Yonge street.

There is a military atmosphere here and everyone seems to be in some kind of uniform. Despite this, the people are genuinely happy and really do worship Hitler.

Both the French and German country-sides are very pretty and I noticed that all the buildings have red tiled roofs.

We visited Potsdam where the most beautiful palaces are situated. The interior decorations were most elaborate and the oil paintings are priceless. One canvas in particular is at least 40 feet in length. I understand the British government offered several millions of pounds for some of these paintings but Germany will not part with them for any price. It is little wonder that there is no Kaiser to-day because of the extravagance at Potsdam.

At the Deutschland [sic] Exposition we saw enlargements of photographs which measured easily 75 feet x 50 feet. Another interesting exhibit was a violin made entirely of glass and at the same time producing a very good tone.

Hitler certainly has succeeded in putting Germany ahead both physically and otherwise for they have won more points at the Games than any other nation.

We sail to-morrow for London for a stay of two weeks where I am competing at Herne Hill racetrack. On Aug 28 we sail for Home from Liverpool and will try to see the folks in Manchester before I leave. Thanks again for making this trip possible.

Yours Sincerely,  
George

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- 8 Messenger Institute for Media Accuracy [MIMA] <http://www.messmedia.org/1936-0626-toronto.html>. Email: [ima@messmedia.org](mailto:ima@messmedia.org). (Accessed 21 October 2005.) Much general information about the telegraph messengers was found on this site.
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- 10 Story told by my mother.
- 11 Messenger Institute for Media Accuracy. (See <sup>8</sup>)
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- 15 Story told by Aunt B.
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- 24 Story told by my mother.

# We Shall Remember Them

BY MARCIA CLEMENT

*Marcia is a retired federal public servant whose interest in genealogy began over 20 years ago researching her own family roots. In 2018 she volunteered to work on the project documenting the lives of the soldiers who died at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station in World War I. In this biography she describes how the death of a valiant young man was felt not only by his family but by his whole community.*

## **2nd Lieutenant Charles James Ervine<sup>©</sup> 27th Battalion (4th Tyneside Irish), Northumberland Fusiliers born: 4 April 1894 – died: 6 April 1916**

2nd Lieutenant Charles James Ervine was the eldest child of Robert and Mary Ervine (née Glendinning). Robert and Minnie, as she was known, married on 19 May 1893<sup>1</sup> at the Dundela Presbyterian Church in the Parish of Holywood, a district of Belfast, Ireland. Their families were neighbours: the Ervines lived at 8 Upper Frank Street and the Glendinnings at number 11. Robert's father, Abraham (known as Abram) Ervine was a carpentry joiner while Minnie's father, Alexander Glendinning, was a linen merchant. Robert's occupation at the time of his marriage was described simply as a clerk.

The young couple moved in with Minnie's parents when Charles was born on 4 April 1894.<sup>2</sup> The growing family soon moved to 32 Castlereagh Place, where their next three children were born: Alexander Glendinning (b. 1895),<sup>3</sup> Henry Lawrence (b. 1898)<sup>4</sup> and Robert Maurice (b. 1901).<sup>5</sup> The



**Figure 1: 2nd Lieutenant C. J. Ervine**

Source: *McQuiston Memorial Presbyterian Church*

family were living on Cregagh Road when William Frederick came along in 1905<sup>6</sup> and finally a daughter, Annie Margaret, in 1907.<sup>7</sup>

The family attended McQuiston Memorial Presbyterian Church, where "Charlie" faithfully attended Bible class. He joined the 19th Belfast Company of the Boys' Brigade that was associated with the Church and played both cricket and football.<sup>8</sup> In 1909 Charlie won the Squad Challenge trophy, an event commemorated in a history of the McQuiston Boys' Brigade.<sup>9</sup>

By 1911 Charlie had finished school and was apprenticed to the linen trade.<sup>10</sup>

When Charlie died of his wounds on 6 April 1916 at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, he was a 2nd Lieutenant in the 27th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers (4th Tyneside Irish).<sup>11</sup>

The Northumberland Fusiliers had a long and distinguished history dating back to 1674. During World War I, the regiment raised 52 battalions, of which 29 served overseas. It was awarded 67 Battle Honours and 5 Victoria Crosses, losing 16,000 men over the course of the war.<sup>12</sup> Four battalions, the 24th–27th (inclusive), were known as the 1st to the 4th Tyneside Irish. These battalions were "Pals battalions": specially constituted battalions of the British Army composed of men who enlisted together in local recruiting drives, with the promise that they would be able to serve together rather than being dispersed to battalions

arbitrarily.<sup>13</sup> The 27th Battalion was raised by the Lord Mayor and City of Newcastle in January 1915,<sup>14</sup> suggesting that Charlie may have moved to England.

The four battalions became the 103rd (Tyneside Irish) Brigade of the 34th Division of the British Army, arriving in France in January 1916.<sup>15</sup> According to a blog about the County of Durham during World War I, after some weeks of training, on 10 February 1916 the 27th Battalion moved forward to join the 10th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters and the 8th Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment.<sup>16</sup> The blog also includes the following specific story, providing great insight into Charlie's character and determination:

By the middle of March the 27th Battalion (4th Tyneside Irish), Northumberland Fusiliers, were holding the line once more. On the night of the 15/16 March, a German patrol planted a German flag in front of them. During the day, the battalion snipers shot at the pole, eventually bringing the flag down. Plans were made to try and recover it during the night, and the company commander, Captain Davey, had no shortage of volunteers to go out and capture the flag. He therefore chose the best man for the job, Lieutenant CJ Ervine, together with two more men of his platoon but after an hour or so, the party returned without the flag. The enemy were too alert and waiting, and had a patrol covering the flag on one side and a machine

gun covering the other. When the three Tyneside Irishmen got to within twenty-five yards of the German flag there was such an outburst of firing that they had to return to the British lines. In the early hours of St. Patrick's Day, Lieutenant Ervine set out again, this time alone and for half-an-hour those in the British trenches waited, until Lieutenant Ervine's platoon sergeant went out to the wire to look for him. At 2:45pm [*sic*] the Germans fired a star shell and those in the trench could see the dark shape of Lieutenant Ervine making his way slowly back to the British lines having managed to recover the prize, but on the way having fallen into a ditch full of muddy water. While Ervine dried himself, Captain Davey and another officer erected a stout pole with the German ensign nailed to it, and above the ensign the green flag with the golden harp, which had been presented to the Company prior to leaving England. As day broke the Germans started to shoot at the pole in a vain attempt to bring it down, but there it hung throughout St. Patrick's Day, attracting admiring visitors to the Tyneside Irish trenches from other parts of the line. Unfortunately, shortly after this episode, Lieutenant Ervine, who hailed from Belfast, was badly wounded and succumbed to his wounds soon afterwards.<sup>17</sup>

Charlie's obituary in his church magazine describes him as, "one of the noblest specimens of young Christian manhood . . .

His unassuming manner endeared him to all his chums, and we have lost . . . one of nature's gentlemen to whom success meant no estrangement and whose character time could not sully. . . Charlie lives first in the circle of his home where his cheery manner left a charm, next in the hearts of his chums as an inspiration to do nobler things, and, best of all, on the other side where long-lost friends are saying, "Charlie's come."<sup>18</sup>

Charlie is buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Plot II D 58, in the Pas-de-Calais region of northern France.<sup>19</sup> His father had his headstone inscribed with the following words:

UNTIL THE DAY BREAKS  
AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY<sup>20</sup>

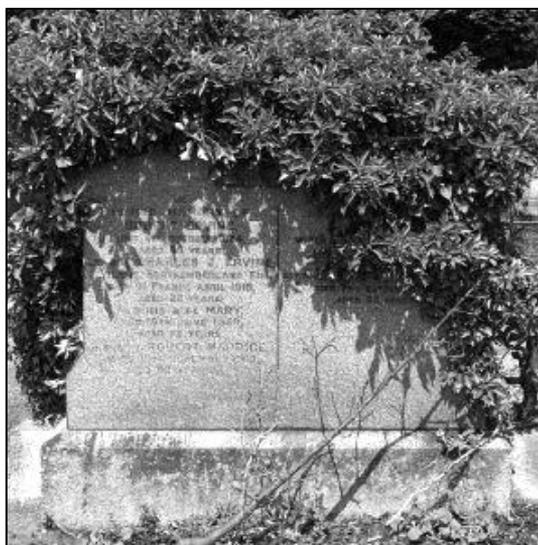


Figure 2: Ervine Family Gravestone  
Source: Militaryimages.net

Charlie was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>21</sup> He is also commemorated on his father and mother's gravestone in the Dundonald Cemetery in Belfast;<sup>22</sup> his father passed away in 1934,<sup>23</sup> his mother in 1956.<sup>24</sup>

Charlie's younger brother Alexander also served in World War I as a company quartermaster sergeant in the Royal Irish Rifles. He was awarded the same medals as his brother, as well as the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).<sup>25</sup>

Alexander survived the war; he was discharged on 10 February 1919.<sup>26</sup>

Another of Charlie's brothers, Henry, who was married to Margaret when he passed away on 20 October 1966, had stayed close to home: his last address was 40 Cregagh Park, Belfast.<sup>27</sup>

Robert Maurice Ervine may not have been married when he died on 16 December 1963, as probate of his estate was given to his brother Henry.<sup>28</sup> He was interred with his parents in Dundonald Cemetery<sup>29</sup> and is commemorated with Charlie on the family headstone.

The youngest Ervine brother, William, emigrated to South Africa in 1929.<sup>30</sup> In 1939 he was a farmer

in Southern Rhodesia with a wife, two daughters and two sons.<sup>31</sup>

No records were found regarding the later life of Charlie's only sister, Annie.

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- 18 "McQuiston Memorial Roll of Honour, The Great War 1914-1918," *McQuiston Memorial Presbyterian Church* ([www.mcquistonpc.org/roll-of-honour](http://www.mcquistonpc.org/roll-of-honour): accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Charles James Ervine.
- 19 "Global, Find a Grave Index for Burials at Sea and Other Select Burial Locations, 1300s-Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 16 July 2019), entry for 2nd Lt C J Ervine.
- 20 *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 11 August 2019), entry for Second Lieutenant Ervine, CJ.
- 21 "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Charles James Ervine.
- 22 *Militaryimages.net* ([www.militaryimages.net](http://www.militaryimages.net): accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Charles James Ervine.
- 23 "Community: Burial Records," Belfast City Council (<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk>: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Robert Ervine.
- 24 "Community: Burial Records," Belfast City Council (<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk>: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Mary Ervine.
- 25 "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Alexander G Ervine.
- 26 "UK, WWI Pension Ledgers and Index Cards 1914-1923," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 16

- July 2019), entry for Alexander Glendinning Ervine.
- 27 "England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Henry Lawrence Ervine.
- 28 "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Robert Maurice Ervine.
- 29 *FindaGrave* (https://www.findagrave.com/: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Robert Maurice Ervine.
- 30 "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Mr W F Ervine, Departure date: 18 October 1929.
- 31 "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Mr W F Ervine, Departure date: 30 March 1939.

## Techniques and Resources

### BIFHSGO Database Review



BY JOHN MCCONKEY

*John McConkey is currently BIFHSGO's Research & Projects Director. He has been a member of the Board for two and a half years and a member for 16 years. He is also the technical coordinator for monthly meetings and the yearly conference. This review is based on John's January 2020*

*"Before BIFHSGO" presentation, a recording of which is available in the Members Only section of the BIFHSGO website.*

As the reader may know, the database section of the BIFHSGO website has gone through several changes in the past year. So it's a good time to offer a summary of these changes and a description of the resources that are currently available.

A good place to start is a review of the history of the database section. Since the early 2000s several BIFHSGO volunteers have been working on transcriptions of Home Children records held by Library and Archives Canada (LAC). An agreement was reached in 2006 giving both parties the right to publish versions of these transcriptions and it was logical therefore, that BIFHSGO should find a place for them on its new website, launched in 2011. These transcriptions were installed as "custom databases" in an easy-to-read format. More transcription projects (mostly military and

immigration focused) took place in subsequent years and by 2018 researchers had over a dozen databases (or indexes) to draw upon.

In 2018 however, BIFHSGO was forced to make a crucial decision. The website provider announced that custom databases would not be supported in a planned upgrade of the website platform. Existing databases would be frozen, and no new ones would be entertained. The only way to install a new database was to use an entirely different format. Consequently, the birth of the “spreadsheet format” took place in January 2019 with a new version of the Middlemore Index. Since then several new databases have been released and a few older ones have been transformed into the new format.

Where are the databases/indexes to be found? Visit the website at [bifhsgo.ca](http://bifhsgo.ca), go to the red sidebar on the left of the home page and click on “Research & Projects.” This will open a list of categories: Home Children, Migration, Military and Other Resources. Each category contains an ever-increasing set of resources: guides, databases, and indexes. Click on a category title to see the databases available for that category. A special category—“New & Upcoming”—highlights databases added in the past six months and projects planned for the near future. In the descriptions below, (C) denotes a custom database and (S) a spreadsheet database. Spreadsheet databases can be searched using the CTRL/f function. Custom databases each have a unique search capability.

The **Home Children** category consists of several databases (listed below) and a 12-page description of Home Children, their backgrounds and juvenile emigration agencies entitled “About Home Children”.

The *Middlemore Index* (S) is the evolving product of an undertaking that was started some 18 years ago by Patricia Roberts-Pichette. Microfilm of documents generated by the Middlemore Children’s Emigration Homes was purchased by BIFHSGO from the Library of Birmingham, England and donated to LAC. Patricia and her volunteers have painstakingly examined the many reels for children’s names and generated a database of almost 6,000 entries. As a result of Patricia’s own research, each entry now has up to 54 fields of information on each child and cites all references in the relevant sections on the microfilm reels. The latest revision of the Index was released in March 2019.

*Barnardo’s Ups and Downs Magazine* (C) is a database containing more than 58,000 entries. Each entry is a reference to an item of interest or a child’s name listed in an issue of the magazine. The reference gives the issue, volume, and page number where the item can be found. More than 200

issues of the magazine were printed during the period 1895–1949. Some of these issues are online, while copies of others can be obtained from LAC.

Middlemore Index A.xlsx

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Identifying information from Middlemore children's records - read "Guide to the Middlemore Index" for supporting information						
© Patricia Roberts-Pichette and British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa (BIFHSO) - queries@bifhsgo.ca						
Surname	Forename	Age	Birthday/Birth Anniversary	Ship	Date left Homes for Canada	Province where first settled
ABBITTS	Frederick	10	1906 10 20	Siberian	1906 06 12	New Brunswick
ABBITTS	George	13	1906 01 28	Siberian	1906 06 12	New Brunswick
ABBOTT	Herbert	12	1906 09 29	Siberian	1906 06 12	Nova Scotia
ABBOTTS	Emily	12	1897 03 18	Siberian	1898 05 14	New Brunswick
ACKROYD	Frances May / Mary	15	1915 09 09	Carthaginian	1915 05 18	New Brunswick
ACKROYD	Mabel Emma	10	1914 12 18	Carthaginian	1915 05 18	New Brunswick

**Figure 1: Sample of Middlemore Index**

Source: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DhaZsPKkyqNtWHKZznIWOW-FMOZle2xp/view>

The *Fegan Homes Index* (C) contains the names of around 3,500 children who were placed in Canada by the emigration home run by James William Condell Fegan, a native of Southampton, Hampshire, England. In 1885 he established a home in Toronto, Ontario, at 295 George Street, where boys were sent during the years 1885–1939. Entries in the database contain first and last name, arrival year and a reference to the original record.

*Home Children Deaths* (C) contains information on Home Children for whom we have death information. Names are added on an ongoing basis using contributions from contacts and other sources such as newspaper obituaries and LAC RG76 General Correspondence files. There are currently over 4,600 entries.

The **Military** category contains four databases that are popular with researchers whose ancestors include Canadian servicemen and personnel from Britain who served in Canada.

*Foreign-Born Canadian Militia 1907* (C) lists almost 2,000 men mostly of British origin who were serving in either a volunteer or permanent capacity in Canada in 1907. Name, rank, age, and country of origin are displayed. A link is also given to the page in an online PDF version of the original document (“Appointments to Militia Department”) where each soldier’s name appears.



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# British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa



## Fegan Homes Index

Between 1885 and 1939, Fegan Homes brought roughly 3,226 boys to Canada. Most were believed to have been settled with farm families in southern Ontario, although some boys were brought to Manitoba. The Fegan database is an index of the names of nearly all of the children who came to Canada, and refers to microfilms of some Fegan Homes settlement records that are held by Library and Archives Canada. Learn more...

Search Surname:

Results Per Page:    
 Page:

Records: 1 to 50 of 3530

Surname ↑	Given Name	Arrival Year	Vol	Page	Notes	FHL Reel
ABBOTT	Ernest	1911	5	204	Military Service.	2027622
ABBOTT	Ernest	1911	5	528	Military Service.	2027622
ABRAMS	Fred K.	1906	4	313		2027622
ABRAMS	R. E.	1909	5	1		2027622
ACKLAND	Geo.	1913	5	411		2027622
ADAMS	Frank Jesse	1929	8			2027623

**Figure 2: Fegan Homes Index page**

Source: [https://bifhsgo.ca/cstm\\_fegan.php](https://bifhsgo.ca/cstm_fegan.php)

*Ottawa Sharpshooters (S)* is a set of three databases (ordered by rank, surname, and age) of 53 men who served in the Ottawa Company of Sharpshooters. These men comprised a small British contingent of the volunteers who were sent to North West Canada to suppress the rebellion started by Louis Riel in March 1885 when he proclaimed a Provisional Government. Also included is an extract from the diary of Captain Alfred Hamlyn Todd covering the period 29 March to 12 April 1885.

*Rideau Canal Soldiers (S)* lists 92 British soldiers who were engaged in the building of the Rideau Canal. These men were from the 7th and 15th companies of Royal Sappers and Miners based in Woolwich, England, led by Lt. Col. John By. The detachment was disbanded in December 1831 but two-thirds of the men decided to stay in Canada and were granted 100 acres of land each. The rest returned to England and other parts of the Commonwealth. Soldiers are listed in four separate databases organized by disbandment option, surname, company, and rank.

*No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (C)* is the product of another successful undertaking by BIFHSGO volunteers—led in this case by Queries Coordinator Sheila Dohoo Faure. This database contains transcriptions of

records kept by chaplains of medical units located just behind the Front Line in France during the First World War. Documented are the deaths of 879 soldiers at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (CCCS). The records have been transcribed exactly as written by the chaplains. However, many mistakes were made in the records and, as part of the research process for soldiers, volunteers have determined full correct names, and these have been added to the database. Furthermore, there is an ongoing project to write biographies of each soldier and, at the time of writing this article, 60 percent of the soldiers have been completed. Volunteers have accessed publicly available sources for these biographies and, in some cases, have been able to connect with family members, who have provided more personal information and family pictures

The **Migration** category currently consists of two databases. One of these has been present on the website for several years but in a different format, while the other is a new database released in May 2019.

*Women's Emigration 1903-1906* (S) is offered as five separate databases, one for each individual year and a combination database for the entire period. Each database is in alphabetical order of surname and together a total of 687 women are listed. Besides first and last name, each entry includes age, origin, destination, marital status, name of ship, date of arrival and supplementary comments (such as occupation). These women (aged 14 years to mid-40s) were brought to Canada by the Hon. Mrs. Ellen Joyce who was the head of the British Women's Emigration Association (BWEA) from 1901 until 1919. The aim of the BWEA was to encourage middle-class women to emigrate to the colonies because of a perceived surplus of women in England and Wales and a dearth of women in the colonies, particularly in Canada and Australia.

*World War II Unaccompanied Child Evacuees* (S) is the result of a project researched by volunteer (and former BIFHSGO president) John D. Reid. In 1940, with Britain under attack and with the possibility of invasion looming, certain more affluent parents who were concerned about the safety of their children decided to evacuate them to Canada. Some were sent to relatives, others arrived in parties organized by businesses and schools. Unlike the boys and girls of the earlier juvenile emigration (Home Children) movement, evacuee children were deemed "guests" rather than "immigrants" and most returned to Britain at the end of the war. This database (containing 1,834 names) is a transcription of a portion of a document held by LAC. It includes each evacuee child's first and last name, host organization and province

where hosted. A link to the complete LAC document (recently put online in PDF format) is in the header of the database.

The category **Other Resources** contains two items. Neither could strictly be termed a “database” but each certainly contains interesting and useful research information.

*Lancashire Diaries 1772–1910* (S) is the work of BIFHSGO volunteer Bryan D. Cook. In 2016 Bryan acquired copies of diaries (originally transcribed by Arthur W. Critchley) of the Scowcroft family of Lancashire, England and set out to organize, digitize and install them on the BIFHSGO website. Samuel Scowcroft (1838–1914) kept a detailed diary for almost 50 years. He was a well-known businessman and politician in the districts of Harwood and Bradshaw. The diary entries provide a fascinating view of life during that period in Britain. Several indexes of names and places are included in the collection as is also extensive supplementary material. As Bryan mentions in his introduction to the collection: “While the primary importance of the diaries for genealogists is to help them find ancestors from over a thousand listed persons, searches by place, event, and topic will also yield valuable fruit to hang on many a family tree.”

*Links to Online Resources* (C) is a compendium of links to some 200 websites covering multiple genealogical topics. These can be filtered by categories such as Beginner, DNA, Home Children, Maps and Military.

The **New & Upcoming** category starts the list of categories in the sidebar menu. There are two new Home Children databases that have recently been made available to researchers and two more projects are planned for 2020.

The *RG17 Index* (S) is the first of several collections recently provided by BIFHSGO volunteer John Sayers. It was transcribed from a set of Canadian Department of Agriculture records which were generated in the period 1869–1892 when that department was responsible for immigration. The set includes correspondence between the Immigration Branch and various UK sending organizations. These records have not been microfilmed, are only available at LAC in hard copy form and are stored off site. The records contain lists of Home Children and are difficult for the general public to access. This transcription work was carried out by a team of volunteers led by John between the years 2009 and 2011. Two versions of the index are available, ordered by name and by year of arrival. Over 14,000 names are included (some duplicated) and each entry shows age, sending organization, place of settlement, name of host, supplementary notes, and a reference to a page in the original file document. The RG17 Index is one of the most

comprehensive lists of Home Children and serves as an important supplement to other Home Children databases. It was released in December 2019.



Figure 3: Photo from Father Hudson's collection  
Source: [https://bifhsgo.ca/upload/files/Research/Father\\_Hudson\\_photos/Album.pdf](https://bifhsgo.ca/upload/files/Research/Father_Hudson_photos/Album.pdf)

*Father Hudson's Photos (S)* is derived from another collection provided by John Sayers and was released in April 2020. Father George Vincent Hudson (1873–1936) was a Catholic priest who dedicated his career to the protection and care of homeless children.

Born in Worcestershire, England, Fr. Hudson was ordained in 1898 and became parish priest at Coleshill, near Birmingham. As

part of a global charity initiative he founded Father Hudson's Care to provide homes for underprivileged children. One of these homes was located in Ottawa and Fr. Hudson paid frequent visits to it. He also kept track of its progress in a collection of 146 photos. This collection was organized in an album by John and then digitized and installed on the website. Several indexes were then compiled: a name index, a photo index, an index of groups, and also an index of photos that include men in military uniform.

I hope this review of research resources sheds light on what is available on the BIFHSGO website. Watch out for the launch of a new project on War Brides of WWII and an update to the Middlemore Index later this year.

# The Cream of the Crop

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



BY JOHN D. REID

Poring over documents, online, or in person when you have access, is always a solitary pursuit. So, following the sage

advice to “stay home,” repeated ad nauseam, has meant more time to follow our interests, perhaps even to work on long-neglected backburner items. That’s been aided by some resources that have been made temporarily available online for free, such as a selection of archival materials from The National Archives (UK). I hope you heard about them. They were mentioned on my blog and in other social media. It shouldn’t be too late to include them here.

## **Military Service Recognition Books**

These books are published by Fenety Marketing in a fairly uniform format for the various Provincial Commands of the 30,000-member-strong Royal Canadian Legion. Supported by advertising and donations, the books feature biographies and reminiscences of those who have served. Most entries are from the Second and First World Wars, but they also include the Korean War and more. They may include

articles on activities of the Legion and on notable events in which Command servicemen and women were involved. Typically each of the approximately 100 volumes has a table of contents near the front which names the veterans mentioned. There’s a list of the Commands with links to their websites at [www.legion.ca/contact-us/provincial-commands/](http://www.legion.ca/contact-us/provincial-commands/). Most volumes are available as searchable pdfs with a list of those who served included.

## **Royal Flying Corps: People Index**

For those who served with the Royal Flying Corps (May 1912 to March 1918), Royal Naval Air Service (July 1914 to April 1918) and their successor the RAF, information is available in spreadsheets organized by surname. These are large files. Surname B comprises 41,981 lines, while the surname P file has 22,113 lines.

There are often multiple entries for each individual, officer and non-officer aircrew. Depending on the source, the information available is surname, rank, initials, forename(s), date of birth, regiment, squadron, source, reference, and more. The database does not give a complete history of each individual. Download the military record from the AIR 76 series at The National

Archives (UK) for the full service history of an officer.

Many Canadians are included. A search for Canad\* (for either Canada or Canadian) results in a B surname file containing 670 entries, the P list has 416. William Avery (Billy) Bishop has 25 lines of information—Lester Bowles Pearson just one line.

Access these lists at [www.airhistory.org.uk/rfc/people\\_index.html](http://www.airhistory.org.uk/rfc/people_index.html), and the parent site, [airhistory.org.uk](http://airhistory.org.uk), for the early history of aviation from a UK perspective based upon original research material.

### **The *Ottawa Citizen* Archive Free Online**

The Ottawa genealogical community has been pushing for historic newspaper access through the Ottawa Public Library for several years. Now the historic *Ottawa Citizen* to 2010, including its predecessor *The Packet* (1846–1851) is here and it's free. You can browse by date or perform basic and advanced search options to find information from the full text. This is in addition to *The Globe and Mail* (1844–2016).

### **England**

*Findmypast* (FMP) has added 116 million names to its flagship British Library Electoral Register Collection. Aside from their first and last name, you can limit the search for people by year, constituency, polling district or place, additional key-

words, county and country. The information is given in PDF documents searchable using keywords and wildcards.

Electoral registers were compiled annually, so there's fine resolution in finding the movement of those qualified to vote. People were added as they became eligible. Cryptic annotations, like "J" after a name, are explained in a help section on electoral register codes. "J" means the person was eligible for jury duty. According to FMP's A-Z of record sets, the Electoral Register Collection includes 123,349,314 entries for the period 1920 to 1932.

While the franchise (right to vote) was restricted in prior years, FMP comments that registers with the richest information for researchers are those issued between the 1885 redistribution of electoral boundaries and the First World War. They are also the most complex, with several sequences representing the different franchises that existed within registers for the same polling area. The different franchises are the reason for the extra information. For example, voters listed at their residence with a business franchise will also have their business address listed; those with a lodger's franchise will have their weekly rent, the number of rooms rented and the name of their landlord, or more usually landlady, listed.

*Ancestry* has added 2,910,996 records and 17,120 images to a UK–Midlands Electoral Registers Collection by extending coverage from 1955 to 1965.

## Ireland

The entire text of the 2019 edition of John Grenham's *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, not in the book format, is now up on his website "with completely new sections on starting out and graveyards, along with new short accounts of researching Irish ancestors in the Army, attorneys and barristers, clergymen, teachers, policemen and doctors." [www.johngrenham.com/browse/](http://www.johngrenham.com/browse/)

## Scots and Irish Magazines at PressReader

I've previously mentioned the British genealogy magazine *Who Do You Think You Are?* and *BBC History Magazine* available for free through the Ottawa Public Library subscription to PressReader. There are many other magazines of interest available including the following.

Available in the March issue of *The Scots Magazine* are articles on Scotland's National Library, the Battle of Dunbar and, for the energetic, suggestions for out-of-the-way places which could be the most memorable of your Scottish family history trip.

While *Ireland of the Welcomes* magazine is not specifically for

family history, the March issue has an article on Dr. Barnardo, whose organization brought tens of thousands of children and young adults to Canada. There's also an interesting article on the Kerry Camino—a three-day hike across the Dingle Peninsula.

## Wales

Twenty volumes of *The Welsh Historical Review*, a publication that started in 1960, are freely available online in The National Library of Wales Journals Collection at <https://journals.library.wales/>. Canadian content includes the following articles: *The Welsh in Canada* by Muriel E. Chamberlain, published in 1998 in volume 19; *Falling on Deaf Ears? Canadian Promotion and Welsh Immigration to the Prairies* by Wayne K. D. Davies in the same volume; and *Send a thousand Welsh farm labourers to Canada!* also by Wayne K. D. Davies in volume 20.

## Tweedsmuir Community Histories

In 1947 Women's Institute branches in Ontario started compiling the history of their local communities, which can include farm and family histories, biographies, and photos.

A project to digitize those books, funded by the Documentary Heritage Communities Program of Library and Archives Canada, is now complete. Books were brought to a central digitizing site from as far

north as Cochrane in northeast Ontario and Kenora in the northwest, to beyond London in the southwest and the Ottawa Valley in the east, and from many communities in between.

The originals having been returned, the digitized documents are now together in one location, with visitors from around the world viewing them. With those and some others previously digitized, about a quarter of a million pages are on the platform. You can freely access the Virtual Archives at <http://collecti.ons.fwio.on.ca/search> and through

the portal <http://search.ourontario.ca/>.

### **Photo Colourization**

Realistic, not necessarily accurate is my reaction to *MyHeritage's* new colourization facility, which transforms original black and white photos into eye-catching colour. Using machine learning algorithms trained on millions of real photos, the results can be breathtaking. You have to try it to appreciate it—check it out at [www.myheritage.com/incolor/](http://www.myheritage.com/incolor/). Non-members of *MyHeritage* can transform up to ten photographs for free.

### **Corrections to the Spring edition:**

We regret that several errors occurred in the article by Dianne Bryson in the Spring 2020 edition of *Anglo Celtic Roots*. These include the misnumbering of the figures. They should have appeared in numerical order without duplication.

Dianne has also requested the following correction and addition:

Reference Note 1 should read:

Birth records cannot be found for Mary or her siblings. The obituary for Mary's mother, Mary (Middlemiss) Oliver (*Galt Reporter*, 31 August 1888), reported that Mary's mother was born in Scotland and moved to England after she married, and this may be the reason why her children's records cannot be located. However, each Canadian census in which Mary appears records her place of birth as Scotland, the same for all her brothers, so I have settled on that location.

In addition, Dianne Brydon would like to acknowledge her cousin Carol Bray (Mary Brydon's great-great-granddaughter), from Neepawa, Manitoba, who collaborated on this article.

# BIFHSGO News

## Membership Report

BY KATHY WALLACE

### New BIFHSGO Members 15 Feb 2020–19 May 2020

Member No.	Name	Address
2027	Jeff Simpson	Ottawa, ON
2028	Carol Stephen	Carleton Place, ON
2028	Norm Swaebe	Carleton Place, ON
2029	Mary-Ellen Leeson	Bath, Somerset, UK
2030	Dawne Aitken	Gloucester, ON
2031	Judith Salley	Ottawa, ON
2032	Marcia Clements	Ottawa, ON

## President Urgently Needed

Volunteer to lead this dynamic genealogical society by contacting Barbara Tose at [pastpresident@bifhsgo.ca](mailto:pastpresident@bifhsgo.ca)

### Other Volunteer Opportunities

#### Outreach Director

(publicity/promotion/outreach to new members)

#### Volunteer Coordinator

Please offer your skills and time to **your** society.

We can't continue to provide the great services you enjoy without **you!**

Contact: [president@bifhsgo.ca](mailto:president@bifhsgo.ca) or [pastpresident@bifhsgo.ca](mailto:pastpresident@bifhsgo.ca)  
**to volunteer or discuss what role you could play to help BIFHSGO**

## **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
Outreach/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 2019**

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

- 12 Sept 2020** **There's No Business Like Showbusiness: Using DNA and Traditional Documents to Find my Maternal Grandfather**—Despite a decade of research, Brian Laurie-Beaumont's maternal grandfather was still a mystery. Brian will tell us how he utilized DNA, traditional documentation and deductive reasoning to establish his connection to a family of entertainers and an important 19th century circus.
- 10 Oct 2020** **Soldier, Settler and Sinner: The Remarkable Journey of Charles MacDonald**—Charles MacDonald, though born to a life of ease, was forced to become a British Army officer. He travelled three continents, experienced precarious circumstances, fathered seventeen children and swept them along in his journey from England to the West Indies and finally to the Bay of Quinte shores. Jane Simpson will relate the story of her remarkable ancestor.
- 14 Nov 2020** **Going Down of the Sun**—Brass plaques to our war dead hang in public buildings across Canada. Each year we are reminded of those who gave their lives and exhorted to “remember them.” But how do we remember those we never knew? Philip G Winkelaar will show us how to use school records, memoirs, official histories, church and military records to reveal the individuals and truly remember them.

**\*Schedule**—Due to Covid-19 restrictions and closures, our program remains unsettled and may be presented online. Please check our website at: [www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca) for up-to-date information on meetings and our special interest groups (Scottish, Irish, DNA, Writing, Master Genealogist Users.)

## 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 Fall issue is 25 July 2020.