



Annual General Meeting
Thursday October 21 – 6 p.m.
- see page 16 for details -

A Silent History: The British Home Children by Lynda Joyce

I keep asking myself the same question: How is it that I worked for 30 years in immigration in Canada and overseas, with my first posting in London, England, and yet I never heard about the movement of 100,000 children from Britain to Canada, as indentured labourers, over a 70-year period? In fact, I never heard of the British Home Children until I read a book called *Little Immigrants* published by Kenneth Bagnell in the 1980s; but I still didn't really understand the importance and scope of this movement.

My father had mentioned coming to Canada from Scotland with his brother to work on farms in Canada. He said his mother had died and his sister had been left behind because she was sick. He did say that his father had remarried and his new wife didn't want the children. It seemed a strange story and I was puzzled by it, but my father evaded further questions. He seemed upset by my probing.

After my father's death in April, 2002, my sister, Sandy Joyce, became determined to write a book about his life. She began to research his Scottish origins and visited Scotland in 2007. I already had the ship's manifest from Pier 21 showing the names of my father, Robert Joyce, aged 15, and his brother, Thomas, aged 11. It listed their occupations as farm workers and their sponsoring organization as Orphan Homes of Scotland. The date of landing in Nova Scotia was April 4, 1925.

In April, 2008, I accompanied my sister on her second trip to Scotland to help with her research and in September, 2009, we found out at the last minute about a trip organized especially for descendants of Scottish Home children sent by an organization known as Quarriers. Even though my sister was at the time undergoing treatment for cancer, she insisted that we make the trip. It was only then that we both came to realize the full extent of the British Home Child movement, as well as the long journey my father had taken to get to Canada and why he didn't want to talk about it.

In total, some 100,000 Home Children came to Canada from Britain, and their descendants are now in the millions. Yet they are scarcely mentioned in general histories of immigration to Canada. When Kenneth Bagnell wrote his book, he was told by a friend that there would be little interest in it. Yet it became a best seller and republished in 2001. Canadians increasingly want to know more about their heritage and as more information becomes available, the

silence is being broken. In the past, Home children would not talk about how they came to Canada because they felt ashamed. Now in 2010, the Year of the Home Child is being officially celebrated in Canada and the stories are being brought to light.



“Home Child” was an epithet hurled at the newcomers who spoke with strange accents and were rumoured to be young criminals

taken from the streets of London. The Home Children were urban-dwellers, and initially had to be taught the business of working on a Canadian farm. They were perceived as slackers, lazy, and useless, the discarded of the mother country. They were often not physically strong, small for their age and some had disabilities. When my father in his 90s was sent to a Veteran’s nursing home from the hospital his question was “Am I to be discarded?” I heard the silent “once again.”

The origins of the British Home Child movement

In the mid-1800s many children in the United Kingdom lacked adequate care. They were hungry, sometimes resorting to stealing, and many were living on the streets -- think of the works of Charles Dickens. Even children living with their parents in the workhouses were not much better off, often worked 14-hour days or more with little food. Many died before they reached 20.

Independently, several people of different religious backgrounds came to the same conclusion: the problem could not be solved in Britain. These children had to be removed from the streets and given food and clothing. They had to be taught to read and write, given work skills and solid religious training, then sent abroad where farm

labour was desperately needed. They had no future in England, Ireland or Scotland.

Two women became particularly involved, but had very different approaches. The first was Maria Susan Rye who arrived in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, in 1869 with a group of 68 children taken from the poorhouses of London and Liverpool. They were initially housed in a converted jail which Maria had bought with her own money and renamed Our Western Home. Maria Rye brought 5,000 children to this home over the years, mostly girls, to work as domestics. Her practice was to assign the children to farmers and never to see them again, trusting in the employer’s good will.

Her colleague, Annie MacPherson, was in London studying when she became concerned about the poor children of London’s East End and, with her sisters, set up homes for these “waifs and strays.” In the summer of 1869 she sent 500 children to Montreal and from there they were distributed to farms in Quebec and near Belleville, Ontario. The next year she sent 100 boys. They came from her homes, from workhouses and from reformatories; others were gathered from the streets and put straight on the ship. It was this mix of origins that led to perceptions in Canada that the Home Children were “tough.” She opened receiving homes in Belleville and Galt, Ontario, and in Knowlton, Quebec, and Halifax, Nova Scotia. In total, she and her sisters brought some 14,000 children to Canada. She did carry out some follow-up visits, but the size of the movement meant they were infrequent.

In 1882, a first party of children was sent by Thomas Barnardo, an Irish would-be missionary who met Annie Macpherson while in London to train as a doctor. Instead of opening a practice, he opened a boy’s home, followed by the Babies’ Castle. He sent a few children to Canada with Annie and then began to send children on his own. He stipulated that the children sent to

Canada had to be of good character and healthy and that they were to be evaluated on a regular basis. Nevertheless, the case of a Barnardo boy who died in Owen Sound in 1896 of severe neglect raised serious questions about their vulnerability.

In Scotland, William Quarrier, who had been brought up by a single mother and who had as a result suffered considerable hardship before becoming a successful businessman, started to help poor street children by training them to be a shoeshine brigade. Subsequently, in 1873, he opened a Night Refuge House in Glasgow for children and adolescents. He realized, however, that this was only a stopgap and, with advice from Annie MacPherson, he started to raise funds to establish a village to prepare children to go to Canada. This village gradually became a reality at Bridge-of-Weir where he had bought a 40-acre farm. Instead of one huge building, he built 37 individual cottages, each sheltering 30 children and a married couple (for the boys), plus a school, a church called Mount Zion, a building to prepare clothes for the children and a hospital and sanatorium for those ill with tuberculosis and epilepsy. At one point a training ship was cemented to the ground to house and train 30 children who wished to join the navy. At any time, about 1,000 children lived in the village. Scottish school children, widows, former Home Children and wealthy Christian families sent donations to further the work of Quarriers, which still exists as a respected charity today, albeit with a different focus. At the Canadian end, each child was sent to a staging centre where farmers completed a Form of Indenture. These forms set out their responsibility to pay the older children, while children under 12 were to be treated as members of the family. A "Visitor" inspected the homes, but one Visitor had responsibility for seeing over 2000 children spread over all of southern Ontario in one year.

Canadian Concerns

The reaction to the arrival of the Home Children in Canada was initially favourable

and demand in Canada for farm labour seemed inexhaustible. However, as the number of organizations involved in obtaining the children, transporting them to Canada and sending them to farms expanded, concern began to arise about the need for some form of supervision for the children after their placement.

In 1874, Andrew Doyle, previously an inspector with the Poor Law Board, was sent to Canada to investigate the children's circumstances once in Canada. He first visited the ship on which Maria Rye was escorting a group of 150 children, on her sixth trip to Canada, before its departure. Later he sailed to Canada to visit the distribution centres and some of the children who had been placed. His report, which was made public, criticized the organizers for their lack of supervision of the children after their placement and for sending children of mixed backgrounds as one group. While the Doyle report was not viewed favourably in Canada it still resulted in a lower number of children being sent the next year.

However, the number of children soon began to rise again. In fact, the number of agencies sending children to Canada increased dramatically. They are detailed in Marjorie Kohli's book, *The Golden Bridge*, which is a fascinating account of the organizations involved, including one set up by James William Condell Fegan. Fegan established Fegan's Homes to bring older teenagers to Toronto. He also started a training farm in England to introduce the boys to Canadian-style farming prior to their departure for Canada. Barnardo's sent 1,700 children to Canada, and Quarriers 7,000. The Salvation Army and the Church of England also became involved.

In 1897, a Canadian reported on the plight of the Home children. J.J. Kelso, the founder of the Children's Aid Society in Toronto and a former journalist, was not against bringing children to Canada as farm work was deemed a healthy alternative for them, but he was concerned that adequate

supervision of their circumstances was necessary to prevent abuse, particularly of the female children. In December of 1897 he submitted "A Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," in which he concluded that "child immigration, if carried on with care and discretion, need not be injurious to the best interests of this country."

The experiences of Home Children varied greatly; some of the younger ones became full members of their adoptive Canadian families and given opportunities they would never have had in Britain. For most the food on Canadian farms was far better than they had experienced before. Others were worked extremely hard over long hours and severely punished for minor transgressions. A few committed suicide and some were sexually abused. It is hard to judge at this distance in time, especially when it is probable many Canadian-born children were in similarly poor circumstances at the time.

In March, 1897, the Ontario government passed an "Act to Regulate the Immigration into Ontario of Certain Classes of Children," which was designed to license homes and keep track of the children after arrival. Quarriers reaction to this law was not to send children the following year. However, the numbers again rose until the movement was stopped between 1916 and 1919 because of the First World War. The program resumed for a time after the war, with an emphasis on older children, but in 1933 it was stopped permanently by the Canadian Government; some children nevertheless continued to be sent right up to 1938.

My Dad

My father, Robert Joyce, was the middle child of his family. His sister, Emma Beatrice, was the eldest, born two years before him, and his brother, Thomas Lampard, was born two years after. His father, also called Robert, was a miner, and his mother, Helen Thomson, a domestic.

They married on July 5, 1907 (aged 19 and 20) in Kirkcaldy, a small town, across the Firth of Forth from Edinburgh.

Around 1915, like many young men in Scotland, my grandfather went off to the Great War, leaving his three young children with his wife. When he returned, everything had changed. He could no longer work in the mines and trained in Edinburgh as an apprentice tailor, eventually working in a kilt shop. He divorced Helen in February 1919, leaving her again alone with the children, and married the daughter of a ship builder, Isabel Lamont. He also adopted a new name, Robert Barrington Joyce Lamont. They lived together in an apartment in Edinburgh, which is now a rooming house for international students. During a visit to Scotland my sister and I were able to get a glimpse inside purely by chance, when a Canadian student entered the house as we stood outside. He was living in our grandfather's apartment.

Helen lost interest in the children, and they were taken from her. She had no relatives, being an orphan. Robert had a sister, but she had too big a family herself to be able to help, while his father, William, was already in the poorhouse. The children, therefore, were also put in the poorhouse, a big grey building near the water and the railway, surrounded by farmer's fields. Today, the building has been made into condos - people say they can still hear children crying at night.

Conditions in the poorhouse were basic. There was no education for the children, the food was meagre and it was crowded and cold in the winter. My grandfather, Robert, on hearing that his children were in the poorhouse, retrieved them from that institution and took them to Quarriers village, where he signed over his parental rights so that they could go to Canada to a better future.

This occurred in 1921 but Emma was not there. She had been sent to the hospital,

possibly with tuberculosis, and so he took just the two boys to Quarriers. Emma, when she was released from hospital, and on finding her brothers no longer in the poorhouse, ran away. Through our research, we found that she married and had four boys, our unknown cousins. She died in 1995.

My dad believed that his mother had died, but we found that she lived until the 1980s and had another son. Home children were often told that their parents were dead so that they could break their emotional ties more easily.

On the day that my grandfather brought his children to Quarriers on April 15, 1921, he was assured that he would still be able to communicate with them and that they would have access to pen and paper to write to him. The boys were not in good condition. They were small and thin and had a condition known as the "itch", which was a skin condition probably produced by the less-than-sanitary conditions of the poorhouse and poor food.

The boys spent four years in Quarriers before being sent to Canada. They lived in the same house with 28 other boys, where they attended classes and lived a very regimented life. The children performed all the necessary chores to run the village, including doing the laundry, cooking, looking after animals and cleaning. My father never spoke of his days in Quarriers, except to brag about how his teacher had told him he was the best at math in his class and to mention that after the church service on Sunday, he was often punished for bad behaviour, with little effect, except that in later life he had no use for religion.*When the boys were sent to Canada in 1925, it was a long journey. The Narrative of Facts for the year 1925, available on the Quarriers website, states that 41 boys were on board the Athenia. They left Scotland on March 27, and arrived in Halifax on April 3. My father did remember being terribly seasick on the trip: I am sure many others were

likewise unwell. The boys were sent in April and the girls in the fall. Each boy had a trunk containing boots, clothing and a bible. Whether they were able to keep the contents of that trunk depended on the farmer. They were not prepared for work on a farm, or for the Canadian weather. They spoke with thick Scottish accents that were almost unintelligible in Canada.

After the arrival in Halifax and immigration inspection, they were loaded onto the immigration train to go to the distribution centre in Belleville, a building known as Fairknowe, which still stands today and is now an apartment building. Groups of boys were often led in procession through town with a small marching band to church and thence to the centre where they would only spend a few days before being sent to their assigned farmer. Children were seldom placed with their siblings. Robert was sent to a farm with a mean farmer who did not feed him well and left him to eat alone, apart from the family. My father remembered this individual angrily and painfully. When he reached the age of 18, he was quick to find another farmer, and then to move to Toronto.

His younger brother Thomas was sent to a farm that was more like a garden. The boys were able to visit each other occasionally on their bicycles. Thomas, however, was not happy in his situation and wrote to his father in Scotland who then wrote to Fairknowe House asking that the situation be investigated. An inspector was duly sent out and wrote back saying that the situation was satisfactory. Thomas, when he reached the age of 18, moved to Ottawa. He subsequently joined the Great Lakes Steamship Lines, then did some threshing in Alberta and finally went to Kamloops, British Columbia, to a logging camp. From there, he wrote to Fairknowe to find out the whereabouts of my father; however, my father had not informed Fairknowe of his address, and so the brothers lost all contact.

My father did make the trip back to Scotland

during the Second World War when he, like his dad, joined the army. While stationed in England, he took leave to visit his father in Edinburgh; he knocked on the door and when it opened, he said "I am your son." His father just acknowledged him, and then shut the door. He never tried to contact his father again.

While I was working in London in the 1970s, my father came to visit twice. The first time, he planned to go to Scotland on his own. He arrived with a broken arm having had a window fall on it the day before. In spite of this, he journeyed up to Edinburgh. The next day he phoned me at work to say that he was in the hospital, having broken his leg. I immediately took the train up to Edinburgh to collect him, not having a car or a license yet! He spent the rest of his trip in my 3rd floor walk-up apartment, but still managed to take the train on his own to visit his former barracks in England.

I had not realized until now how emotional this trip must have been for him. The next year, he returned and I took leave to travel with him to Kirkcaldy, where he showed me how his brother and he had collected crabs on the beach. We saw his old school and the place where his house had been, then visited the Highlands which he had never seen. What we didn't know was that his mother and sister and nephews were all alive and living in Scotland at the time! A missed opportunity.

On our last day in Scotland, visiting a pub, my Dad started chatting up the locals. He had not a good word for Scotland. "This country gave me nothing," he said. I dragged him out of the pub before he got a thrashing but I realized that, to him, the

motto of the Home Children was true: "Our Hope is in Canada". He was a very proud Canadian, driving on his own to the Atlantic Provinces, to British Columbia and even arranging in his 70s to be dropped off by plane for a week on a remote lake in Ontario to do some fishing. He had a nervous moment or two when the plane showed up a day late!

After he turned 18 and was released from his indenture, he would still visit Fairknowe to let them know how he was doing. It was obvious that he viewed Fairknowe as home. On his first visit in March, 1930, just before his 20th birthday, he was in bad shape and asked to stay the weekend. A wonderful social worker called Mrs. C.A Winters gave him some of his savings, clean clothes, sent him to the doctor and admonished him to do better. The next year, he came back to report that he was doing well. What would have happened without the wonderful support that social worker gave that year?

In this year of the British Home Child in Canada, I want the stories of my Dad and other Home Children to be known. There should be no more secrecy or shame. A commemorative stamp has been issued and the CIC website contains a special section on the Home Children under the Multiculturalism link. Ontario MPP Jim Brownell, who is also a descendant of a Home Child, introduced a bill in March to make September 28 the Day of the Home Child in Ontario. Regardless, my sister and I will honour the Home Children on this date, this year and every year, by telling their story—a very important part of Canada's immigration history, and the story of our family.

The Gunn Prize

We are delighted to announce that in keeping with CIHS's constitutional objective "to support, encourage and promote research into the history of Canadian immigration" the first Gunn Prize will shortly be presented to University of Victoria PhD student Stephen A. Fielding. The prize of \$1000.00, provided jointly by CIHS and the Sir Wilfred Laurier University's International Migration Research Centre, recognizes a paper by Mr Fielding relating to the Italian Community

in Vancouver. A full report of the presentation and, we hope, a link to the paper, will be featured in our next Bulletin.

Québec City – Forgotten Port of Entry by Robert Vineberg

In the absence of a physical reminder, our collective memory of the past often fades away. In Pier 21, Canada is blessed to have preserved a concrete example of an immigration port of entry from the age of the ocean liner. However, the very existence of Pier 21 leads most Canadians to believe that Halifax was the major sea port of entry for Canada. In fact, with the exception of the five or six years immediately after the Second World War, the Port of Québec landed at least twice as many immigrants as Halifax in almost every year after Confederation! Indeed, from 1869 to 1889, 538,137 immigrants landed at Québec, while only 91,910 landed at Halifax.¹ Even in the last years of the operation of the seaports as immigrant ports of entry, Québec still had more landings than Halifax. From 1966 to 1971, 81,793 immigrants landed at Québec, while only 36,386 landed at Halifax.²



Interior of Immigration Hall, Louise Embankment, Port of Québec, c 1900. Credit: *Library and Archives Canada, a048697*

While the Quarantine Station at Grosse Isle is being preserved by Parks Canada, unfortunately nothing remains of the large immigration facilities at the Louise Basin in Québec City, which is now a marina for

pleasure craft. However, in 1887, the facilities had just been enlarged to deal with the growing flow of immigrants. The Minister of Agriculture was proud enough of the new facilities to describe them in great detail in the 1889 Annual Report of the department:

The arrangements for the landing at and forwarding of immigrants from Québec are now so complete that the following description may prove of interest:

For the convenience of steamers carrying immigrants to be landed at Québec, there are magnificent deep water wharves at both sides of the river. Immigrants intending to travel by the Canadian Pacific Railway are landed at the Louise Embankment breakwater wharf, which is about 800 feet long, and at low tide has 36 feet of water. On this wharf is a baggage shed, 400 feet long, where baggage can be handled and loaded, but for the convenience of immigrants who walk on a planked platform to the immigration building where the immigration, railway and other offices are, the Canadian Pacific Railway generally runs the baggage up on railway lorries and spreads it out on the platform in front of the building to be sorted and checked as fast as the immigrants procure railway tickets. It is then loaded into baggage cars and a special immigrant train, usually composed of colonist sleeping cars, is always ready to start, so that there is no unnecessary detention. The immigrant has only to exchange or purchase his railway tickets, claim and get checks for baggage, procure provisions for the journey at the counter, and step from the platform

into a colonist sleeper in which he goes through without change, to Manitoba, and even British Columbia. There are rarely more than 400 passengers and their baggage on one train, so that frequently the immigrants by a single vessel require two, and sometimes three special trains,

The Immigration Hall erected by the Dominion Government in 1887, is a good two story building 400 feet long, with a wide veranda all around, and fixed seats where people are secure from sun and rain. It is admirably situated, almost surrounded by flowing water, pure fresh air in abundance, and plenty of spare ground adjoining. During the two years it has been in use, all who have passed through have given free expression to their satisfaction with the building and conveniences provided for the weary passenger, after spending ten or twelve days in the limited space available for air and exercise on board ship.

On the ground floor at one end, are sufficient double and single offices to accommodate all the officers connected with the various branches of the Immigration Service, viz: Dominion and Provincial Agents, Port Physician, Customs, Ticket, Telegraph and Telephone Offices, all easy of access to any person either in, or outside the buildings.

The Main Hall, about 250 feet long, has ample room for 1,000 passengers with their hand-baggage, is well lighted by large windows, and many side doors afford easy means of communication with the veranda. In the hall is a long counter and shop, kept by a person appointed by the Government, where immigrants can procure



Immigration Hall, Louise Embankment, Port of Quebec, 1914 Credit: *Library and Archives Canada*, a021672

provisions for the journey at moderate rates. For the guidance and information of immigrants, price lists of articles for sale and tables of the Canadian currency value of foreign money, are posted up in the several parts of the hall; these are printed in French, German, Scandinavian [sic] Russian and other foreign languages. Arrangements have been made to exchange money brought by immigrants into Canadian currency....

At the west end is a dining-room, seating 200 at once. As tea, coffee or milk with bread and butter costs 10 cents, and a full hot meal of meat and vegetables, 25 cents, everyone can be satisfactorily accommodated. A large kitchen, supplied with a new modern range, adjoins the dining-room.

The wing is divided into two apartments (male and female, entirely separate). Each contains six bath-rooms and a number of wash basins, and always furnished with soap and towels.

On the second floor, are two large rooms that can accommodate 300 people each: fixed seats run all

around these rooms, and they will be found useful in case of overcrowding from any cause. On the female end there are 15 bed-rooms and quarters for a matron and assistant. On the men's end there are 4 bed-rooms. These may be used by people who wish to rest a day or more before starting on a long rail journey, or those awaiting remittances from friends, &c., &c....

Counting the space of the verandas under roof, the whole premises have ample accommodation for 3,000 people.³

The Quebec facility was enlarged again just before the First World War.

The landing and onward dispatch inland of some 3,000,000 immigrants through the Port of Quebec is an important part of Canada's immigration history, and deserves to be recognized as such.

Letter from Mr K K Jarth

I thank you for your letter of April 20, 2010 and for your good wishes on my retirement.

I feel privileged in accepting membership of the Society and thank the Board for accepting the recommendation of my friends and colleagues from New Delhi.

I have wonderful memories of my work at the High Commission. I welcome the membership of CIHS, among other reasons, because it will give me the opportunity to continue my association with CIC and Delhi Wallahs. Should I think of ways to be of value to the efforts of the CIHS, I shall be glad to do so in the future.

Contact with Members by Mike Molloy

In May Jo and I spent a delightful afternoon with **Lloyd** and **Lynn Champoux** in Kelowna. Both are looking well but Lloyd's chronic habit of puns is as bad as ever. Lloyd served in BC region, the original Central Process Office (CPO), Hong Kong, Tokyo and London and has been participating in our academic outreach activities. Lloyd is rumoured to have been one of the inventors of the signature found on thousands of letters from the old CPO –



Immigration Hall, Louise Embankment, Port of Quebec, c. 1890. Credit: Library and Archives Canada, a021357

Notes

1. Minister of Agriculture, *Report of the Minister of Agriculture of the Dominion of Canada for the Calendar Year 1889, Immigration*, Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1890, pp 5 and 28.
2. Manpower and Immigration Canada, *Immigration Statistics, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970 and 1980*.
3. Minister of Agriculture, *Report of the Minister of Agriculture of the Dominion of Canada for the Calendar Year 1889*, Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1890, pp xxvii and xxviii.

"I.M Cepeau". Our western trip was capped with a visit to **Ben and Connie Pflanz** at their beautiful home in Cochrane, Alberta, where Ben has evolved into a very competent chef and Connie still runs half marathons.

In July, **Brian and Bev Davis**, along with Jo and myself, went to Montreal for lunch with our old "patron" from our 70s' Beirut posting, **Roger St. Vincent**, who has since moved

permanently to Slovenia. We were glad to be able to put **Nestor Gayowsky** in touch with Roger.

The Society has heard from **Mike Finnerty, Daniel Jean, Gary Komar, Sharleen Bannon, Fran Psutka, Susan Comstock, Bill Marks, John Samuels and Doug Dunnington**. We are pleased to welcome **Patrica Birkett** to our ranks and we have also heard from **Randy “Flash” Gordon, John MacLachlan** and the Society’s own Marriage Commissioner, **Murray Oppertshauer**. **Jim Pasma** generally spends September in Ottawa so misses the AGM – give us a heads up next year, Jim, there’s always a breakfast or lunch happening around town.

CIHS member **Michael McCaffery** advises: *“I have just finished my first year of a 3-year GIC appointment as a member of the Refugee Protection Division of the IRB assigned to the Toronto office. I have been adjudicating claims from Africa and Haiti. In the coming year I will be serving on the Division’s Professional Development Committee. CIHS members may expect calls from me inviting you to be guest speakers at our monthly PD sessions”.*

Norm Olson, a member of the stellar class of ‘68, wrote in May and enclosed a March 9 Globe and Mail article by our favourite PhD student, **Laura Madakoro** which applauds the elevation of Pier 21 to the status of National Museum of Immigration but argues the need for an equivalent on the West

Coast to take into account the “the thousands of people who crossed the Pacific as fishermen, miners, workers, picture brides, merchants and traders to try their hand at life in Canada”. An interesting point and we’d appreciate our member’s views. But first a skill-testing question, especially for our West Coast members: What was the Vancouver equivalent of Halifax’s Pier 21?

Jo and I also had the pleasure of visiting **Charles** and **Mariana Godfrey** in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s wine country. In August there was a long and long over due conversation with **Bill Sinclair** in Halifax regarding a future “official” visit to Pier 21.

June 22 was a scorching, windy day in Jerusalem, and the hot gusts made walking down Ben Yahuda Street more than a little tricky, but the trek was well worth it because at the venerable Rimon café I met up with the trim, black-clad figure of **George Varnai**, one of the great immigration lifers, and for decades a key manager in BC region. George and his family moved to the Holy Land shortly after he retired and he is looking very fit indeed. We spent the better part of the afternoon sipping tall cool beers (for medicinal purposes only, to counteract the hot wind), getting caught up and talking about life in immigration. George sends his best wishes to the Society’s members.

And to **ED ZIEGLER: HAPPY 90th!**

The Joan Atkinson Award by Erica Usher

This year, the Public Service Award of Excellence has added a new award category for Assistant Deputy Ministers – the Joan Atkinson Award. This award recognizes those traits exemplified by Joan throughout her career as a public servant – courage, wisdom and compassion, and the ability to impart frank advice and guidance to employees and to peers in a manner that did not diminish the person receiving it, and who thereby helped people to achieve their potential. Joan Atkinson joined the Public Service in 1979 as an FS1D, moving up through the ranks to ADM at CIC, followed by ADM positions at INAC, PCO and PSHRMAC/TB. Joan showed her extraordinary resilience as she faced many personal and professional challenges over the years with dignity and grace. Her will to overcome adversity and her strength of spirit were inspirational. Her contribution to the Canadian Public Service through her exceptional ability and superior leadership is recognized by this ADM-level award.

The CAIPS* Chronicles: Part 1 – Ancient Days by Jim Humphries

Years ago, most of us working in immigration considered computers to be a bother, if we thought of them at all. They were a backroom operation that from our perspective only added a clerical burden to our “real” work of selecting immigrants. I believe that improvements from the introduction of CAIPS did much to change that situation, and our attitudes as well.

The immigration program was always “data-heavy,” because management required statistics about who and how many had been admitted, or not, or were in process, or not, or accepted, or not, and under what conditions. The Overseas Service’s own Al Gunn, in an earlier computer era, had been the main creator of that system, and he was stuck with a paper-based reporting system to feed it. The data collection required from visa offices involved reams of individual case forms to be manually collected, sorted, counted and sent off to Ottawa. The numbers produced were combed through by the nerdy among us who trolled for clues to program effectiveness and benefit, and most importantly, to justify to Treasury Board the levels of personnel and resource usage. Meeting those management information needs left little time or thought for possible uses of computers as agents of operational efficiency. Fortunately, those very tasks were natural applications for the newly developing field of computer-assisted work processing applications.

When I joined the department in 1973 (Manpower and Immigration at the time), it had a huge mandate that included major functions focused on the politically-important employment side. As a result, the department’s computer resources and personnel were pretty well concentrated on “big iron” data bases suitable for headquarters use only. The massive computers they required spent their days (and nights) endlessly grinding out UI

checks and statistical reports. For these reasons, computer division personnel, although suitably nerdy, were not interested in, nor able to manage, much beyond those huge functions.

I will try here to lay out the story of how CAIPS arose and proved its great utility. My role ended in 1989 after its successful introduction and trial by fire in Hong Kong, so I will be able to describe only those initial stages. This is the first of perhaps three instalments, and I am hoping that others will be able to bring the story right up to the present.

My own introduction to small but useful computers started in Vienna where I was a member of the Vienna International School Board. One of the math teachers there had a close connection to IBM and was able to obtain an early version of what years later was to become the IBM PC. He gave evening classes using that machine, and I learned a bit about the Basic and APL programming languages and gained some insight into potential applications. I was then cross-posted to Port of Spain where I was responsible for day-to-day operations, including the collection of data for the “big iron” in Ottawa. Like many others, I became convinced that there had to be a better way than those frustrating and picky case-file stickers and multiple multi-part forms.

Port of Spain was a relatively big operation, which had area responsibility for the Guyanas and the Netherlands Antilles. The office was suffering from paper overload and drowning in files, both lost and found. Some of the physical mess involved was solved through a careful redesign of the office layout and an improved file holding system, but the clerical make-work remained, albeit in neater circumstances. I learned, too, that program managers often developed their own local statistical needs,

so it was not just the Ottawa-bound data forms that had to be collected and forwarded. To top it all off, there was a major follow-up process every year, whereby great lists of apparently long-inactive cases were sent to visa offices for verification of their status.

The idea was to get program data into reasonably accurate and complete shape, and involved having visa officers at each post review those files which seemed "dead" to Ottawa's computer system. Most such files would be found to have their completed data forms still attached, even though the cases had been finalized, some even years previously.

As a result of these problems of accuracy and completeness, data timeliness was compromised and the department's standard reports were often issued a year or more after the fact. This meant that information intended to assist managers to make important program decisions arrived far too late to cover any recent program-altering events or needed selection system changes. These were very serious shortcomings, begging for resolution. Although we did not have this important function as our main goal when developing CAIPS, it did greatly facilitate data-collection by bringing it up to near real time speeds, and with exceptional accuracy. CAIPS also made possible the creation of a worldwide total case indexing system of great use in ensuring program integrity. We foresaw those benefits of course, and they provided useful arguments for funding CAIPS development, but they could not really come into place until most or all visa offices were using the system. For us, the main goal was to reduce the clerical burden at the "sharp" end where case-processing was done and where decisions were made and recorded.

In the early 80s, two events had begun to alter the picture for the computerization of our visa operations. The first was the commercial introduction of useful mini- and then micro-computers on affordable terms.

The second was the transfer of the overseas immigration function from Employment and Immigration to External Affairs and International Trade. This transfer may have caused parts of the overall program to suffer but I am certain that CAIPS would have been nearly impossible to develop if we had remained with Employment and Immigration: For, once the move was made to the Pearson building, visa officers had direct access to a smaller computer technology service that was not preoccupied with "big iron" operations. As a result, it was more open to, and even solicitous of, potential new applications. Although it consisted of only a few programmers, the IT team in External Affairs had helpful and modern-minded staff familiar with the newest equipment. Most importantly, they had John Reynolds, a superb programmer who single-handedly wrote all of the programs that created CAIPS. He created a robust and very useful system that worked "straight out of the box," and delivered greatly increased operational efficiency and convenience for visa offices. Getting it done took a few years, plus some luck on the funding side and a great welcoming effort by the local staff and *most* CBers at Hong Kong. As always in government, our big stumbling block was getting the attention of management and securing a realistic budget. CAIPS would never have been possible without a lot of support and encouragement from EA headquarters management and staff, including some on the political side! My superiors in this position ably provided support in key areas, such as in-house politics and the budget process. John Zawisza and Cliff Shaw encouraged, supervised and critiqued our work, and Paul Gray kept me on track. Please note that this account is being written nearly 30 years after the fact and may show its (my) age. If some events are missed, or (worse) names not mentioned, I sincerely apologize.

On my way home from Port of Spain to CIC HQ in 1981, I had my first real experience of distributed computer power when I was able

to insure my car without visiting an insurance agent and out of the country. That was a teaching moment for me. Everything was done simply and quickly over the telephone in a few minutes.

Once in Ottawa/Hull I was assigned as Desk Officer (USA) under Gary Schroh. Then, when we moved into External Affairs, he kindly released me to take an assignment in the directorate working to improve overseas office practice and equipment. I and a number of others suggested that computers were becoming useful for many office functions and that the department should investigate their possible introduction to overseas processing. I was lucky to get the assignment. It provided me with an opportunity to make a real difference while working on a fascinating challenge that lasted for the rest of my time in HQ and then for several years in Hong Kong. I was greatly assisted by Liz Boyce and Fran Psutka and I am grateful to them for their continuing contributions throughout the development and introduction of CAIPS. Gerry Madden also offered some useful insights before taking an overseas posting. As an aside, I should note that part of my preparation for this task involved taking public service courses in systems analysis and operational organization. In spite of what many say about them, I found those courses to be in fact quite useful.

Our first stop was External's IT section, where we were instantly welcomed. We began by going over all of the processes in all areas of overseas immigration processing and identifying those for potential facilitation and further study. CEIC was also helpful in providing lists of data elements that were needed. This was all very geeky, technical, and painstaking, but necessary, as it formed the ground work for analysis of the system requirements. We discussed the heavy clerical load that dogged the processes in use overseas and identified those tasks that might be improved if computerized. Out of this came a proposed system that the programmer

could begin work on, and most importantly, one that did not require a major budget request before his work could start.

We (well, he) decided to begin with a database program which he had just developed, which could provide a working registry index that was quick and easy to use that would not add to the burden of registry staff. It simply replaced the typed index cards with keyboarded computer entries. It would be the base for any processing system we came up with. Our target site for an early test was CHC London which had recently had been outfitted with a so-called mini-computer. They had a Data General mini-computer that was dedicated at the time to post finances which clearly had excess capacity, making it an ideal place to start. It may surprise the tech-savvy among us to learn that it had only a 15 bit processor!

This small step forward proved to be an invaluable learning experience, as we encountered the inevitable unforeseen circumstances, the human frailties, training needs, "sharing" problems and local situations that demanded solutions. One little wrinkle in London was their use of the "Soundex" name-coding system under which all index cards were sorted. It was intended to simplify finding a person's surname even without being exactly sure of the spelling. Instead of straight alphabetical order, the names were encoded with the starting letter of the name and a 4 or 5 number code for the rest. In this way Mahmoud and Mohamad (or Humphries and Humphreys) would each have the same sorting code, rather than the alphabetic system. I am not sure if that was a good or bad thing; however, their wish was our command and coding the names proved an easy task for the computer. As soon as our "little CAIPS" was ready and fully tested at HQ and the small amount of extra equipment needed was in place in the High Commission, we booked two weeks for the introduction and training in London. At the end of our visit, all seeming to have gone

smoothly, we departed, leaving the registry staffers to fend for themselves. I went directly on to Paris to discuss introducing the same program there and to study their needs. They were very keen to get this small CAIPS as quickly as possible, even though it was unilingual at the time. I was sure that we would need the whole project to become bilingual in due course in any case, and that is what happened.

Meanwhile, back in London, problems were already developing. The first Friday after we had left, our nice new program suddenly slowed to a near halt in mid-morning, and they did not understand why. Then, on the very next Monday, the database was found to have no records at all. They had lost an entire week's work! This was not the smoothest start-up after all. As it turned out, the first problem was a factor in the second. It was also proof of the fact that computers do what you tell them to do, and not necessarily what you really want them to do. Nor are they at all judgmental about the wisdom of your instructions.

What had happened was that the finance section's application was being used every Friday to do a complete resolution of all post accounts so that paycheques could be written. The resulting heavy computations tied up all of the computer power for hours, slowing our little CAIPS application to a

crawl. On the Friday in question, at the end of the day, a registry assistant was supposed to make a full back up. There was a simple program for this, in which it was only necessary to press one button – foolproof right? Not so! Because the system was running so slowly he either lost patience after he pushed the button, or began to doubt he had pushed it at all. So he pressed the button again, thereby committing a fatal error only a true geek would understand, for it meant that the back-up ran twice. The first back-up took the records from a special file that held all of the actual changes made that week, and then updated the whole database with those changes. The second back-up, of course, had no records in its special file so it proceeded to overwrite the existing case entries with empty spaces! In the end we were able to solve the problem by persuading the finance section to agree to run their accounts resolution program in a batch overnight when CAIPS was "off line." And, of course, the registry was more cautious about making back-ups, too. Later CAIPS was modified to preclude that type of error. That was just a special case of Murphy's Law, of course, but a fitting end to part 1. Next will be the push that led to the Hong Kong trial and triumph!

*CAIPS - Computer Assisted Immigrant Processing System

The Brotherhood of Fighter Pilots by Ron Button

On my first visit to Songkhla, I went in a three-man team with Rene B. and Don M. While I was there, we got a message from Bangkok saying that south of Songkhla, on the Malay border, thirteen Vietnamese had come ashore; they were about to be pushed off and would we take some kind of rescue action? As the senior officer present, I decided to go myself. I went with a United Nations man and a Church fellow from the States called Cy.

After a three-hour drive we reached the place. It was a little spit of land on which the Thais some years before had built a beautiful open pagoda-like summer-house. Sitting in this summer-house were the thirteen Vietnamese who had come ashore and their boat was just there on the shore. Surrounding these thirteen unarmed people was an army of Thai soldiers with machine-guns and everything – I just couldn't believe it. We talked our way through and met the refugees.

The refugee who did all the interpreting for the group was a former F-86 pilot from the Vietnamese air force. I was an ex F-86 pilot myself and, if there was ever a strong fraternity throughout the world, it's F-86 pilots. Regardless of country or ideology, they are brothers. You sit down and it's a "your house is mine" kind of thing. It's very strong. We really knew how to talk to each other.

We were with that group for almost four hours, and I discovered that several of them had relations in Canada. I made a decision right there: we'd take them all, tell the Thais and that would save them from being put out to sea. Their boat was in very poor shape – it looked like it was falling apart. We got them all to fill out application forms and sign them and then, with Cy's assistance, I sat down and made out a bunch of Canadian Immigration papers and gave them their visas right there and then. Before we left an arrangement was made with the Thais that the U.N. guy would be back within two days to move them to camp.

A week later, back in Bangkok, I got a telex that told me things had gone terribly wrong. The U.N. guy was new to his job, extremely bureaucratic in his ways, and he didn't get arrangements made to pick them up until seven days after our visit. By that time it was too late: the Thais had waited five days and then pushed them off back out to sea.

I don't mind telling you that I cried that night. For once in my life, full as it has been of bureaucratic rules, I'd really done something and now I'd lost them and they were probably dead. I was very depressed. But Bill L. was smart enough to say, "Hey, if they're lucky, they might just drift and hit the Malayan coast a few miles down and the Malays won't push them off. Why don't you send Don C. a telex, tell him who they are and maybe he'll run across them somewhere. "

About six weeks later, Don picked them up in a Malay camp. He telexed us to say they sent their very best wishes. I was their friend for life. He'd taken on my commitment and he was putting them through. Two of them went to the States, but the rest came to Canada. So that story at least had a happy ending.

In Memoriam

Often overlooked are the contributions of the spouses of the officers who shape and deliver Canada's immigration programs. We note with great sadness the passing this last year of three wonderful women.

Maria St. Vincent, wife of Roger St. Vincent, is remembered with great fondness by those fortunate enough to share a posting with her and Roger as a warm and welcoming presence and accomplished hostess.

Ron Button provided the following vignette about Maria: *One day I was to meet Roger at his apartment but he was late so Maria gave me a drink at their bar in the living room. In front of me was a dish of pistachio nuts. Each time I tried to eat one of them I had to put it to the side because it was permanently closed. It turned out that the whole dish was full of firmly closed pistachio nuts. When I pointed this out to Maria she smiled and confessed that she saved all closed pistachio nuts and served them to Roger in an effort to keep his weight down.*

Marjorie "Midge" Gunn, wife of our late, long-serving Secretary, Al Gunn, passed away in May. Midge's love, devotion, feisty spirit and creativity in the art of Ikebana will leave many

memories for her daughter Lynn and her beloved grandchildren, James (Lori), Joshua, and her pride and joy, Camden

Caryl McKay, wife of Daryl McKay (for many years our Bulletin Editor), mother of Colin (Jenny) and Andrew (Edyta) and granny to Courtney, Kate and Henry, was a prominent and deeply respected member of the Ottawa theatre. She spent many years overseas with her family, working as a teacher, editor and protocol officer with Citibank. In Ottawa, she worked as a manager at Cognos and Simware. She directed and acted with various Ottawa Theatres including OLT, Tara Players and the NORT. She also co-starred in the feature film "Famous Dead People" (1997)

Annual General Meeting

The 2010 Annual General Meeting will be held at **St. Anthony's Soccer Club, 523 St Anthony Street, Ottawa, on Thursday, October 21**. St. Anthony's runs off of Preston Street, immediately north of the 417 overpass. The club is wheelchair accessible and there is ample parking.

The bar will be open from 6:00 p.m. and the meeting will come to order around 7:00.

We have a stellar speaker lined up. Robin Higham, a Senior Fellow at the University of Ottawa has published a thought-provoking book titled "Who do we think we are?" exploring the limits of pluralism and asking what the necessary tradeoffs are between pluralism and social/political coherence in a democratic country. We can expect a lively debate.

For budgetary reasons we have to charge for drinks and we ask members, who are able to do so, to make a voluntary contribution towards the cost of the excellent Italian buffet (which costs the Society \$25.00 per person).

We extend a special invitation to any Society members from outside the national capital region who are in Ottawa at that time. Please RSVP rgirard09@gmail.com or call 613 241 0166.