

# Reunion 2014 – London, Ontario

## August 8 – 10, 2014

On August 8, 2014, about 30 lovely war brides and 90 family members of war brides attended the fourth annual Canadian War Brides and Families Reunion at the Delta Armouries Hotel in London. Over the weekend, there was much singing and dancing, sharing of memories, looking at artifacts and enjoying tea in the Hospitality Room. Many a story was shared.

Upon registration, each reunion guest received a hand-sewn bag donated by Jane Cowx, stuffed with badges and information by Abbee Hughes, granddaughter of war bride Edna Simpson. At dinner on Friday night, MC Dolores Hatch introduced President Jean Fells and VP Joan Reichardt who welcomed us to the reunion. After dinner and a speech by City Councillor Matt Brown, Betty Simpson, Bonnie Shewan- Burroughs and pianist Phyllis Schram led a rousing singalong featuring the “Lambeth Walk” and “We’ll Meet Again”.

Saturday began with the AGM where business was taken care of for this year, including the selection of Calgary for the 2015 reunion, and, with great enthusiasm, Halifax as the 2016 site, when many War Brides will be celebrating their 70th anniversary of arriving in Canada. Next up was a walk to the London Central Library for a fascinating talk at 1:30 by Calgary artist Bev Tosh - “War Brides: One Way Passage”. Irene Mathysen, MP, spoke to the 85 audience members, then Bev showed slides and told stories about the brides on the brideships that carried them to Canada, as well as the paintings she has made of many of the brides on their wedding days.

After Bev’s presentation, the audience moved up to the Central Library’s third floor to see the interesting display of photos, artifacts, gowns and souvenirs which the war brides brought with them on their journey to their new home. Carol McIntosh Small wrote about her mother’s silver horseshoe (it was surrounded by family wedding photos): “On February 24, 1945 at St. Patrick’s Anglican Church, High Spen, County Durham, England, in the British tradition, S. Ann Calvert carried a cardboard silver horseshoe with her ivory prayer book when she wed L.A.C. W. Elmer McIntosh, the first, and possibly only, Canadian to be married in the church. That silver horseshoe is a cherished family heirloom which has been carried in three granddaughters’ wedding bouquets and will be carried once more in May 2015.” The horseshoe, along with all other memorabilia, remained on display throughout August.

Dinner that night in the ballroom was emceed by James Reaney, London Free Press columnist and reporter. MP Bev Shipley read a message from the Prime Minister, then paid his own tribute to the lives and contributions of War Brides. A letter from MPP Deb Matthews was also read. James asked the war brides to identify the ship they travelled on - it was hard to decide which ship carried the most war brides (at least 44,000 crossed the Atlantic, many with babies). Dancing to the melodious wartime music of The Music Makers followed.

On Sunday morning at 10:00, war bride Elsie Mills’s son the Reverend Ian Mills led a church service at the hotel. The offering was donated to the Military Family Resource Centre. Brunch was next, with a Toast to the Monarchs by President Jean Fells. It was sad to say good-bye after such a happy weekend with perfect weather, but many of the brides and their families said they’d meet again at the reunion next year in Calgary. Submitted by Susan Wallace (daughter of war bride Edith Metcalfe Wallace)



*We`ll Meet Again!*