



Canadian War Brides and Families

Spring 2016

Greetings from President Joan

Happy springtime, everyone! It is so nice to see longer days and sunshine! I am looking forward to a busy time for the next couple of months. I plan to go to England in April, and to be in London for Bev's Exhibit at Canada House - it should be quite the event! Then home for a few days and off to Halifax for our Reunion. Our planners have been working hard for this extra special event and I am sure we will have a good time!

So far we have met in Saskatoon (twice), then to Victoria, then London, Ontario, last year in Calgary and now back to where most of us first set foot on Canadian soil all those years ago. All of the work that goes into planning these events has been done by volunteer members, plus some 'on site' helpers, and it is a very challenging job. At the moment we do not know what will happen next year. We have never met in Manitoba or Quebec, but there has been little interest from there either.

The question is do we try to keep going with Annual Reunions? Where? I look for suggestions from the members as we will have to make a decision in Halifax, so please think about our options. Meantime, get out your dancing shoes and posh frocks! See you in Halifax.

Cheers!

Joan

Canadian War Brides & Families Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Canadian War Brides and Families will be held on Saturday, May 21, 2016 at 10:00 – 11:00 am in the Commonwealth B Room at the Westin Nova Scotian Hotel, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Meeting is open to all members.

Anyone interested in putting their name forward for an executive position, should email us at canadianwarbrides@netidea.com



**HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY 2016
to Canada's British War Brides!**



Reminder to those visiting London, England in May or June 2016.
Contact Canada House in advance to book a tour and see
Portraits in Sepia, Stories in Silk: Canada's British War Brides
on display in the Trafalgar Square Lobby until the end of June 2016.

War Brides: One-way Passage

HMCS Alberni Museum and Memorial in Comox, BC

June 15 to Sept. 15, 2016

War Brides: One-way Passage at the HMCS Alberni Museum and Memorial in Comox, BC on June 15 to Sept. 15, 2016. Artist, Bev Tosh, will be in attendance for the opening on June 15th at 10:00 a.m.

War Brides includes 30 full-length portraits and personal stories. Collectively, they pay tribute to the tens of thousands of war brides for whom a leap of faith meant not just a new husband, but a new country. Memorabilia from regional war brides lends a West Coast focus to a wide cross-section of Canadian portraits and stories.

The HMCS Alberni Museum and Memorial (HAMM) is located in the Comox Centre Mall in Comox BC. HAMM is dedicated to preserving the history of the men who served on HMCS Alberni in the Battle of the Atlantic 1941-1944.

Comox Centre Mall

Comox, BC V9M 3M1

250-339-4322 | 250-334-6555



Exhibit hours are 10-4, Tue-Sat. Special openings on Sundays or Mondays for groups of 10 or more by reservation.

Admission to HAMM is by donation.

Interested in any tours while in Halifax for the Reunion?

War Bride daughter, Anna-Lynn, is trying to organize some tours while she is in Halifax attending the reunion. Tours could be before the reunion on May 18 & 19 or after the reunion on May 23, 24 or 25th. If you are interested in finding out more about any of these tours, you can contact her by email at asanche@telusplanet.net or call her at (780) 446-2964.

Options for tours include **Peggy's Cove/Lunenburg** or the **Bay of Fundy tide tour** or **Historic Halifax** or a tour called **Salty Sea Adventure** (part of the tour in fact returns us back in time to the late 1930s and 1940s)



Canadian War Brides & Families – Reunion 2016

Westin Nova Scotian, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Reunion 2016 – Your Reunion Committee has been very busy getting everything ready for our 2016 celebration in Halifax, May 20th to 22nd. We are pleased to report that we received sizeable cash donations from Scotiabank Atlantic and Cunard Cruise Lines which have allowed us to keep our Reunion Registration fees at a reasonable rate for everyone. We have extended the deadline for these reduced rates in hopes of getting as many people registered as possible. We still have a few rooms left in our Group block at the Westin Nova Scotian Hotel and urge everyone to get your accommodation reserved before our preferred room rate is gone!

We have a full program for this exciting week-end including – Registration & Hospitality Suite on Friday from 1 to 4 pm, a delicious meal & singsong for Friday evening, our AGM on Saturday morning & a busy afternoon at Pier 21 with a beautiful Afternoon Tea with entertainment plus shuttle service provided for our War Bride Mums. Saturday night's Gala Banquet has very special guests confirmed including His Honour Brigadier-General the Honourable J.J. Grant, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia and Her Honour Mrs. Joan Grant. After another fabulous meal we will be spellbound by War Bride Daughter Bev Tosh who will give a short presentation which will be followed by music & dance provided by 'Boarding Party' - members of the Stadacona Band of the Royal Canadian Navy Department of National Defence.

Sunday morning begins with our Church Service led by Reverend Charles Black who some of you may remember from the War Bride Train in 2006. Reverend Black officiated at the Vow Renewal Ceremony at the huge reception in Halifax. After church we will all gather for our buffet breakfast before joining hands and singing We'll Meet Again one more time.

Hope to see everyone in Halifax!



While in Halifax, plan to spend some time at PIER 21!



Canadian
Museum of
Immigration
at Pier 21

Re-trace your first steps or your mother's first steps in Canada at Pier 21

The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Canada's newest National Museum re-opened in June 2015 after extensive renovations, the exhibits are immersive and interactive using first-hand accounts from stories, journals and oral histories. You will especially enjoy the Pier 21 Story in Rudolph P. Bratty Hall as it is located in the very room where all of the war brides arrived and many of their husbands departed during the Second World War. You will also enjoy the Canadian Immigration Hall, see our new film *in Canada* and visiting the Scotiabank Family History to look for your British departure record or to buy a picture of your ship.



The museum will be open from **9:30 - 5:30 Saturday & Sunday.**

We can't wait to see you at the tea and hope that you will be able to spend some extra time with us during your stay in Halifax.

On Becoming a War Bride

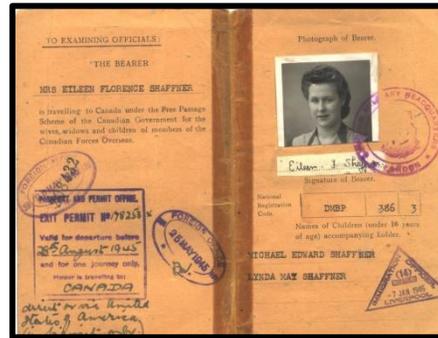
Eileen was born in 1923, one of five children living in Southeast England. Free education at that time ceased at age fourteen. She was sixteen when the war started in 1939. By then her father had passed away and with only a small pension based on injuries sustained during World War I her mother could no longer afford the rent on the family home and there was no such thing as government assistance; the family could barely exist. She had been working since fourteen, her older sister and brother were also working, and her youngest brother was still in school; so she, brother and mother had to move in with the oldest married sister. Wages were very low and everyone had to contribute. The brothers subsequently joined the military and the girls worked outside the home.



She describes the fateful day, September 2, 1939, as a beautiful sunny day and although all knew what was happening, it was nevertheless a shock as they sat listening to the radio and heard the words "England is at war with Germany". As a young girl she could not envisage the years ahead as parts of her homeland were reduced to rubble and young men would don uniforms, many never to return.

From the very first day of the war the "black out" existed. Every day at sunset every window had to be draped with blankets or curtains to prevent even the slightest chink of light escaping. Doors had to be covered; vehicles eventually had hooded blue lights to assist the driver but gave barely enough light so as not to be seen by enemy planes.

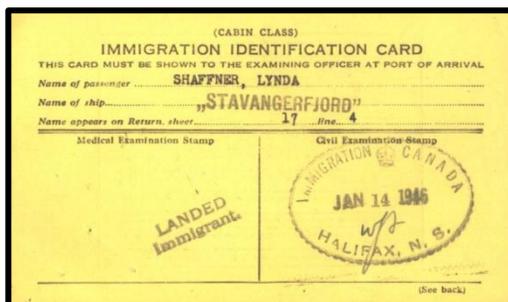
She joined the Auxiliary Fire Service – everyone had to do their bit and one night a week she had to do all night duty. After a night's work it was home to wash and change for her day job at an International Grocery store. Ration books had to be managed closely but it was a hardship on most everyone and lasted beyond the war years.



Her home town, Caterham, was a dangerous place to live because it was so close to the City of London – targeted by German bombers. People would often climb out of air raid shelters to be met with whole streets demolished and sometimes whole families wiped out.

All around were men in uniform and army vehicles as forces prepared for Germany to invade England. The streets, railway stations and stores were filled with men in khaki, wearing red "Canada" patches on their shoulders. Canadian soldiers were the first to reach English shores. Their accents were strange at first but they were so friendly and appreciative of any kindness shown. Soon the neighbours were opening their homes to those strange speaking men so far from their homes and families. Before long there were dances and social gatherings and blossoming war-time romances.

In early 1941 she met the man she later married. She was eighteen and the handsome blonde man became my father. They were married in a small church in Woldingham and so began their lives together with their son and daughter. The handsome soldier returned to Canada in 1945 and in January 1946 the war bride and her children arrived at Pier 21 to reunite with her husband and start life in a new land. There were approximately 48,000 marriages and 22,000 children involved in what was dubbed "Operation Daddy". While the majority of those spunky ladies came from the UK, many also came from Holland, France, Belgium, Italy and other European countries and Canada became home!



This is a brief story of a British War Bride before coming to Canada. It is based on the life of Eileen (Kearns) Shaffner Spicer, 93 years of age, currently living in Bridgetown, Nova Scotia.

Written by her daughter, Lynda (Lyn) MacNeill, currently living in Riverview, New Brunswick.

March 2016

Remember When

Remember when we stood on the deck of the ship as we sailed into Halifax? All those funny little wooden houses climbing up from the shore? Just a few days before we had left everything and everybody we had known all our lives, and here we were, at the beginning of the rest of our lives. Remember getting off the ship and into Pier 21, the paper work, all so new to us, dealing with luggage and then on to the train, so much bigger than our British trains, and chugging out of the station and on to the next chapter of our journey. I remember everything looked so empty and so untidy, no neat fields and hedges, no little farmhouses, no church steeples and quaint villages, just so much untamed countryside. I remember much discussion about the food. I had never seen salmon salad with celery in it - and we, in our dining car, had an incident with a jug of tea which was not acceptable as it was chipped and dirty! A girl who was going to Calgary started the complaint and I joined her. I am sure the staff thought we were a right bunch of 'little madams'.

And on we went, stopping every once in a while to let one of our girls off while the rest of us peered out the windows to see what the welcoming party looked like!

We had a black porter with us who made up the bunks and did some cleaning. As we neared Winnipeg and the end of his shift, he was complaining about how tired he was and I said, in my cheerful little English voice "Never mind, you'll soon be home, keep your pecker up! I swear he went pale with shock! "

Then at last, it was Saskatoon and my turn. I was first off the train as I had not seen my husband for the longest time - 10 months! I remember this huge station with few people (it was nearly midnight), and there he was, looking a bit odd in civvies but at last we were together!

Then came the 'meet the family' event which was good or bad, always awkward and nerve racking, some of us were welcomed with open arms, others not so much!

We still had the ordeal of meeting friends and neighbours, all curious to look this bride from 'over there' over. I felt like a specimen of livestock, or a prize dog! We survived, didn't we, but aren't you glad we don't have to do that again?

Bagpipe Tootling War Bride Gives Serenade On Arrival

To the strident strains of a war bride's bagpipe serenade to Canada, the liner Lady Rodney docked in Halifax harbor yesterday afternoon, bringing to the Dominion 258 dependents of Canadian servicemen. A dozen Army wives and one R.C.A.F. wife en route to new homes in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, were aboard the reconverted troopship. For the first time, no children were aboard a vessel bringing back war brides.

"And it was some relief, too," observed one bride as she remarked on the absence of the customary infants' wails that accompany the arrival of dependents' ship here.

Two Halifax women were among those landing. They were Mrs. Margaret Taylor, wife of Capt. G. G. Taylor, and Mrs. Joan M. Reynolds, wife of Capt. J. M. Reynolds.

The bagpipe-tootling bride was pert Mrs. Betty Read, Hamilton, Ont., a tiny 23-year-old who has been handling the unwieldy pibroch for more than 10 years. She played in the Girl Pipers' Band of Dagenham, a London suburb.



EX RODNEY FOR GLACE BAY AND YARMOUTH. — Bound for homes in Nova Scotia the three war brides shown above arrived here on board the liner Lady Rodney. From left to right are: Mrs. Doris Madden, Sussex, husband, L.-Cpl. H. J. Madden, Sandford, Yarmouth County; Mrs. Jean Howie, Newcastle-on-Tyne, husband, Sgt. J. L. Howie, Glace Bay; Mrs. Helen Parsons, Dorking, husband, Pte. J. R. Parsons, Glace Bay. (Canadian Army Photo).

Submitted by Joan Reichardt

If you have a story/photos you would like to share in the newsletter, please email to canadianwarbrides@netidea.com or mail to 215 W. Beasley St., Nelson, BC V1L 3K4

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