

British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association



Written by Lori Oschefski, Andrew Simpson
with a special feature by the William Morris Gallery, England

Spring 2019 Newsletter
Marking the 150th year since
the first party of BHC arrived in Canada

INTRODUCING MADGE GILL

Madge Gill (1882–1961) was an English mediumistic artist who made thousands of drawings "guided" by a spirit she called "Myrminerest" (my-inner-rest). In her adult life, she suffered the loss of three of her four children, many illnesses and an unhealthy marriage. In her childhood - known by her birth name, Maude Ethel Eades - she was a British Home Child discarded by her family over the shame of her birth. Difficulties in her life, now believe to also include her history as a child migrant to Canada, led her to seek creative refuge with her spirit guide Myrminerest.

Maude was born 19 January 1882 in East End, London, England, to single parent Emma Elizabeth Eades. Emma spent her early childhood years, isolated from society because of the shame inflicted on her mother by Victorian attitudes towards illegitimate births. Maude stayed with her family until they relinquished her to the care of the Dr. Barnardo Homes - unwilling to care any longer for the burden of a child born out of wedlock.

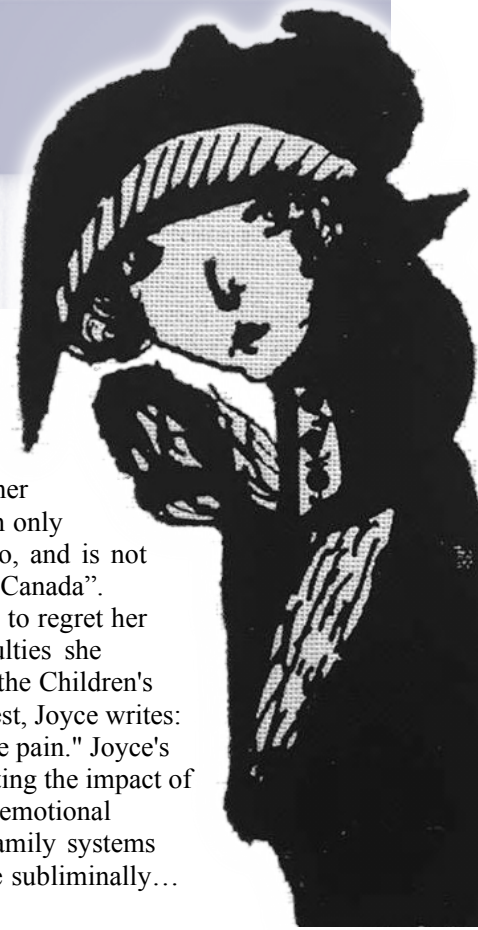
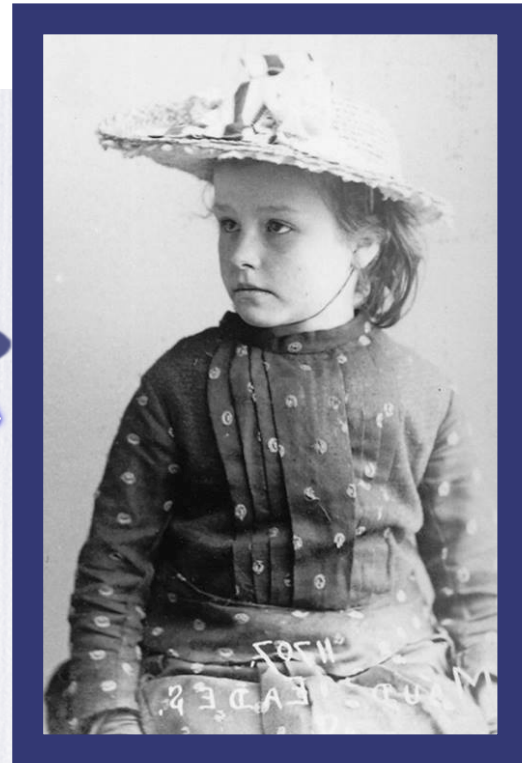
At the tender age of 9, after five years living in Dr. Barnardo's Barkingside Village, Maud was sent to Canada to become a domestic worker. Arthur SeanArthur Joyce explains conditions in Canada: "Despite Canada being touted as a land of promise and a classless society, the old British class prejudices still held true. In Canadian communities, instead of the fostering, nurturing and love they needed, many BHC were taunted and made to feel ashamed for being a Home Child." Maude endured hard labor and poor living conditions in Canada. She saved every penny should could to return to

England as soon as her indenture contract ended. Eighteen year old Maude left Canada for good in 1900. The Dr.

Barnardo newsletter "Ups and Downs" reports her return stating she was "full of anticipation and delight at seeing her friends again". Chastising her decision to return, Barnardo's also added "We can only hope she has realized half she looked forward to, and is not already, like so many more, sighing to be back in Canada".

Despite their concerns, Maude never seemed to regret her return to England, despite the enormous difficulties she encountered in her adult life. In his book *Laying the Children's Ghosts to Rest*-Canada's Home Children in the West, Joyce writes: "Shame is a powerful silencer, but it doesn't stop the pain." Joyce's research explored the role of epigenetic's in perpetuating the impact of trauma in the descendants of Home Children. "The emotional

deprivation echoes down the generations," he writes. "Family systems psychologists know that this angst is often passed down the line subliminally..."





Descendants often tell a tale of families wracked by emotional distance, depression and even second-generation suicides," along with substance abuse issues.

The history of the Home Children, their childhoods spent in austere institutions and servitude, suggests a fundamental truth about human nature, Joyce continues: "Our capacity for resilience in the face of trauma is infinitely variable, depending on the personality of the individual. Some Home Children who suffered abuse never fully recovered. Many others lived an emotionally sterile life. Yet many managed to build a successful career and family life. Maude Eades falls into this category, having discovered an innate talent for art. Artists have an advantage over others in that the act of producing art is often cathartic—a means of releasing old demons in a healthy way."

Upon her return to England, Maude found work at the Whipps Cross hospital, Leytonstone. She resided with her aunt, Kate Gill, who introduced her to Spiritualism and mediumistic practices. It is unclear exactly when Maude started using Madge as her first name - her return to the UK was under Maude - in the record of her 1907 marriage to Tom Edwin Gill, her name was recorded as Madge Ethel Eades. Tom was Kate's son, thus Madge's first cousin. Lawrence Edwin, their first child was born in late 1906. Reginald Alfred, born in 1910 died in the influenza pandemic of 1918–1919. Leonard Eric came in 1913. Following the death of Reginald in 1918, Madge was diagnosed with melanotic sarcoma and her left eye was removed - replaced with a glass eye. Sadly, in 1921, Madge gave birth to a still born baby

girl. Heart broken, Madge remained ill for months after, suffering from ongoing depression and possibly a nervous breakdown.

Following her illness, Madge experienced a "presence", visions and periods of trances. "I then had an inspiration to take up my pen and do all kinds of work of an artistic type. . . . It took various forms. . . . I felt impelled to execute drawings on a large scale on calico. I simply couldn't leave it and I did on average 20 pictures a week, all in colour. . . . I felt I was definitely guided by an unseen force (Cardinal 1972:135)". Guided by this unseen force, identified as Myrninerest (my-inner-rest), she created a multitude of creative works including: drawing, writing, knitting, crochet-work, weaving, tapestry, rug making and colorful embroidery. For three months in 1922, Madge was a patient at Lady Chichester Hospital in Hove, for her "mental trouble". While in treatment, she showed her doctor some of her drawings, which were subsequently turned over to the Society for Psychical Research in London where they were felt to be "more of an inspirational than of an automatic kind" The first public showing of her work was in 1923.

Madge's personal troubles continued with the break down of her marriage and a serious accident involving her son Leonard. She spent two years by his bed side while he recovered, usually drawing or writing. Her husband Tom, reportedly unfaithful by this time, was diagnosed with cancer in 1932, passing away in 1933. It was during his illness that Madge showed one of her most famous works, Reincarnation, a calico roll densely worked in colored inks, which attracted national press coverage. The Times of London reported it as: "One of the most remarkable works in the exhibition – a work that would be remarkable in any exhibition, both in form and technically – is a pen and ink drawing on calico, measuring no less than 17ft by 5ft 6in., entitled Reincarnation by Mrs M.E. Gill. For convenient description, it is something between the work of modern Dutch and Belgian mystics and that of Mr Stanley Spencer." Following her husband's death, Madge continued to live with her two sons, Lawrence and Leonard (predeceased her in 1958). Madge became reclusive and rarely left the house. During this period of her life, she was mostly working on postcard sized ink-drawing and long rolls of untreated calico cloth. Although she showed her work publicly, Madge rarely parted with any of her pictures. Rather they were hoarded in her house, stuffed in every corner! Madge started doing seances and people's horoscopes. Her artistic work continued at rapid speed throughout this period and were often signed "Myrninerest".



Of her work biographer Roger Cardinal wrote "Gill's frenetic improvisations have an almost hallucinatory quality, each surface being filled with checkerboard patterns that suggest giddy, quasi-architectural spaces. Afloat upon these swirling

proliferations are the pale faces of discarnate and nameless women, sketched perfunctorily, albeit with an apparent concern for beauty, and with startled expressions. It is tempting to interpret them in relation to Gill's biography: is she referring to her lost daughter, her beloved aunts, or to some feminine ideal? Are these in sense self-portraits, or rather attempts to stabilize her own fragile being, as it were through fleeting snapshots?" With the release of her Dr. Barnardo intake photo, we can see the resemblance of her childhood likeness to many of the females in her drawings.

The tragedies in Madge's life drew her deeper into the spiritual world of her alter ego, Myrnerest, as she struggled to cope with her demons. Joyce also comments that Madge "carried the heavy burdens of the Home Child. Cardinal relates that in her later years Gill "became self-absorbed and cantankerous," something of a recluse in her East Ham house. Artists are often viewed by society as eccentric, and indeed, "some neighbors spoke of her disturbing gaze..." It's arguable that as we age and the body weakens it becomes harder to suppress our childhood demons. "Developmental, behavioral, educational and family problems in childhood can have both lifelong and intergenerational effects," states one study. The fact that Madge was able to create so much beauty out of personal trauma remains as perhaps her greatest legacy."

Sources:

This article is heavily based on Madge Gill's biography written by Roger Cardinal and an article co-written by Sean Arthur Joyce & Lori Oschefski for the William Morris Gallery's Madge Gill Exhibition program. The Madge Gill exhibit opens in the William Morris Gallery 22 June 2018 – 22 September 2019 Location: Lloyd Park, Forest Road Walthamstow, London, E17 4PP Admission Free

<http://madgegill.com/Biography>

<https://www.kooness.com/artists/madge-gill>

<https://acroamaticonline.com/2017/07/10/the-mystical-world-of-madge-gill/>

<https://rawvision.com/articles/madge-gill-postcards-spirit-world>

<http://spitalfieldslife.com/2018/12/16/looking-for-madge-gill/>



Special Partnership with English Madge Gill project to mark BHC 150

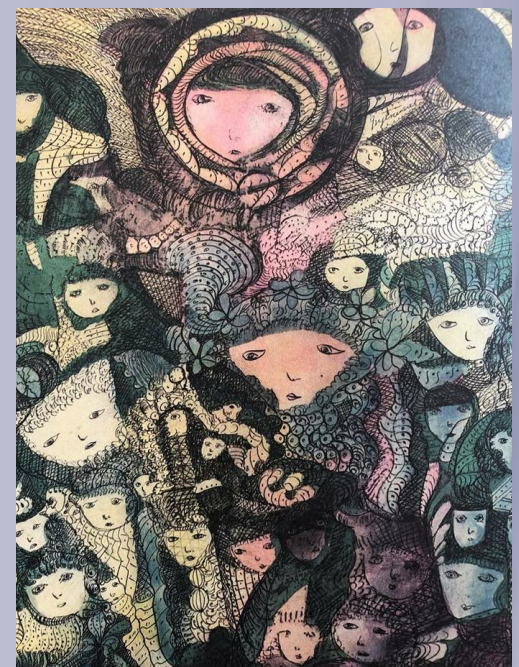
Sophie Dutton, is the Director and Curator of "[Works by Madge Gill](#)". She is currently working with the William Morris Gallery in London, England on a special retrospective Madge Gill exhibition, opening this June. This exhibition will bring together drawings, large-scale embroideries, textiles and archival objects; many of which have never been exhibited before. A thirty foot, multicoloured calico titled "Crucifixion of the Soul", will be one of the highlights of the exhibition.

Sophie, introduced to Madge's work by her late father, has spent four years planning the exhibition. She described her work, as "a labour of love". To Mark the beginning of the events, on Thursday 8th March 2018, a Blue Historic Site Plaque was unveiled at 71 High Street, Walthamstow, London, the home where Madge lived. Work stated in July of 2018, with Wood Street Walls, local artists, to create a mural of Madge on the BAD Warehouse, a building located just around the corner from her former home. The painting was completed in October. Sophie reached out to BHCARA in July of 2018 wishing to explore and expand upon Madge's experience as British Home Child, Maud Eades. This was a very significant period of her life and undoubtedly influenced her artwork.

Through this partnership, Sophie is successfully connecting Madge's story to her Canadian experience - the common anguish and feelings of disconnection many of the children felt and the area's she traveled in

Canada. Madge's experience as a BHC is most certainly an insight into the haunting images she produced by the thousands.

We are organizing a series of events in Canada, including a Madge Gill inspired embroidery workshop which took place recently, held at the Black Creek Pioneer Village in Toronto, Ontario. Workshops similar to this are to be also held in the UK.



Madge Gill "Sea of Faces" C1935

Photo credits: Works by Madge Gill Facebook:
from London Borough of Newham Heritage
and Archives



Blue Plaque installed on Madge Gill's former home. Image credit: Spudgun67 Wikipedia



Our Madge Gill

Embroidery Workshop

Canada's workshop was a private event to which the BHCARA invited special members as a thank you for the support shown to our organization over the years. Those in attendance were: Janice Savini, Jennifer Layne, Kathleen Inzirillo, Julia Walkley-Sherman, Diane McGregor, Shirley Joyce, Dona Crawford, Dan Oatman,

Debbie Gallant, Kaitlin Gallant (our 2018 Student Achievement Award Recipient), Susan Hall, Mandy Juniper, Gillian Hoekstra, Dawn Sheppard, Josephine Catalano Macpherson, Barbara Creek, Marlene Penman, Lori Oschefski and Lori Kay. As Canadian weather can be difficult, this and distance prevented some invitee's from attending. Working from home was: Tarra Trachsel Green, Carol Black, Beverley Schulz, Lynn Boone, Kimberly McEwan, Judy Neville, Mary Arnold, Patricia Skidmore. Of course, there are many many amazing people who have, and continue to be, great assets and friends to BHCARA who couldn't make it, but nevertheless were in our thoughts.

The aim of the workshop was for participants to explore Madge Gill's story, her art, and to learn about her techniques. Participants were supplied with the materials needed to create their own enlarged postcard sized pieces of embroidery work, echoing the thousands of postcards Madge created. Pieces from all workshops will be shown at the William Morris Gallery as part of the Madge Gill exhibition.

Our participants took to their task with the great zeal and interest in Madge. Each participant has found special meaning in the workshop. As the participants stitched, an affinity was formed among the group. The stitcher's reflected upon the life of Madge Gill, chatting with each other in conversations about her life, her work, and how they felt her experiences reflected those of our own BHC family members. Kathleen Inzirillo remarked "One just gets lost in it. I can see how this brought her joy amongst the sadness and ambivalence of her life." Many felt that the isolation and loneliness, common to all BHC, were major influences in Madge's work. Dona Crawford was able to connect Madge to her father, as both became artists. Dawn Sheppard felt that Madge's "memories surfaced as visions that she interpreted in threads and paints" and that she would have learned her handwork skills as a child, as it was her chosen mode of expression. Sewing was a skill taught to the girls at Barkingside. Jennifer Layne recognized Madge's work as using "the tool available to express herself artistically as a coping mechanism for the trauma she suffered throughout her life."

A special surprise participant was the young nephew of Kathleen Inzirillo. Sebastian Marten became interested in Madge Gill after asking his Aunt about the sewing she was working on. Intrigued, Sebastian asked if he could produce an embroidery piece. He quickly found a spot where he could concentrate and in true reflection of Madge, he taught himself how to stitch, capturing her vision with his shapes and yarn. When asked what it meant to him to be part of this workshop, Sebastian wrote "It showed me about how much I care about people and that makes me happy." Sebastian, wishing Madge's story be told, shared her story and his embroidery piece with his class at school.



Photo by
Shirley Joyce



Judy Neville
working from home

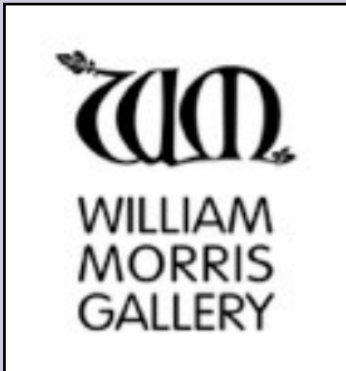


Sebastian with his Aunt Kathleen,
photos courtesy of the Inzirillo family

Dona Crawford at home with her finished piece.



They not only reflected upon the life of Madge Gill, but reflected on the lives of the BHC within their families and how they related to the experience of Madge Gill. The Canadian workshop was inspiring to the participants and for some, caused reflection of our lives and the effects the BHC schemes had. The workshop was a huge success and we look forward to seeing the presentation of our pieces in the Madge Gill Exhibition.



Release from the William Morris Gallery England's Madge Gill Exhibit 22 June – 22 September 2019

William Morris Gallery will present an exhibition of works by Madge Gill (1882-1961), an exponent of mediumistic art and one of the

foremost British Outsider artists. Born in Walthamstow, Gill endured a difficult early life. In 1920, she was first 'possessed' by a spirit she referred to as

Myrninerest, under which she would draw frenetic improvisations with an almost hallucinatory quality. She spent most of her years in East London, and when she died in 1961 her vast output was discovered in her home. The exhibition will be the most comprehensive survey of Gill's work to date, bringing together many works that have never been exhibited before.

Due to her illegitimate birth during the Victorian era, the family placed Madge into the care of Dr. Barnardo's orphanage in Barkingside. From there she was enrolled in the British Home Children scheme for orphans and sent to Canada, where she endured hard labour and poor living conditions. She saved everything she earned and returned to London in 1900 to work as a nurse at Whipps Cross hospital in Leyton. She married and had three sons, one of whom died in the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918. In 1919 she gave birth to a daughter who was stillborn. Complications proved almost fatal and a lengthy illness resulted in the loss of her left eye. Her grief manifested itself in a deep depression and she underwent treatment in Hove for an undiagnosed psychiatric condition.

On 3 March 1920 at age 38, Gill was first 'possessed' by Myrninerest, with whom she maintained contact with for the rest of her life. During these trances, she produced an extraordinary number of artworks, primarily drawings in ink on paper and calico. Mostly in black and white, Gill's drawings often feature a girl's face or figure surrounded by repetitive patterns of broken or swirling lines and checkerboards. She would often make her art at night by candlelight, drawing at a rapid pace. She could make 50-100 postcards in a single sitting, and these meticulous works often reflected her obsession with spiritualism. For an untutored artist she skillfully explored different techniques and formats including inks, paints and textiles. She also created many intricate and multicoloured embroidered rugs, hangings and dresses.

During the 1930s, Gill's husband passed away from cancer. She continued to live with and care for her two sons in her home in Upton Park. She exhibited several times at Whitechapel Gallery, however never wanting to sell her work, Gill attributed it to her Myrninerest and would purposely price the artworks too high for anyone to afford. She gained a reputation as a spiritual medium and eccentric character in her local neighbourhood.

When she died in 1961, her artworks reportedly filled her home, piled in cupboards and under her bed. Nearly 2,000 works were donated to Newham Council by her son and are still in their heritage collection today. Many of her large scale works are rumoured to have been discarded, but another 2,000 works at least were sold on through house clearance, private sales and auction. As a result, many of her artworks have been distributed all over the world.

Today, Madge Gill is one of the world's most highly regarded 'Outsider' artists, represented in all the major international collections, including Jean Dubuffet's Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne and the l'Aracine Collection at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Lille. Yet the largest collection of her work resides in the place where she is perhaps least known –



Untitled, black ink on card,
Plashet Grove, East Ham, London.
Courtesy Newham Archives and Local
Studies Library

in East London where she once lived. The exhibition will be the most comprehensive survey of Gill's work to date and will bring together drawings, largescale embroideries, textiles and archival objects, many of which have never been exhibited before. A section of one of her largest pieces, a monumental 30 foot long multicoloured calico titled *Crucifixion of the Soul*, will be unrolled. The exhibition will include many loans from Newham Council, Grosvenor Gallery, Collection 1' Art Brut and several private collections which includes newly uncovered artworks, the first drawings she made during her time in hospital, a multitude of her iconic postcards and her last dated drawing 'Architectural Fantasy'.

The exhibition is curated by Sophie Dutton in collaboration with the William Morris Gallery. Dutton first encountered Madge Gill's work four years ago and has undergone a search for her works and information on the artist's life. With the support of Waltham Forest Council, Dutton has put together a year-long programme of events dedicated to Madge Gill. In March 2018, the project launched to the public with a blue plaque being unveiled on the flat Gill was born in Walthamstow to commemorate her extraordinary life.

The William Morris Gallery is delighted to present this exhibition of Madge Gill's life and work, which aims to reconnect her story and work with the place she is from. Morris famously quoted; 'I do not want art for a few any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.' This has strong resonance with Gill and her inspirational compulsions to make work, teaching herself, in ill health, at home and with limited supplies.

'This exhibition provides an exciting opportunity to learn about one of East London's most fascinating twentieth century artists. Whilst the scale and scope of her work is exhilarating, she also had an extraordinary technical ability. This is particularly evident in her embroideries, which are intricately worked with thousands of individual strands of embroidery thread. It is fitting that Gill's work will be shown at the William Morris Gallery uniting two of Walthamstow's most visionary artists for the first time.' Rowan Bain, Senior Curator at William Morris Gallery

'The exhibition will shine a spotlight on a prolific local artist who made art despite the odds, finding creativity to be an outlet for traumatic life experiences. It's an exciting and rare opportunity to finally bring so many of Madge Gill's inspiring artworks out of the archives to be seen and enjoyed, reconnecting her to the places she once lived.' — Sophie Dutton

Taking place as part of London Borough of Culture 2019, the exhibition will be accompanied by a programme of events, including a heritage trail and series of workshops. During this time, a display of works by textile artist Marie-Rose Lortet will also be on view upstairs.

Accompanying the exhibition, there will be a book celebrating the life and work of Madge Gill published by Rough Trade Books, entitled *Madge Gill by Myrinerest*.

About Sophie Dutton

Sophie Dutton was first told about Madge Gill by her late father who had worked for Newham Council, where he had seen the remarkable collection of Gill's art hidden away in their archives. He passed away in 2015, and curious to see what had intrigued and excited him so much, Dutton arranged to view a small selection of Gill's postcards and drawings in Stratford Library. After this initial viewing of Gill's minute postcards and hearing more about her past from the archivists, Dutton was inspired by the captivating nature of her work. Surprised to learn that Gill's textiles and drawings are little known, especially in the areas the artist once lived, she began her own journey to discover more about the mysterious artist. Through indepth research, visits to numerous collections and archives, searching for lost works, and meeting those connected to Gill's story, Dutton set out to raise the profile, public knowledge and interest in Gill's life and work. With the support of Waltham Forest Council, Dutton has put together a year-long programme of events dedicated to Madge Gill. Please contact info@worksbymadgegill.co for more information on the project.

About the William Morris Gallery

The William Morris Gallery is the only public Gallery devoted to William Morris: designer, craftsman and radical socialist. Housed in the Grade II* listed building that was Morris's family home from 1848 to 1856, it displays the world's largest collection of his work. In recent years the Gallery has developed an ambitious programme of contemporary and historical exhibitions by artists including Jeremy Deller, Yinka Shonibare, Frank Brangwyn and May Morris. Other special exhibitions have explored 20thcentury political posters and African textiles. The Gallery was awarded the Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year in 2013 and was nominated for the European Museum of the Year Award in 2014. London Borough of Waltham Forest, which owns and runs the William Morris Gallery, has been named the first London Borough of Culture in 2019. Waltham Forest will receive more than £1m of funding from City Hall for cultural events and initiatives. www.wfculture19.co.uk William Morris Gallery Forest Road London E17 4PP Tuesday to Sunday, 10am



Embroidery pieces from our Canadian Workshop



Carol Black



Dan Oatman



Debbie Gallant



Dona Crawford



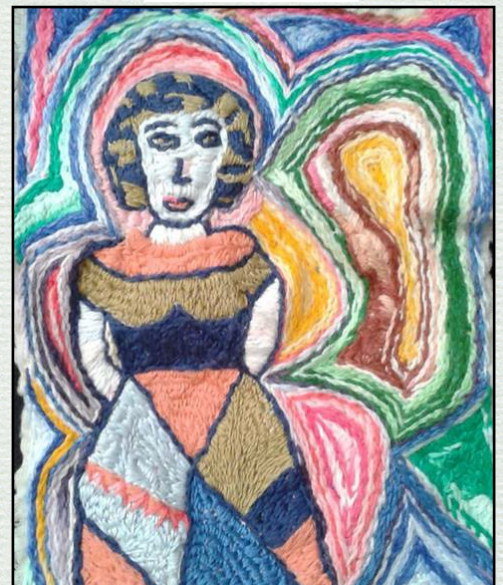
Gillian Hoekstra



Janice Savini



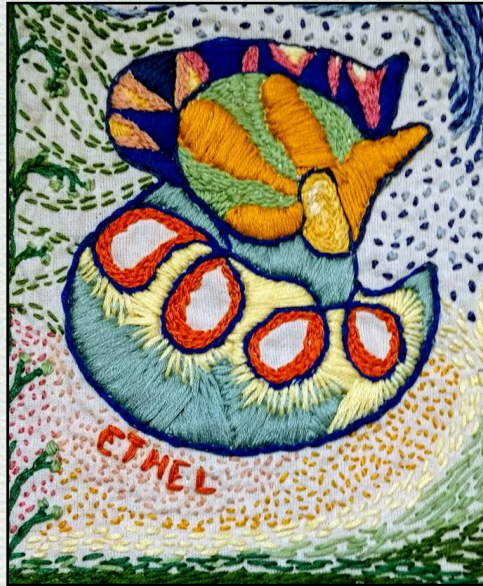
Jennifer Layne



Josephine Macpherson



Judy Neville



Julia Walkley-Sherman



Mandy Juniper



Kathleen Inzirillo



Lori Kay



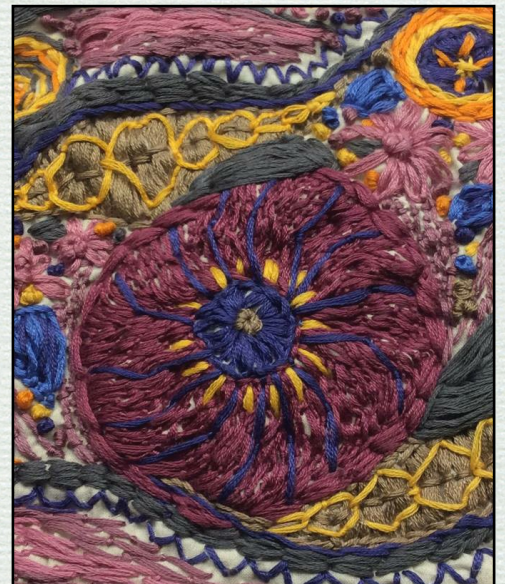
Lynn Boone



Patricia Skidmore



Shirley Joyce



Tarra Trachsel Green.



Diane McGregor



Beverley Schulz



Sebastion Marren



Marlene Penman



Mary Arnold



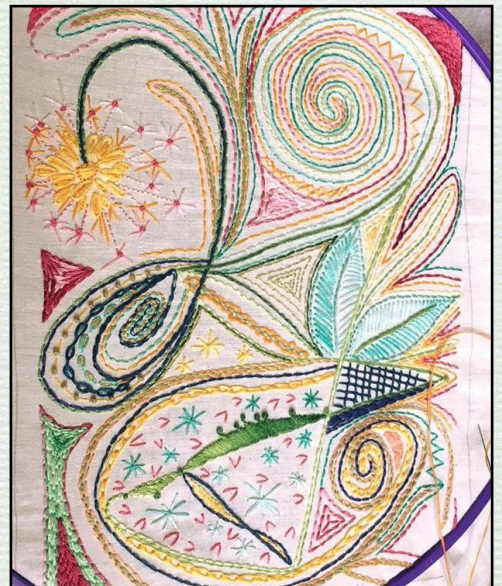
Susan Hall



Kaitlin Gallant



Barbara Creek



Dawn Sheppard

Celebrating BHC 150 & Madge Gill in Canada

There are several events in Canada this year to mark the 150th Anniversary of the arrival of the first British Home Child to Canada.

Sunday July 21st - The Tillsonburg Legion celebrates BHC 150

Visit page 15 for poster and event details

[Click here to visit the event page on Facebook](#)

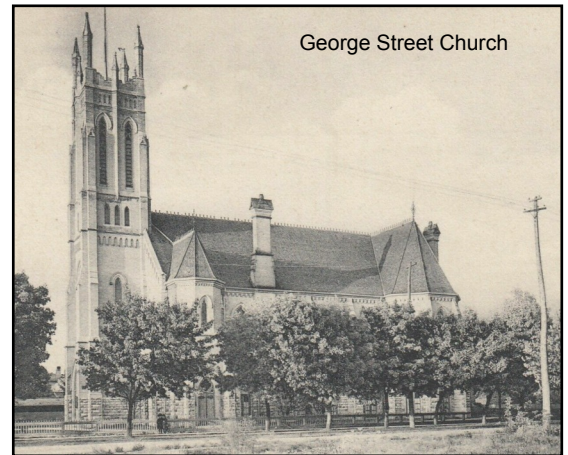
[Click here for tickets and registration](#)

Saturday August 3rd - Madge Gill Walking Tour - Peterborough, Ontario

In collaboration with Ivy Succie & Patricia Bronson

Join us for an amazing tour of places relevant to Madge Gill and the Barnardo children in Peterborough. Among the stops will be:

1. George Street United Church, where the children attended church.
2. Barnardo Avenue & the Hazelbrae Monument where nearly 10,000 names of the children who passed through this home are inscribed. The monument sits on the grounds of the Queen Alexandra School - where the Grace School the BHC attended once stood
3. Site of the former Home - now marked with a historical plaque.
4. Confederation Park Cenotaph, ten names of BHC who died in the First World War are engraved here.
5. Del Cray Park - a plaque honoring Dr. Barnardo stands on the Pathway of Fame.
6. The Little Lake Cemetery where many BHC are buried.



Be advised that transportation will be required for parts of the tour. Please bring rain gear should the forecast call for rain. Visit our [Family Reunion event page on Facebook](#) for more information, times etc. More details to be released.

July 15th to August 14 Orillia Public Library special BHC 150 exhibit

Lori Oschefski and Jayne Poolton-Turvey are teaming up to bring you a special month long exhibit at the library. The exhibit will feature never seen before BHC vintage documents and artifacts. Stories of BHC including those from Orillia will grace the beautiful windows of the Library. On display will be the [BHCARA 2016 Memory Quilt](#) and the 2010 Year of the [BHC Alberta quilt](#).

We are thrilled to also be displaying the amazing work of Visual Artist Laura McHugh. Laura has been working with the BHCARA members since last year creating her British Home Child Portrait Project. Laura's amazing work complements the work of Visionary Artist Madge Gill. She is creating a very special piece for this exhibit.

Laura has been working with the BHCARA members since last year creating her British Home Child Portrait Project. Of this project, Laura writes:

"My grandfather, Philip E. Trussell, was born in 1888 in London UK and was emigrated to Ontario CN in 1901. I was able to get information from Fegan's on May 7, 2018, including photos of my grandfather's class group photo at Fegan's and a copy of the papers signing him over. My father, who never knew the full story of his dad, passed away the following day so I was especially grateful to have received the response from Fegan's just in time to share that story with my dad. I know it meant a lot to him.

I learned of the BHC group and Facebook page in the last few weeks of my dad getting progressively weaker. (He was 91 and had congestive heart failure.) I am an engineer and artist and thought it important to raise awareness about BHC through painting these portraits, so I very much appreciate the willingness of BHC relatives to trust me with their family stories and photos.

With everything going on out there in the world regarding emigration, family separation and all the related heart-break, I believe the BHC story is important."

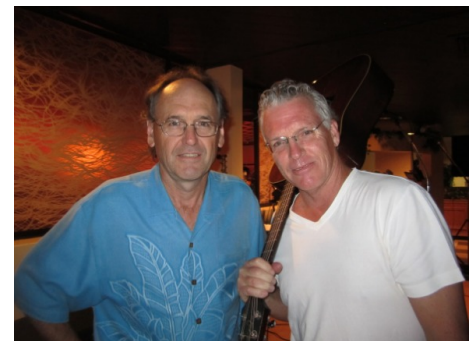
You can read more about this amazing project at Laura's web site: [LAURA MCHUGH - Visual Artist](#)
More information about the exhibit can be found on our [Facebook event page](#).

Saturday August 10th - BHC 150th Family Reunion - and special interactive BHC 150 exhibit

This year's event will be co-hosted by Lori Oschefski and Jayne Poolton-Turvey. This day will feature a special interactive BHC 150 exhibit, including speakers Lori Oschefski and John Jefkins. a military exhibit by Carl Black, music by Even Steven and free on site research help. More details and schedule to be announced. The day will run from 10 am to 4 pm.

The Orillia Public Library is located at:
36 Mississauga Street West
Orillia, ON
L3V 3A6
Phone: (705) 325-2338
Fax: (705) 327-1744

Email: info@orilliapubliclibrary.ca



**Steve Evers & Steve McKeown -
Even Steven**

The Orillia Public Library

Even Steven:

Steve Evers and Steve McEown were both born and raised in Orillia. They started their professional music career in Calgary, Alberta in 1978 as "Even Steven". Still performing today, they have opened for artists such as The Good Brothers, Trooper, The Stampeders, "Hotel California", Cassandra Vasik, and The Martels. Their albums include "Natural Act" (cassette tape) and "What I Am" (CD released in 1998). Canadian legend Gordon Lightfoot's 1998 album, "A Painter Passing Through", included Steve McEown's composition "I Used To Be A Country Singer". Steve Evers is a nephew to Gordon Lightfoot, whose sister Beverly married the son of two British Home Children. We are pleased to present such a talented duo, one a direct descendant of two British Home Children, at our event! (Bio info from 2016 - The Harbor Front Fish Bar)

September 28th Lighting of the High Level Bridge in Edmonton Alberta

Especially for BHC 150 and our National British Home Children Day in Canada, the High Level Bridge in Edmonton will be lit up in red white and blue lights, in honor of our British Home Children. This lighting, sponsored by the BHCARA, was arranged by member Kim Crowder. The High Level bridge boasts 60,000 LED bulbs. By special request, the bridge can be lit in a variety of colors.

Kim will also be hosting a display at the Whitemud Crossing Branch of the Edmonton Public Library. Dates and details to be released - information can be obtained through the [BHCARA Facebook Group](#).



Reflecting on that 150 years

By Andrew Simpson



All of us have our own very different journey in the discovery of a British Home Child.

At the center of course, there is the shared experience of a young person migrated across the Atlantic, but the rest is as varied as the individual, the circumstances of the migration and the outcome.

And I suspect how we feel about those migrations and the thinking that underpinned the relocation of thousands of British children will be equally mixed and may change over time.

I know mine has. I started with a sense of anger and revulsion at what appeared a cynical move to remove those deemed to be undesirable and too expensive to care for, which also neatly offered Canadian farmers cheap labour and provided a legion of domestic servants to cater for those who thought status came with a servant.



But history is messy and the motives of those engaged in taking children to Canada were complex, and based partly on the fact that the State had yet to embrace a fully interventionist approach to the poor, amongst whom were the sick, the unemployed, the destitute and young people at risk.

And as I delved deeper, trawling the records of one migrating charity, as well as picking up on some popular ideas about utopian agrarian communities, it becomes easier to see how migration looked an appealing option.

Nor is it true that the establishment fully embraced the idea of migration. From the Doyle Report on into the early 20th century there were critics of the policy, including the three socialist Guardians of the Board of the Chorlton Union who raised concerns about the quality of the monitoring system for migrated children and questioned the very premise that poor children should have to be sent to Canada.



Added to which the picture becomes more complicated by the individual case studies which show that while some who went were destitute and living on the streets, others were from loving and caring homes whose parents or parent could no longer support them.

And sitting beside these, were parents who at best were neglectful and at worst were cruel and exploitative. One survey in the 1880s by the Manchester and Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges, showed that "the Refuge presented evidence that the children they encountered at night on the streets of Manchester and Salford selling matches, newspapers and shoe shining were working to supplement or provide an income for their mothers and fathers".

Writing in 1889 for the Manchester Statistical Society, Gilbert R. Kirlew observed, "that in the great majority of cases the parent or parents of these children provided them with the capital to become street hawkers, and expected, at least, 40 per cent in return for the outlay and labour involved".

And pointing out that "a considerable number [have homes which], in many cases are little more than places in which to creep for shelter, like a dog kennel – a considerable portion not even getting meals in them".

**Siblings of a
British Home Child**

In an earlier pamphlet for the charity he had told the story of two boys aged 4 and 8 who he had encountered who were neglected by their drunken father living on "bare boards of a dirty empty room".

The same charity had from almost the beginning of its inception involved itself in prosecuting neglectful and cruel parents through the courts and campaigned for the regulation of child labour regarding street hawking.

All of which makes the picture less black and white and more a sort of grey, and while there were well documented cases of child abuse in Canada, there were also success stories.

But that doesn't let people off the hook. The trouble is who do you blame? Certainly, the British State along with British society can be criticized, but they were operating within the accepted philosophy of laissez faire which argued that the Government's role was one of the "night watchmen", and as such was restricted to overseeing things with little intervention.

We can quite rightly be appalled by this, particularly in the face of such poverty and hardship, along with the Workhouse system which was predicated on the idea that the poor were often feckless and to blame for their plight. But that would be unhistorical as would the wish for an earlier application of an interventionist policy, leaving me just to point out that there were those at the time who were critical of the system but powerless to change it.

So, I do have sympathy with some of those who argued for the benefits of migration faced with a State in denial, very real cases of hardship, and poverty-stricken parents who saw no alternative but to offer up their children for migration.

But that doesn't let off the hook those Canadian farmers who neglected and abused the children in their care or those who spoke of BHC in disparaging terms.

Or for that matter the institutions here in Britain who did the sums and saw that migration was cheaper than long term care.

Nor those parents who were less than perfect, and here I am back with my own BHC. He was Roger Hall, who was migrated to Canada by Middlemore on behalf of the Derby Union. He was, to use the phrase "damaged goods" before he arrived in Canada in 1914, having run wild at home in the company of his bother who was my grandfather. Both were sentenced to time in a naval boot camp, but Roger opted for migration, failed to settle on any of the three farms he was placed on, and finally ran away to join the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1915, having changed his name and lied about his age.

His military career both in the UK and on the Western Front were marked with serious episodes of disobedience which mirrored his time on the farms.

His mother, my great grandmother appears to have had a tenuous hold on reality, and in 1913 was judged "unfit to have control" of her children who were passed back into care for a second time. I make no judgement of her parenting skills, given that she had become a single parent a decade earlier, and within another two would be confined to an asylum where she died in 1963.

The Middlemore Home
FAIRVIEW STATION, : : HALIFAX, N. S.
J. STERLING KING, Manager

Application for Boy

Kindly fill in this form and return at once to above address

I hereby apply for a boy of 16 years, and, if successful in my application, I agree to provide him proper food and clothing, so that he shall be as well clothed as at present, and medical attendance; also with such Common School Education as is supplied in the District where I reside for at least 5 months of each year; and I undertake that he shall attend Sunday School and Divine Worship. I further undertake when he is 16 years old to pay him instead of providing clothing and schooling \$5.00 per month for services he may render me and also to retain him in my employ up to the age of 18 years, unless there be full and adequate cause for his removal; in which case he must be returned to the Middlemore Home after not less than a month's notice with as good a supply of clothes as when I received him, and not be placed in another home without first obtaining consent of the manager of the Middlemore Home. I agree to keep an account showing price of all kinds of clothing, shoes, etc. necessary summer or winter, for Sunday or for work, and pocket money to the amount of above wages, except whenever reasonably well supplied with clothing, the wages or any part, is deposited in Savings Bank or with the Home Manager, for the boy's future use. I agree to furnish a report as often as required of his (1) health, (2) general conduct, (3) education and (4) wages received. I acknowledge the Home Manager to be the Guardian of the said boy, and I agree to permit him or his agents, at all times to have access to the said boy and I acknowledge the right of the Home Manager or his agent to remove him from my custody if he shall consider it in the interest of said boy to do so, with not less than as good a supply of clothing as when I received him.

Signature S. T. Griffiths
Address Sheffield, Lunenburg Co., N. B.
Witness Murray E. Gilbert, Date Feb. 10th 1914

Such are the complicated lives of many people.

But it has a relevance to the story of BHC, because she was a shadow until I began my own family history, where like many others I discovered my own British Home Child who no one had ever told me about.

And that led to my journey, which by degree took me to Lori and the work she has done and on to the Manchester and Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges. Along the way I have drawn support and help from Lori and other BHC self help groups as well as setting up my one with Tricia Leslie.

I can only claim to have been involved in BHC since 2008, but in that time, I have seen it grow and become a serious and mature area of historical study, and one which will continue to develop.

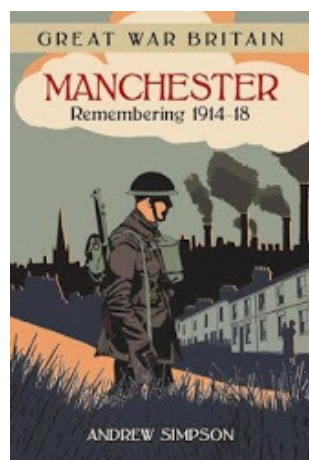
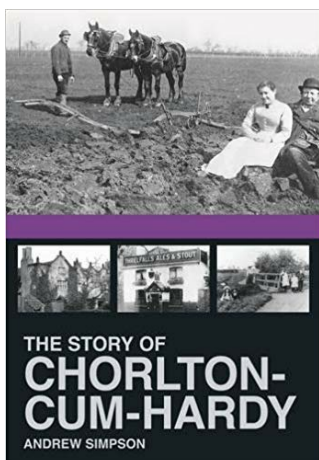
As it progresses, new knowledge will offer up fresh interpretations of the causes, and the impact of the policy, along with its place in the wider story of social provision and the histories of Canada and the UK.

This will alter or modify our opinions, and that is all to the good, because to fully understand BHC and to honour those who were swept up by it, we must never give up on the search for the full story.

- 1 The Manchester and Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges, founded in 1870
- 2 Kirlew, Gilbert R., Facts and Figures Relating to Street Children, page 44, Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society, 1888-9
3. Kirlew, Gilbert R, Tim and Joe The Living Dead, 1872



Griffith House 5 St John River



Books by British author and historian Andrew Simpson;

The Story of Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Chorlton-cum-Hardy Churches, Chapels, Temples A Synagogue and a Mosque, Manchester Pubs, Hough End Hall, The Story Didsbury Through Time, The Pubs and Bars of Chorlton, The Quirks of Chorlton-cum-Hardy,

Coming soonThe history of the Together Trust

Visit Andrew's Blog

<https://chorltonhistory.blogspot.com/>

The
**Tillsonburg
Legion**



PRESENTS



Celebrating BHC 150 in Tillsonburg

2019 marks the 150th year since
the first **British Home Child** came to Canada

1 IN 5 CANADIANS ARE BHC DESCENDANTS!
are **YOU** one?

ALL WELCOME
\$5 REGISTRATION FEE

SUNDAY JULY 21 2019
10 AM - 4 PM

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BHC DISPLAYS

Lori Oschefski • CEO of the BHC Advocacy & Research Association

Richard Lucas • Story of Charles Lucas of Courtland

Dan Oatman • "To Boston and Beyond: British Home Children--Sharing the Stories"

Donald Grey • Film "Nobody's Child" and Q&A

Light Lunch Provided by Branch 153 Ladies Auxiliary



Tillsonburg Legion #153

16 Durham St. Tillsonburg
Contact 519-409-2866 For More Information

