

FAIRBRIDGE GAZETTE



The first party of 41 children arrived at the *Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School* near Cowichan Station on September 25, 1935. The last leg of their journey was via the Vancouver Island Coach Line buses from Nanaimo. The children and their escorts travelled across the Atlantic on the CPR vessel, the *Duchess of Atholl*. Some of the children in this group were as young as 4 years old.

**September 2015 marks the
80th Anniversary of the
Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School.
Plan to come to the
*FCA Reunion this September.***

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Registration Form



Roddy Mackay: President's Message

Greetings, to all you "Young Fairbridgians." I never cared for the terminology of "Old Fairbridgians," particularly when we were given that title upon leaving Fairbridge as teenagers. I know it was one of those traditions adopted from the British public schools. Yes, we all are in our golden years but from my observations at last year's reunion all or most were definitely young at heart. That was reflected in our numbers that attended, almost the same as the prior reunion. The Fairbridge Family continues to be our theme, and that feeling was apparent in all the scheduled events. The Friday night "Meet and Greet," was the one of liveliest evenings we have organized in years. At the banquet rather than having a guest speaker, we invited members to take the mike and speak on their reflections of their days at Fairbridge. One second generation spoke of his father, which was quite moving. To my mind, it is well worth repeating as whom else can tell the story better than those who spent much of their childhood at the school.

So if you haven't already, please mark Sept 18th/19th 2015. The host hotel is the Ocean Front Hotel. As most of you are aware Fairbridge Canada opened in 1935 making this year 2015 our 80th anniversary. Your F.C.A. board will be planning and organizing the Reunion with this special anniversary in mind. We welcome your ideas to assist us in organizing the event. Please contact either myself or other members of the F.C.A. Board with your suggestions prior to our F.C.A. board meeting in early May. F.C.A. Board members contact information is posted in the Gazette or our Fairbridge Canada web site.

Like many of you, my plans and activities are predicated on the state of my health. I decided some time ago that I would take life one day at a time and enjoy it day by day. So please help yourself and us by booking early. If an emergency arises, you can always cancel your reservation with advance notice. We are looking forward to holding another great Fairbridge Family reunion.

Cheers, Roddy (Email: roddymc@comcast.net)

2015 Fairbridge Canada Association Reunion September 18-19, 2015

**MARK YOUR
CALENDARS**

THE **FCA REUNION REGISTRATION FORM** IS INCLUDED WITH THIS GAZETTE

Oceanfront Suites at Cowichan Bay, 1681 Cowichan Bay Road Cowichan Bay, B.C. V0R 1N0
Toll Free 1.800.663.7898
Local 250.715.1000
info@oceanfrontcowichanbay.com

**FCA Fees of \$30.00 per year
are due in January of each year.**
Membership forms can be found
on the FCA website at:
<http://fairbridgecanada.com>

*Or you can contact Ron Smith or
Pat Skidmore for a form.*

Fairbridge Canada Association Board

President: Roddy Mackay: roddymc@comcast.net

Vice President: John Hardy: jkhardy@shaw.ca

Treasurer: Ron Smith: rgwsmiths@hotmail.com

Secretary & Gazette Editor: Pat Skidmore: pjs@telus.net

FCA Directors:

Christine Brookshaw
Ray Field
Roy Myhill

Christina Dobson
Cheryl Kent
Steve Turnbull

- Tom Lisle shared some thoughts of Jean Conlon and her husband Pat Conlon, who were both Fairbridgians: *Like many Fairbridgians, they likely had many unanswered questions about their early life, but I think what impressed me was their enthusiasm for life. They were active in the community, friendly, warm and hospitable, and had a wonderful outlook, with a great sense of humour. When Pat passed away, Jean moved to the Island... she became involved with the Fairbridge executive. I still get a chuckle about the skit she and Roddy and John put on at the 2013 reunion. I think Fairbridge has lost another good one.* (ed. I am certain that we all agree!)
- John Hardy has located letters written to Mrs. Lantry by Bernard and Arthur McGee and he is seeking information on the whereabouts of the McGees so he can return the letters to them.
- I received Christmas greetings from Roddy Mackay, Hugh and Virginia Taylor, Bil Cockburn, the Brookshaws/McIvors, Gayle Bennett, Dick and Berenice Speed, Tom Isherwood, Blackie and Hazel Todd, Dave and Kay Lorente, and from John Stocker, a Molong Fairbridgian, which also included a response from Geoffrey Sherington, author of the book *Fairbridge Empire and Child Migration*.
- William Dowler's daughter wrote seeking information on her father, as did the daughter of Lionel Bowen.
- Marcel Moss, a Rhodesian Fairbridgian sent news of their mini Reunion in Cape Town.
- Christine Brookshaw emailed about the photo on page 6 of the Christmas Gazette (see page 6 of this issue.)
- Tom Lisle emailed about the photo on page 6 of the Christmas Gazette (see page 6 of this issue.)
- Dave Lorente: fought the government historians in Deputy PM Sheila Copps office and even the Historic Sites and Monuments Board for years to have the Federal plaque that was to be erected in Stratford ON - to read 1948 instead of 1939. They relied on the other government papers saying child migration to Canada effectively ended with the advent of war in 1939. But others from BC had already been in touch with Lorente and I had also personally met other former child migrants who had come - one case to Ontario - as late as 1965. Anyway I eventually got an apology from all who opposed me and the Federal Plaque was taken down and recast and re-erected. It now reads 1948...and is still wrong but much better.
- British Home Children Advocacy and Research Association sends out regular newsletters: <http://www.britishhomechildren.com/>
- The 35th consecutive British Home Children and Descendants' reunion, sponsored by Middlemore Atlantic Society, will be held on Saturday, September 19th, 2015 at the Saint John's Anglican Church Hall, 75 Main Street, Fredericton, NB from 9:00am to 5:00pm. See their website at: <http://www.middlemoreatlanticsociety.com/>
- Letter from Fred Bishop with some photos – including names. →
- The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. It is an interesting source of information. Their website is at <http://www.pier21.ca/>. Two Fairbridgians have their stories posted, Roddy Mackay and Tom Isherwood.
- I have ongoing correspondence between the Vancouver Foundation and the Cowichan Secondary School in Duncan with regards to the Fairbridge Farm School Busrary.
- Remembering Jock Bennett: Jock loved working with the cattle (which he was very good with) feeding, cleaning the works. Well I can't remember what he did wrong but as his punishment he got sent to feed and look after the pigs. He hated it but never let whoever looked after all the animals know, so eventually I guess they figured that punishment hadn't worked and they put him back with the cattle, much to his delight. One of the jobs with the pigs was to get their food ready, he remembered being in the silo with the corn and whatever was added to the feed and having to throw shovel fulls against the silo walls to get it all mixed up. He was even offered to be put through Vet school as he was a natural BUT being young he opted for the Merchant Marine. Looking back on his life, there were times he figured he should have taken up the offer. He also loved the sports programmes which I think a lot of the kids did. *Gayle Bennett*.
- Ethel Riley's husband, Owen Canfield, emailed – he said that he and Ethel "...met in 1952 in Quebec. She was a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and I a member of the US Air Force. We married in 1955, raised a large family here in Connecticut. Sadly, she died of cancer in 1988. I adored her, still do, though she has been gone for 26 years. I am 81 years old. She was a year older. We had an extraordinary life together, with 10 children including two sets of twins."



The Fairbridge Historic Cairn

This year marks the 80th Anniversary of the founding of the *Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School* at Cowichan Station on Vancouver Island and it may be in order to publish a number of short vignettes about the school's operation recognizing its historic importance. This one is about the construction of the historic cairn at the entrance to present Meadow Green Farm along Koksilah Road. There are very few such markers throughout the Cowichan Valley and many residents, even those living in the immediate area, are not aware of who paid this particular cairn and when it was erected.

Thankfully the former Fairbridge Canada Association secretary, Molly Harris, sent some letters off to the appropriate individuals in 1990 and was able to receive the necessary information, which is outlined here.

Many of you know that the farm school, as it originally operated, closed in the early 1950's. By this time the Canada Colonization Association, established by the Canadian Pacific Railway's Immigration and Colonization Department, managed the day-to-day operation of the farm school until the Vancouver office of the Burford Management Services Limited started to assist the Fairbridge Society to sell off their Canadian properties. The Association was also helping to bring families from Great Britain to settle on Vancouver Island with their first home being at Fairbridge.

In 1975 the home site was sold by the Fairbridge Society to Bellamy Properties Ltd., a Victoria land development firm, while the farm lease to Archie Stevenson had been terminated in 1967 and Gordon Grier (Grier's Farm Ltd.) taking over the farm property continued to maintain it as a dairy operation for the next 10 years until the farm was put up for sale by the Fairbridge Society and bought by William Vanden Dungen in 1977.

As it turned out Colonel G. Gaisford who lived on Neel Road in Cowichan Station, inquired about the cairn in 1990 and The Fairbridge Drake Society, who took over from the Fairbridge Society provided copies of meeting minutes, which shed some additional information. The first meeting on July

9th, 1975 mentions the Society was thinking of erecting two cairns; one at the present location and the other near the swimming hole. It was decided few would see the latter so opted for just the one adjacent the farm entrance. Interestingly the following was included in the minutes—"After much discussion, the Director was requested to ascertain the views of the Old Fairbridgians as to whether, in their opinion, the erection of a cairn, together with the old School bell at the Farm entrance, was a suitable memorial to their old home, or whether they would prefer to see some alternative memorial...."

At subsequent meetings on September 10th, 1975 they confirmed the cairn would cost an estimated \$500, then on November 12th, 1975 they confirmed the wording and authorised Mr. Berkerfeld to proceed and finally they approved the design which was to stand about 4 feet high, and a base of about 3 feet square as well as the location.

Mr. G.M. Berkerfield, Secretary for the Fairbridge Society in Vancouver, and employed by Burford Management Services in his reply to Molly did not mention who actually put the money up to cover the costs for its construction. However, it was later learned similar cairns were also erected at the farm schools in Australia and as indicated above the Fairbridge Society was the source of the funds. They specifically requested the cairn be placed at the entrance to the farm, or on the west side of Koksilah Road and not within the home site, which was soon to become a private residential development. As for its actual construction Mr. Berkerfield indicated that the cairn itself was erected by a local firm, the Island Stone Company, using local river rocks and the bronze plaque manufactured by Mortimers' Monumental Works Ltd. of Victoria during the summer of 1975. The letter went on to say "the entire work was done on a contract basis and Fairbridge not actually involved in the construction of the Monument. The wording on the plaque was provided by Major General W.T. Campbell, C.B.E." Mr. Grier put the fence around the site and planted some beautiful rhododendrons.

The cairn simply reads:

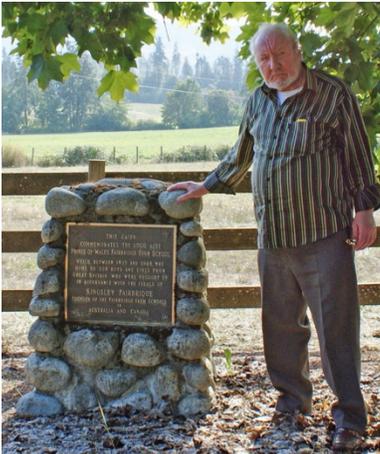
This cairn commemorates the 1000 acre

PRINCE OF WALES FAIRBRIDGE FARM SCHOOL

which, between 1935 and 1948, was Home to 328 boys and girls from Great Britain who were brought up in accordance with the ideals of

KINGSLEY FAIRBRIDGE

Founder of the Fairbridge Farm Schools in Australia and Canada



The McIvor's sent this photo of Mike next to the Cairn taken during the 2009 FCA Reunion.

The Molong Fairbridge Cairn has plaques on 4 sides.



A former Molong Fairbridgian, Jim Reid, at the Molong Plaque

Plaque at Molong 1938-1973

The plaque that was put on a large solid rock at the site of the

Molong Fairbridge Farm School reads:

“From 1938-1973 some 1,200 British and Australian Boys and Girls were brought up to love the country and to learn country skills and ways, in keeping with the ideals of Kingsley

Fairbridge, Founder of the Fairbridge Farm Schools of Australia and Canada.”



Fairbridge Chapel

For more Chapel news and updates, please see the website: <http://www.fairbridgechapel.com>.

New pictures and stories are always being added.

Send Fairbridge Chapel DONATIONS to:

Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society
4791 Fairbridge Drive, Duncan, BC V9L 6N9

Include a return address for your income tax receipt.

Fairbridge Farm School Bursary News

Donations to the Fairbridge Farm School Bursary can now be made directly to the Vancouver Foundation.

Make cheques out to the Vancouver Foundation and include the Fairbridge Farm School Bursary in the memo line.

Send to:

Stacie Graham, Coordinator, Development & Donor Services
Re: The Fairbridge Farm School Bursary, Suite 200 - 475 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 4M9

stacie.graham@vancouverfoundation.ca

T. 604.688.2204 D. 604.629.2725 |

<http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca>

Or you can still send donations c/o:

Pat Skidmore, 174 April Road, Port Moody, BC, V3H 3M7

Make cheques out to the Fairbridge Farm School Bursary

The FCA is looking for Fairbridgians who served in the Canadian Forces after 1945

The FCA Board is working on compiling a list of those Fairbridgians who joined the Canadian Forces from 1945 and on. A plaque with names of those who served during WWII is on display in the Chapel and the Board would like to include a plaque for those who served after 1945. Send names to Ron Smith or Pat Skidmore.

Britain's Family Restoration Fund has been extended to 2017.

For more information see the Child Migrant's Trust Website:

<http://www.childmigrantstrust.com/services/family-restoration-fund>

Fairbridgians Who Passed... our sympathy goes out to their families.



STANLEY SPENCE (November 20, 1935 - January 4, 2015)

Stanley Spence passed away suddenly at home on January 4th after a long illness. He was born in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1935 and came to Canada in 1946 to Fairbridge Farm School near Duncan. He had a lively sense of humour and always had a smile with a great love for life. After high school he apprenticed to become a meat cutter and worked in this trade until retirement. He is survived by his wife and best friend of 52 years, Phyllis and four children, Penny (Keith), Marilyn (Rick), Donna (Gordon) and Bradley (Paula) 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Stan loved to travel and he travelled to Scotland, Britain, Europe and Australia. A memorial tea was held at Sands Funeral Home in Victoria on January 17, 2015. In lieu of flowers please give to the Kidney Foundation of Canada. Loved always, sadly missed

Photo left: Stanley Spence at the FCA 2009 Reunion. (Pat Skidmore photo)



JAMES DEAN (1929 – January 26, 2015)

Jim passed away on January 26, just three days before his 86th birthday.

Jim was lovingly surrounded by his wife, Lily (nee Clabby) and children. Jim came to the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School Jim quit farming after his first assignment and commenced a career as a deckhand on a tugboat – he rose to the rank of Captain. Later he was an executive in charge of fleet operations.

Photos left: James Dean - 1940s and taken during the 2007 FCA Reunion. (Reunion photo by Pat Skidmore.)



MOLLIE PREECE (July 13, 1929 - March 28, 2015)

Mollie Preece was born in Bethnal Green, London England and came to the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School in August 1938. Mollie had a full and interesting life, which included a lot of travel during her Nanny years. Mollie worked at Grace Hospital from 1971-1989. After her retirement Mollie made several trips to Hawaii. Mollie gained notoriety by her donating blood. The last count Mollie recorded was 161 pints. To the left is an article from the *National Examiner* dated January 26, 1982.

Children packing for the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School taken at the Fairbridge Hostel at Benington, England. Members of the May 1947 group, the Lisle and Frankish children and ?

Tom Lisle's thoughts are: From the upper right counter clockwise: a) Peter Frankish. b) Pat Lisle. c) Gordon Dewhirst. d) Barbara Frankish. e) ??? with back towards camera. Could be Barry Whiting or two or three others. I am not sure.

Christine Brookshaw emailed saying the boy on the left, between the 2 girls looks like her father, Michael McIvor.

Thanks Tom and Christine – I wonder if anyone else has any ideas?

