



Chapter 11

Family Reunions & Picnics

The BC West cousins have a long history of good times together, from gatherings at Boundary Bay, Beach Grove and Granthams Landing, not to mention Christmas gatherings in East Burnaby, w. 52nd St., Taylor Way and Southwest Marine and of course the long-standing tradition of late August picnics at Stanley Park, Boundary Bay and many other locations.

The photo on the left was taken in August of 2015 at Gibsons. Due to the unique attendance (virtually no “young folk”), I call this one “Growing old with your kuzzins”. At this event the attendees were mostly the “senior” cousins. On the ferry on the way back, eight of us had a delightful forum, discussing things like teetotalism in the West families (which was quite rampant). We also discussed Grampa’s spirituality, which included his earliest upbringing as a Strict Baptist, exposure to the Church of England while in the military, and strong affinity for the Presbyterian Church during the Alberta years. Several cousins remember Sundays as being literally a day of rest for Grampa, usually finding him alone in his room reading the bible. Richard remembers him, later in life, regularly reading the British Israelism newsletter, a publication from a sect which believed that the British were descendants of the lost tribe of Israel.

Vancouver Wests visits to England

For close to 100 years, the Vancouver Wests have kept up connections with their English relatives, ranging from letters and post cards to Christmas gifts, and on occasion, visits to England by various family members. Gramma visited in 1927, Phil in 1926, and Grampa and Gramma in 1937, in addition to many visits of our parents, aunts and uncles and cousins from the 1950s onward. In the other direction, we enjoyed Mary Irish’s visits in the 80s and 90s, and the Elm Farm Smith brothers while they were on a trip researching the production of cottage cheese in 1967. Colin and Barbara made several trips to their sons’ family when they lived in Victoria.

The most extensive visit by far was Grampa and Gramma’s 1937 six month visit which coincided with the Coronation celebration of George VI. I have Gramma’s pocket diary of that trip and also many photographs taken of their visits with many of their England family. The diary is cryptic, to say the least, with very little detail except the place names that resonate so strongly with our England families. On page 125, there is a photo taken during their visit with Gramma’s sister-in-law Flora, her nephew Reg and niece Joyce (Prowting). There is also a photo of Grampa, looking very dapper in a well-cut suit with his brother-in-law George Long. I’ve always wondered if he was trying to impress Gramma’s brother, who was a “costumer” (haberdasher) in Bournemouth. 1937 was Grandpa’s first return to

England since the end of the war in 1918. Here is the itinerary in its entirety:

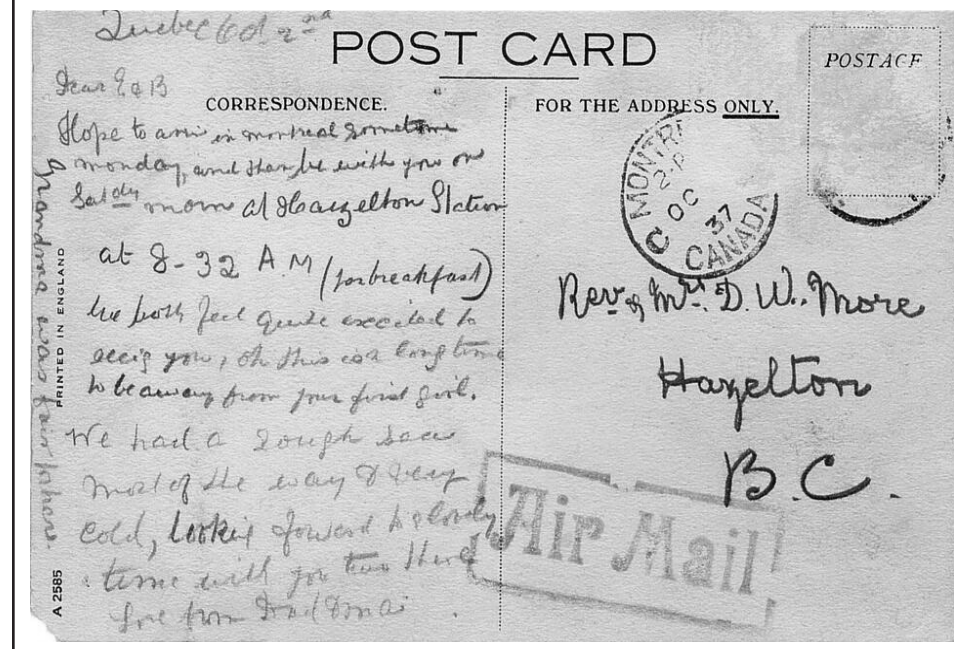
Wednesday, April 1 Left Vancouver 5:30pm, Arrived Seattle 10pm
 Thursday, April 2 Left Seattle 1am, Arrived Portland, Ore 7am
 Tuesday, April 7 Arrived Washington, DC 6am Left 12pm for New York via Philadelphia
 Wednesday, April 8 Arrived New York 7am, sailed on Ascania 5pm
 Friday, April 10 Arrived Halifax 5pm
 Saturday, April 11 Sailed from Halifax 12pm
 Sunday, April 19 Arrived Plymouth 6am
 Monday, April 20 Arrived Surrey Docks 10am - Broad Oak - 6pm
 Monday, April 27 Mayfield
 Friday, May 1 Left Heathfield for Birmingham
 Saturday, May 2 Frederick St.
 Sunday, May 3 Spent day at Lickey's
 Monday, May 4 Went to Sutton Coldfields Park
 Wednesday, May 6 Left Birmingham for Didcot
 Thursday, May 7 Drayton, saw Will
 Friday, May 8 Longworth and Hanney
 Monday, May 11 Left Didcot for Hatch End, London - saw decorations along procession route
 Tuesday, May 12 Coronation
 Wednesday, May 13 Around London
 Thursday, May 14 Trip on river from Westminster Bridge
 Friday, May 15 Harrow on Hill, Walford, Wembley etc.
 Sunday, May 17 Hampden Common
 Monday, May 18 Left London for Calne - Met at Chippenham by J and M
 Tuesday, May 19 Bow wood Park (Lord Lansdown)
 Wednesday, May 20 Maudheath monument
 Thursday, May 21 Left Calne for Stowford
 Saturday, May 23 Wingfield Church
 Sunday, May 24 Left Stowford for Bournemouth
 Friday, May 29 Christchurch Abbey Ruins
 Tuesday, June 2 Poole
 Friday, June 5 Left Bournemouth for Heathfield
 Tuesday, June 9 Mother left Bournemouth for Stowford
 Monday, June 15 Left Heathfield for Stowford
 Tuesday, June 16 Visited Cheddar Gorge, Caves, Wells Cathedral, Wookey Hole Cave and Mendips
 Thursday, June 18 Trowbridge
 Saturday, June 20 Farleigh Church
 Thursday, June 25 Trowbridge
 Friday, June 26 Visited Longleat and Heavens Gate (Perhaps Earl of Bath)
 Saturday, June 27 Farleigh Hungerford Castle
 Wednesday, July 1 Visited Wells and Glastonbury
 Thursday, July 2 Bradford on Avon, left Stowford for Calne
 Friday, July 3 Cherrill (?) White Horse and camp
 Sunday, July 5 Sherstone, Malmesbury (Abbey)
 Sunday, July 12 Avebury
 Wednesday, July 15 Left Calne, very heavy rain, went to Grove and on to Charlton
 Friday, July 17 Grove to Abingdon, Grove, Hanney, Venn, Marcham
 Saturday, July 18 Grove
 Sunday, July 19 Left Charlton for Goosey
 Monday, July 20 Drove to Drayton, saw Will
 Tuesday, July 21 Visited Venn and Hanney Mills, W. Hanney Church
 Wednesday, July 22 Garlands
 Thursday, July 23 Goring and Streat, Blewbury Mill
 Friday, July 24 Haymaking

Saturday, July 25 White Horse, Blowing Stone, Uffington
 Sunday, July 26 Left Goosey for Birmingham via Didcot, Oxford and Banbury
 Monday, July 27 Aston Park
 Tuesday, July 28 Visited Kenilworth
 Wednesday, July 29 Handsworth Park
 Friday, July 31 Sutton Coldfield Park
 Saturday, August 1 Frederick St.?
 Sunday, August 2 Lightwood Park and Warley Park
 Monday, August 3 Litchfield Cathedral, St. Chad's Church
 Tuesday, August 4 Didcot via Banbury and Oxford
 Wednesday, August 5 Henley on Thames and Wallinford
 Thursday, August 6 Drayton, Sutton Courteney, Marcham Mill
 Friday, August 7 Wantage, Challow, Goosey, W. Hanney, Garford, Frilford, Abingdon, Appleford
 Saturday, August 8 Didcot
 Sunday, August 9 Reading, Guildford, Brookwood, Dorking, Riegate, Red Hill, Bisley Godstone, E. Grinstead, Heathfield, Broad Oak
 Monday, August 10 Cade St.
 Tuesday, August 11 Battle, Hastings, Burwash

Although Gramma's diary ends here, a postcard written from the returning ship indicates that they didn't arrive back in Canada until Oct. 1, a trip of 6 months! And the first thing they did is travel to Hazelton to see my mom & dad!

Hope to arrive in Montreal sometime Monday and then be with you on Saturday morn at Hazelton Station at 8:32am (for breakfast). We both feel quite excited to see you, oh this is a long time to be away from our first girl. We had a rough sea most of the way and very cold, looking forward to a lovely time with you two there.

Love from Dad / Mom.





West meets West - 2012 “Kuzzins” visit to England

Travellers were Cally & Lorne Kramer, Connie & Bruce More, Nick & Dianne Scharfe, Loreleigh Fitzgerrald, Ann Tasker, Chantelle West, Richard West

At the beginning of October, 2012, ten West cousins and spouses met at the King Alfred statue in the Wantage town square for three days of touring ancestral places in this area of Oxfordshire (formerly Berkshire), and for visits with our England cousins. The following is my report of that trip.

Our visit to Oxfordshire went by too quickly, but all went as planned with the addition of some unplanned “goodies”. It was much like a three day convention with the Saturday family “Ancestor’s Day” reunion being the final “dinner”. For me, the high energy we felt each morning as we convened at a new location was strongly reminiscent of the times we got together as children: at Boundary Bay; at Granthams Landing; at each other’s homes at Christmas time; or with Grampa, going to the PNE. Needless to say, the participants presented the best possible face of the Vancouver Wests to our England relatives. Even though there was the odd timing or “geographical confusion” issue, my “Kuzzins” were much easier to “herd around” than the generations of university students, during my 25 years of overseas choir tours.

I am so happy to have finally realized my long-time dream of sharing this wonderful area of our ancestors with a group of my cousins. As Richard observed, the only thing that would have made it better would be to have had more of the cousins along. (The other 16 were really missed!) In addition to the visits to mills, houses, graveyards & other landmarks, we thoroughly enjoyed the five occasions during which we got to meet our

England relatives. Our Thursday lunch at The Fox in Denchworth was an opportunity to meet members of the Smith family, and for Friday lunch at the Royal Oak Pub in Didcot we met Ireson descendants. On Thursday night we were treated to a wonderful buffet prepared by Mike & Ela Ireson (mostly cooked by Ela’s mom), and on Friday night there was another large gathering of Smiths at Roger and Pam Smith’s, with especially yummy desserts. Saturday was the “main event”: the Ancestor’s Day gathering buffet at Bridge Farm, which was royally hosted by Roger & Helen Barker. Accommodation for the three days was provided by Colin and Barbara Smith (Lorne and Cally) and Richard and Sheila Smith hosted Chantelle. Richard, Ann and Loreleigh joined Connie and me at a house exchange in Oxford while Nick & Di stayed at a Wantage hotel.

The personal get togethers were really the “icing on the cake” for all of us. Seeing all the intriguing sights was one thing, but getting to know our England cousins at the same time made it particularly special. In conversations, we learned even new things about Grampa and his family (see stories in chapter 3) and had many subsequent discussions among ourselves about the circumstances surrounding Gramma and Grampa’s leaving England for Canada.

Special thanks go to Colin Smith & Ruth Pocock for being our primary England contacts. We’re also grateful to Barbara and the rest of the Smiths: Roger & Pam and Richard & Sheila, for their special contributions to our visit. Thanks to Pete, Muriel and Joe West for hosting our visit to Garlands Farm and the rest of the West sisters whom we were delighted to meet at the Ancestor’s Day. Thanks to Matt Webb and Ian Smith for showing us around Venn Mill and Venn Mill house, and to Helen and Dermot Mathias for their warm hosting at Old Blewbury Mill. Lastly, thanks to our fellow historians for all their hard work and input to our family history: Helen Barker, Helen Willemsen, Becky Harris, Chris Frances, Tim Barker and Dan Pepler. Until we meet again!



Richard thanks our hosts Roger and Helen Barker at the end of the Ancestor’s Day dinner



Left to Right, top to bottom

1. Pub lunch with Enid Ireson and Chris Jordan
2. Barbara, Helen and Pam Smith
3. Barbara, Sam and Mary Peplar and Ruth Pocock
4. Pete West, Muriel West and Colin Smith at Garland Farm
5. Sam Peplar tells Bruce about the life of Dennis West
6. The Garland Farm "girls": Muriel, Susan, Elizabeth, Rosemary & Jane
7. Cally and Ela Ireson's mom
8. Eric Ireson trades family stories with Di
9. Ruth Pocock, Sheila & Richard Smith, Chantelle
10. Our hosts including Pete, Ruth, Richard, Pam, Sheila & Roger



Next page: At Abingdon Baptist Chapel, we try to restrain Dianne from going over to the dark side (the Church of England).

