

Joan Clark nee White
English War Bride
Queen Mary
August of 1946



Editor's Note: The following memoir is based on an interview that was conducted by Elinor Maher and Beverly MacLellan for the Colchester Historical Society Museum & Archives as part of the museums Year of the War Bride research and exhibit of 2006. The Pier 21 Society would like to thank Ms. Maher, Ms. MacLellan and the war brides that contributed to this collection by sharing their experiences and impressions of the war years and their early days in Canada.

Name: Joan (nee White) Clark

Parents: Minnie and Frank White

Home: Salford, (near Manchester), England

War time memories:

"I was one of four children, two girls and two boys. My sister was Elsie and my two brothers were Phil and Ron. They all died quite young. My dad loved to sing and dance.

Everyone always went to the pub. They didn't get drunk but they 'had a pint'. There were lots of dance halls for entertainment and most people loved to dance.

Dad was soccer mad and my mother used to get him to take us to the games.



In 1939, at the start of the war, I was working in a factory, sewing military uniforms. Pretty well everyone left school at 14 and went to work. I worked with my sister Elsie who lost a hand due to an industrial accident. For part of the war I also worked in a munitions factory.



I remember we used to run to a bomb shelter whenever we heard the sirens."

Birthdate:

February 9, 1919

Husband:.

Roderick Clark

"Roddy was born in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. He had relatives in Nova Scotia but he and his sister Sadie (Rent) were raised in a Catholic orphanage. By the beginning of the war he was working in Halifax and so he joined the

North Nova Scotia Highlanders. He was stationed near Manchester."

How did you meet your husband?

"When we were young there were lots of dances and that's where we first met Canadian servicemen, including Roddy."

Wedding date:

March 25, 1943

What was your family's reaction to the news you were marrying a Canadian?

"Roddy got along well with my parents. I think they were a little upset about the fact I was moving to Canada but they didn't say much."

Can you tell us about your wedding?

"We were married at the registry office and I wore a short blue dress. There was a reception at my home and mostly it was family there.

After the wedding Roddy was away a lot with the army and I stayed with my family. He was part of the D-Day invasion of France. He just came home for short visits."

How did you come to Canada and what are your memories of the trip?

"Roddy came to Canada a few months before I did in August of 1946. My son Barrie was two and Lynda was six months old when we came by the Queen Mary to Halifax. We got special treatment on the boat because I had children with me. We got a very nice room and everyone helped with the children. Because Barrie was older they often came and took him to play and that made it easier for me. There was lots of good food."



What was the date and memories of your arrival?

August 1946

Children?

"We had five children, Barrie and Lynda were born in England. Diane and the twins Pam and Paul were born in Nova Scotia. I also have eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren."

What were your first impressions of Canada?

"I remember all I could see was trees. And I really minded the snow. In Manchester we might have gotten a little bit of snow but nothing like here."

Where did you live when you first arrived in Canada?

"We lived in Halifax for a while and then came to Truro. At first we lived with Roddy's Aunt Min on Victoria Street. Then we got our own apartment and finally our own house on Queen Street."

Tell us about the adjustments you had to make.

"There was no place to go here. No dance halls or pubs. Nothing to do when we wanted to go out. It was very different from home."

Did you have trips home?

"I had two trips home. The last time I went was in 1965 when I went over to see my dad before he died."

Did your family come to Canada to visit?

"I've had visits from my niece and some of her family. They fit right in immediately. We could all see family characteristics in them."

Did you or your children have difficulties obtaining Canadian Citizenship?

"I got my old age pension started without a problem but in 2004 when my daughter Lynda, who was born in Britain, and I applied for our Canadian passports we had to dig out proof of landing and a lot of old paperwork. It took about ten months for the Canadian citizenship cards to arrive. These cards were necessary to apply for a passport. Things seem to have gotten a lot stricter after 9/11."