

Mary Norcott nee
Greenfield
English War Bride
Samaria
June 16, 1945

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



My story begins in 1940...I lived in a village in southern England. When war was declared in 1939 I had just graduated from high school, and I soon volunteered to enlist in the WAAF. While waiting for call-up I helped out at the local garage. In the Spring of 1940 a contingent of the Canadian Army arrived in our village on practice exercises...needing gas they pulled in at the garage and that is how I met my future husband, Jack. After a few days they drove off with a goodbye wave.

In wartime England the future was uncertain and people met and parted, going their separate ways as a matter of course. However, 18 months after that first meeting I was, by now, a

member of the WAAF stationed in "Ops" at No.1 Fighter Station, Tangmere. One day as I was coming off duty I was stunned to see Jack walking down the street towards me. This was such a thousand-to-one chance that we should meet up again considering there were hundreds of Canadian servicemen and almost as many service women in southern England at the time....we now say it was just meant to be! Jack's regiment was stationed 8 miles from Tangmere and we met frequently at dances and off-duty times. At Christmas 1942 Jack proposed and we were married in June 1943. Jack went to Europe just after D-Day and I continued in the WAAF until discharged to have our first child, Michael, born Aug4, 1944 while Jack was "somewhere in France".

Michael and I came to Canada on the "Samaria" sailing from Liverpool, England on June 7, 1945. On board were contingents of troops returning to Canada from Europe as well as war brides and young children. I

believe this was the last ship to bring war brides to Canada until all the troops were transported home. Michael was 10 months old. It was a very hard voyage, we were cramped in the cabins, the children got sick, it was long before the days of Pampers, the diapers were cloth and had to be washed. We had daily life boat drills, even the young children had to put on life jackets, the war brides were given books introducing us to Canadian sayings, Canadian food and telling us what to expect in different situations. We arrived in Halifax, Canada, on June 15 - I don't know for sure but imagine we came into Pier 21 - we then had to board a train for a 2-day journey to Montreal, Quebec.

The journey up to Montreal was hard. Michael had an upset stomach, I was exhausted..but we were met in Montreal by Jack's parents (complete strangers to us) who made us very welcome as did his sister, Elsie. I arrived in Jack's hometown, Ste.Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec, in the middle of June 1945...Jack was still in Europe. I stayed with my in-laws until Jack arrived back in Canada in September 1945. Elsie introduced me to other girls my age - I was only 23 -but I was very lonely and wondered whatever I was doing so far away from home (England) !!

I did go home to England about a year and a half later...my homesick visit, I call it... I was very homesick by now mainly because we could not get settled. There was an acute housing shortage after the war which left a lot of us having to share homes , or rent rooms...not a good situation!

So Michael and I headed off back to England for three months. After about two months there I began wanting to return to Canada, missing Jack, of course, but also realizing that Canada wasn't soooo bad after all. Also I realized that I could get back to England any time, it wasn't that hard!! I always say that first trip



back to England set my course..I chose Canada and I have no regrets. I love being Canadian. I love to visit my "old home" but am always ready to return to my real home..CANADA. It will be 60 years ago this June when we landed at Pier 21 in Halifax; the same month Jack and I will be celebrating our 62nd wedding anniversary with our three sons and their families.

Edotor's Note:

When War Bride Mary Norcott visited Pier 21 with her daughter and granddaughter she planned to show them the 'then and now'



photographs of she and her husband Jack that she had donated to the museum years before. What she didn't know was that her gorgeous photographs had been made into a poster celebrating Scotiabank's Alumni Program. Mrs. Norcott was thrilled with the poster that has already represented the museum at events in Toronto and Halifax.

Granddaughter Lindsay, a Dalhousie University student, and daughter May of New Maryland, N.B., stand on either side of Mary who holds her poster