

John McKean
British Evacuee
Child
Voldendam
August 1940



In August 1940, aged 6, I was a child passenger on board SS Volendam, together with my sister Mary, en route to Canada under the CORB scheme. Three days out from Liverpool we were torpedoed, abandoned ship, were rescued and returned to UK. Remarkably, there was only one casualty, a Dutch officer. Most of the children returned home to UK, but a small number re-embarked on the next ship, SS City of Benares, which was also torpedoed: this time 83 children died.

Fifty years later, in August 1990, many of the CORB children met in York, England, for a reunion. Many stories were told, songs sung, and tears shed. So I never arrived at Pier 21, and have often wondered what would have happened if I had. I now have a good idea of what life would have been like in Canada if that fateful torpedo had not intervened.