

THE SHIPS THAT BROUGHT THE CHILDREN



Between 1935 and 1948 329 young children were brought to Canada to settle at the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School on southern Vancouver Island. They arrived at various ports on the east coast of Canada and travelled across the country thanks to the Canadian Pacific Railway. But prior to their land journey they came across the Atlantic Ocean in 17 different parties on 10 different vessels. Four of the parties travelled across the North Atlantic during World War II in 1940 and 1941. This included one party of over 33 of which 30 would eventually travel on to the Fairbridge Farm School in Molong, Australia.

For most who came on the various ships like the majestic *HMS Aquitania* or the *Empress of Canada* or the smaller tramp steamers such as the *Erria* or the “Lucky” *Bayano*—a real banana boat, few would be aware of the individual ship’s history or general statistics. The following is just another part of the Fairbridge story. Readers will note that there is more information about certain ships than others and there are also ‘gaps’ in the story—especially with the smaller ships that were largely used to transport cargo around the world although they often did have passenger accommodations for those travelling to various out of the way ports.

As mentioned above, the first party to travel across the Atlantic arrived to Fairbridge on September 25th, 1935 on the *Duchess of Atholl*, a Canadian Pacific Steamship Co. ship. It travelled from Liverpool to Quebec City and Montreal mainly from April to early November each year.

Duchess of Atholl Parties 1, 2, 4

Launched: 1927 Maiden Voyage: June 1928
Last year of service: 1942 (sunk)

Builder: W. Beardmore & Co. Ltd., Dalmuir
Owner: Canadian Pacific Steamships Ltd. Montreal
Home Port: London
Main Route: Liverpool to Montreal (April to November), Liverpool to Halifax and St. Johns N.B. winter

Gross Tonnage: 20,119
Length; 582 feet, Breadth 75.2 feet
Propulsion: Geared turbines, 2 Screw Shafts
Cursing Speed: 17-18 knots

Capacity: 580 Cabin, 480 Tourists, 510 3rd Class
Crew; 510

Historic Notes:

On August 27th 1939 all the CP *Duchess* ships were taken over, or requisitioned, by the U.K. Admiralty and put into war time service. When it was sunk it was carrying a great many armed forces personal from the British southern African colonies.

The *Duchess of Atholl* was sunk by U-178 on October 10, 1942. It had left Durban, South Africa, stopped at Cape Town on October 3rd and was bound for Freetown and then on to the United Kingdom. There were 534 passengers and 265 crew on board of which 825 survived. Four crew members, likely in the engine room, were killed.

Duchess of Richmond Parties 3, 10, 17

(Renamed the *Empress of Canada* on July 12, 1947)

Launched: June 18, 1928 Maiden Voyage: March 15, 1929
Last year of service: 1953 (fire)

Builder: John Brown & Co. Ltd. Glasgow
Owner: Canadian Pacific Steamships Ltd. Montreal
Home Port: London
Main Route: Liverpool to Montreal (same as other Duchess services (see above))

Gross Tonnage: 20,022 (in 1947 20,325)
Length 601 feet (183 metres) Breadth 75.3 feet (22.94 metres)
Propulsion: Geared turbines, 2 Screw Shafts
Cursing Speed: 18 knots

Capacity: 580 Cabin, 480 Tourist, 510 3rd Class (1929 to 1946)
400 First, 300 Tourist (changes in 1947)
Crew: 510

Historic Notes:

The ship made a great many North Atlantic convoy crossings during World War II. It caught fire on January 25, 1953 at the 4 Gladstone Dock, Liverpool and capsized. It was re-floated but sent to La Spezia, Italy and scrapped.

Duchess of Bedford Parties 5, 8, 9

(Renamed the *Empress of France* in 1947)

Launched; January 24, 1928
Last year of service: December 1960

Builder: John Brown & Co. Ltd., Glasgow
Owner: Canadian Pacific Steamships Ltd. Montreal
Home Port: London
Main Route: Liverpool to Montreal (same as other Duchess services (see above))

Gross Tonnage: 20,123
Length: 601 feet (183 metres) Breadth 75.2 feet (22.9 metres)
Propulsion: geared turbines, 2 Screws Shafts
Cursing Speed: 18 knots

Capacity: 580 Cabin, 480 Tourist, 510 3rd Class (1928 to 1946)
400 First, 300 Tourist (1946-1957)
218 First, 482 Tourist (1958 to 1960)
Crew: 510

Duchess of York Parties 6, 7

Launched: September 28, 1928 Maiden Voyage: March 22, 1929

Last year in service: July 11, 1943 (crippled by German aircraft attack, then sunk the next day by the Royal Navy)

Builder: John Brown & Co. Ltd., Glasgow

Owner: Canadian Pacific Steamships Ltd. Montreal

Home Port: London

Main Route: Liverpool to Montreal (same as other Duchess services (see above))

Gross Tonnage: 20,021

Length 600 feet (183 metres) Breadth 75 feet (22.9 metres)

Propulsion: Geared turbines, twin screw

Speed: 18 knots

Capacity: 580 Cabin, 480 Tourist, 510 3rd Class

ts Madura Party 11

Launched: 1921

Scrapped: 1953

Builder: Barclay Currie & Co., Glasgow

Owner: British India Steam Navigation Co.

Gross tonnage: 8,975

Length 485 feet Breadth 58.3 feet

Speed: 13 knots

Historic Notes:

the “ts” refers to it being termed a “tramp steamer” and much of its service was between minor ports throughout south east Asia. it was both a passenger and cargo vessel.

SS Bayano II Parties 12, 13

Launched: 1917

Scrapped: 1956, Ghent

Builder: Alexander Stephen & Son, Glasgow

Owner: Elders & Fyffes

Gross Tonnage: 6,788

Length 425.5 feet Breadth 54.2 feet

Historic Notes:

This ship brought two parties of children to Fairbridge. The first was the November 8th, 1941 party of 16 or the last party before a four year halt to parties coming across the Atlantic Ocean. Then, in July it transported a group of 13 boys when travel was again safer after World War II. The party arrived at Fairbridge on July 29th.

The Bayano was called the “Lucky Bayano” for a good reason. It made more Atlantic crossings during World War II than any other merchant ship—a total of 52, including Convoy ON-28 which arrived in Quebec City on November 4th, 1941 with the 12th party. (ON stands for Operation North). The ship was a true banana boat as its usual run was from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom with bananas. Records showed that it carried over 3,000,000,000 bananas over its long 41 years on the high seas!! Fyffes Ltd. had 21 vessels in its fleet at the beginning of WW II but lost 14 from 1939 to 1945. Some of the banana boats could accommodate more than 100 passengers.

SS Erria Party 13

Launched: 1932

Scrapped: Osaka, Japan, 1962

Owner; East Asiatic Company, Kobenhaven, Denmark

Gross Tonnage: 7,670

Historic Notes:

The ship could accommodate 74 passengers and 4 boys and 10 girls on the split Fairbridge party number 13 came on this ship. See above—SS Bayano

SS Beaverford II Party 14

(Originally the SS Empire Kitchener (1944-1946) owned by the British Government)

Launched: 1944

Scrapped: 1969

Builder: Caledon Shipbuilding & Engineering Company Ltd, Dundee

First Owner: British Government

Second Owner: Canadian Pacific Steamship Ltd., Montreal (1946 to 1962)
and was renamed SS Beaverford

Third Owner: Alliance Marine (1963 to 1966) and renamed the Hulda

Gross Tonnage: 9,881

Length 151.6 metres Breadth 19.6 metres

Speed: 15 knots

Historic Notes:

The Empire Kitchener was renamed the SS Beaverford in memory of the original Beaverford that was lost on November 5, 1940 during the height of the Battle for the Atlantic in World War II along with all its entire seventy-seven crew members while taking action against a German pocket battleship, *Admiral Scheer* so the rest of the convoy HX84 fleet could take evasive action and escape. Thirty-two vessels made good their escape of the thirty-eight ship convoy. There is a considerable amount of information about the ship and gallant crew on the web. (HX means the convoy started from Halifax).

As for the end of the ship—the Hulda—is was driven ashore as a result of Hurricane Camille in August 1969 at Gulfport, Mississippi then taken to Onomichi, Japan for scrapping.

SS Manchester Shipper Party 15

SS Manchester Trader *SS Manchester Port*

SS Manchester Progress *SS Manchester City*

It is not at all clear which ship of the Manchester Liners, as the company was called, brought the 15th Party across the Atlantic. Their usual run was from Manchester and Liverpool to Canadian ports along the east coast including Quebec City and Montreal. Seven out of ten of their fleet was lost during World War II although as you can see below some new ships were being built during the war years.

SS Manchester Shipper

Launched 1943

Scrapped 1969

Builder, Blythswood Shipbuilding Company, Scotstoun

Owner: Manchester Liner

Home Port: Manchester

Gross Tonnage 7,585

Length 461.5 feet Breadth 58 feet

Propulsion: 3 Steam turbines, single screw shaft

Speed: 15 knots

SS Manchester Trader

Launched: 1941

Scrapped: 1963

Builder: Blythswood Shipbuilding Company, Scotstoun

Owner: Manchester Liner

Home Port: Manchester

Gross Tonnage: 5671

Length 432 feet Breadth 57 feet

Propulsion: Steam turbine

SS Manchester Port

Launched: July 30, 1935

Scrapped: September 29, 1964

Builder: Blythswood Shipping Company, Scotstoun

Owner: Manchester Liner

Home Port: Manchester

Gross Tonnage: 5649

Length 422 feet Breadth 56 feet

Propulsion: Steam turbine

SS Manchester Progress

Launched: June 28, 1938
Scrapped: January 15, 1966

Builder: Blythswood Shipbuilding Company, Scotstoun
Owner: Manchester Liner Ltd.
Home Port: Manchester

Gross Tonnage: 5620
Length 430.7 feet Breadth 57 feet
Propulsion; 3 steam turbine SR geared to single screw shaft

SS Manchester City

Launched: June 23, 1937
Scrapped: May 15, 1964

Builder: Blythswood Shipbuilding Company, Scotstoun
Owner: Manchester Liners, Ltd.
Home Port: Manchester

Gross Tonnage: 5600
Length 430.7 feet Breadth 27 feet
Propulsion: 3 steam turbine SR geared to 1 screw shaft
Speed; 13.5 knots

Historic Note:

All of these Manchester Liner vessels survived World War II and eventually returned to their owners. There may be some other source of information such as sailing dates of voyages to Canada, passenger list or other stores that would pinpoint exactly which ship was used to transport party 15.

***HMS Aquitania* Party 16**

Launched: April 21, 1913 Maiden Voyage: May 30 to June 4, 1914 (Liverpool-New York)
Scrapped: 1950

Builder: John Brown & Co. Clydebank, Scotland
Owner: Cunard Line

Gross Tonnage 45,647
Length 901 feet Breadth 97 feet
Propulsion: Direct Drive steam turbines, 4 screw shafts
Speed: 23 knots

Passenger Capacity (1914-1925) 3,230, (1926-1939) 610 1st Class, 950 2nd Class, 640 Tourist Class
Crew: 972

Historic Notes

The British Admiralty requisitioned the ship in 1939 as a troop carrier and it could transport over 7,000 armed forces personnel at one time. After the Second World War it was used to bring returning troops back to North America, usually landing at Halifax. From late 1945 to 1948 the return voyage carried British children who had been evacuated to Canada and the United States back to the United Kingdom. The ship was returned to Cunard Lines on April 1, 1948 and over the next two months refitted to carry immigrants. On May 25, 1948 it was chartered by the Canadian government to bring immigrants from Southampton to Halifax. It made 25 such trips.

Over its 36 year history it had steamed about 3 million miles in 450 voyages and carried over 1.2 million passengers.

