

The following article was first published under the name of Peggotty on November 26, 2015, exactly 3 years to the day before Ted G. Davy's death. The article was republished on November 27, 2015 in the *Great Yarmouth Mercury* and included the photo of researcher, Norfolk-born John Reid, who now lives in Canada. He compiled the dossier about British pupils being evacuated in 1940 to his adopted country.



John Reid

YARMOUTH EVACUEES BRAVED PROWLING U-BOATS TO REACH CANADA

PUBLISHED: November, 26, 2015 By PEGGOTTY

Although the Second World War ended 70 years ago, surprising new information stemming from it continues to come to my attention. It is well recorded that in June 1940, 3,700 schoolchildren from our borough were part of a one-day railway exodus of 47,000 youngsters from 18 East Coast towns, deemed vulnerable to attack, to the comparative safety of the Midlands. But I have just learned of a new destination: Canada, thousands of miles from home!

There was no mass departure for Canada as there was for Retford on that 1940 Sunday at Vauxhall Station, but nonetheless 6,650 British youngsters embarked on perilous voyages across the North Atlantic, braving the German submarines armed with torpedoes that were stalking Allied shipping.

Of those who survived the crossing, officially termed British Guest Children (BGC), two were from Yarmouth.

I am obliged to Hemsby-born John Reid, long resident in Ottawa, for supplying me with the detailed document he compiled, his interest stemming from the fact that he knew one of those two evacuees, *Teddie Gerald Davy*, who had won a scholarship to Yarmouth Grammar School.

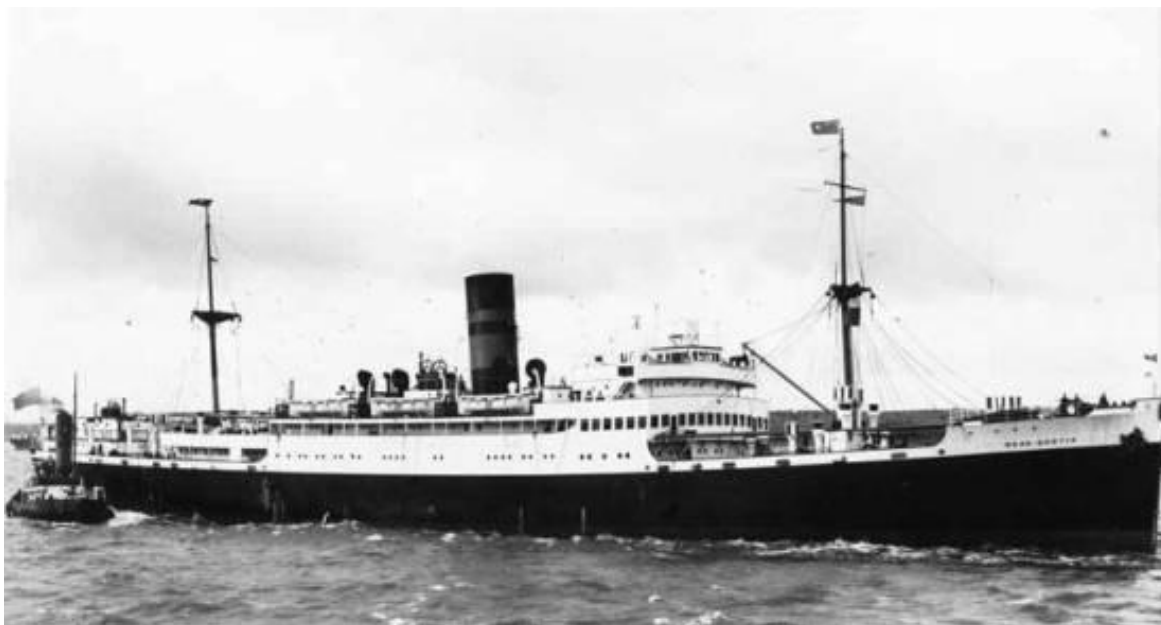
"His brother Bertie was a work colleague of my father at Watson's Garage on Southtown Road - long gone. What's especially poignant about the story is the death of Teddie's father in a bombing raid on Yarmouth not too long after the evacuation," explains John.

The other lad was *Oscar Michael Hull*, although his first two names were sometimes reversed. He was born in 1927 near King's Lynn, but at the time of his evacuation was living with his widowed mother on Salisbury Road in Yarmouth.

All British evacuees were passengers from Liverpool on ten former ocean liners. One, the Dutch vessel *Volendam*, was torpedoed two days out but all 320 of her young passengers were saved by lifeboats and returned to their port of departure. Seventy-seven of the 90 evacuees on the *City of Benares* died, mainly from exposure, when she was torpedoed.

Another convoy included the battleship *HMS Revenge* as an escort. However, she was on a double mission: not only was she helping to safeguard the convoy but also was secretly transferring to Canada £14.5 million in gold from Great Britain.

Thirteen-year-old Teddie Davy - and, possibly, Michael Hull too - was among the 29 youthful passengers on the final vessel to make the crossing under the scheme, the Nova Scotia, which arrived safely in the Canadian port of Halifax after a 12-day voyage during which five other convoy members were sunk.



The ex-liner Nova Scotia on which teenager Teddie Davy was evacuated to Canada in 1940. RMS Nova Scotia (Royal Mail Ship) was a 6,796 GRT UK transatlantic ocean liner. In World War II she was requisitioned as a troop ship. She was the sister

ship of RMS Newfoundland, which Vickers, Sons & Maxim, Ltd of Barrow-in-Furness built Nova Scotia for Furness, Withy & Co of Liverpool, had launched for the same owner 11 months previously. In 1942 a German submarine sank her in the Indian Ocean with the loss of 858 of the 1,052 people aboard.

No pre-arranged host awaited him, but the authorities placed him in the care of a retired Royal Canadian Air Force chaplain, the Rev Walter Dunlap. Within three years, he had voluntarily returned home to England.

Teddie's particulars, culled from the records by John, say his parents were Herbert and Louisa Davy, of Nelson Road Central, Yarmouth.

John tells us that in 2008 Teddie was interviewed at his Canadian home, recalling his 1940 evacuation to Nottinghamshire where he read in a national newspaper about the scheme to send some pupils to Canada.

"He pestered his parents in Great Yarmouth with a letter a day until they made an application for him to be part of the scheme," continues John. "He was taken to Liverpool directly from Nottinghamshire and recalls the voyage on the Nova Scotia as easy, with no sea-sickness as he'd previously been in boats on the North Sea.

"He was well-treated as part of the host family in Halifax. When his host family was transferred to

Montreal, he decided to return to England which he did as a cabin boy on a Norwegian cargo ship in January 1943.



AIR-RAID VICTIMS: five special constables were killed when their station in this garage building on Queen's Road, Great Yarmouth, was hit by a parachute mine in 1941.

"Mr Davy returned to Canada in 1948 as part of an Ontario government immigration scheme to help farmers, and commented that he was one of the few who actually fulfilled the three-month requirement on a farm. Subsequently he joined the Canadian Navy for five years, then settled in Toronto before moving to Calgary about 30 years ago.

"He remains in contact with the daughter of his host and considers the decision he made in 1940 and subsequent experience in Canada to have been very positive."

As for Michael Hull, his widowed mother was named on the documentation as Dorothy Perfitt, of Salisbury Road, Yarmouth, with W F Perfitt, of the same address, as next-of-kin.

His only placement in Canada was in Halifax with a childless couple, Frederick Hayes and his wife; his host was a university professor of zoology.

John says records show Michael would have stayed at school until he was 16 and had matriculated, but as his parents had no special plans for him, he joined the Canadian Merchant Navy and decided to remain permanently in his adopted country.

John also notes that Commonwealth War Graves Commission records reveal that Teddie's father,

Herbert, "was killed in Great Yarmouth in the collapse of a garage in April 1941 while on duty as a special constable."

That building in Queen's Road was James Calver's Seagull Garage. Herbert's colleagues who died when it was hit by a parachute mine during Yarmouth's biggest and most widespread air-raid of the war thus far were George Brown, William Harrison, Percy Smowton and Frederick Willsmore.

Reviewing his evacuation research, John writes: "People still argue about whether moving to Canada and elsewhere was a good thing. Statistically, more children died in the City of Benares disaster than would likely have died from bombing in England, leading some to call transporting these children through U-boat infested waters 'a war crime'.

"Others point to the better living conditions most evacuees experienced."

As for Hemsby-born John, 70, his father, Charles, worked his way up from motor mechanic to manager of Watson's Garage. His mother taught at Stradbroke Junior School in Gorleston which John attended.

The family moved from Gorleston to Bradwell, then in Suffolk, and John went from Lowestoft Grammar School to Leicester University where he got a BSc before emigrating to Canada to work in meteorology, adding MSc and PhD degrees, then transferring to science management and policy.

In retirement he is involved with family and local history.
