

Ribble - A Lasting Legacy

Child Migration



1859 - 2009



Ribble

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Introduction

Incidences of child migration to Canada, Australia and, to a lesser extent, the United States are documented in our records between 1864 and 1930. While there were periods during which this option was regularly offered to boys whose discharge was imminent, it was not on as large a scale as similar programmes implemented in other care organisations, such as Quarrier's. Children were generally sent to these countries to meet farm labour shortages, particularly with regard to Canada, which was growing, developing, and opening up huge areas of farm land during the nineteenth century. With respect to Kibble boys, emigration was voluntary and parental consent was sought in cases where the boys had parents.



Early Cases:

The earliest cases of child migration documented in Kibble's records are few and far between, and were fairly exceptional. Some of these were under more irregular circumstances than others; for example, William McCulloch of Greenock, sentenced to fifteen days in prison and three years in the reformatory for theft of a flannel shirt in 1860, when he was fourteen years old, is recorded as having 'left irregularly'. He stowed away on a ship to the West Indies and 'afterwards settled at the boilermaker trade'. Another Greenock boy, David Gray, was sent to prison for fifteen days then to Kibble for five years for stealing a silver brooch. He was 'liberated by warrant' in 1864 at the age of sixteen. First working as a blacksmith in Greenock, he subsequently went to sea and, sadly, 'died in the West Indies'.

(Miss Kibble's Reformatory Admissions Register 1859-1880)



Charles Brannan of Saltcoats received the same sentence as David Gray, for theft of lead pipes, when he was twelve years old. Liberated by warrant in 1865, having spent almost four years in the reformatory, he 'went to America' and was 'doing well as a shoemaker in Providence, Rhode Island'. It is probable that he learned the trade of shoemaking in Kibble as this was the most common trade taught in the school at that time.

(Miss Kibble's Reformatory Admissions Register 1859-1880)

In 1862, William Cameron, aged twelve, of Paisley was sent to prison for the standard fourteen days before being committed to Kibble for five years. His "crime" was stealing cabbages. Unusually, he was released after eighteen months and 'allowed to go to America with his mother under warrant'. Alex McLuskey, also from Paisley, was released under similar circumstances in 1867; he, too, went to America with his mother.

(Miss Kibble's Reformatory Admissions Register 1859-1880)

Later Cases:

Records from 1910-1914 refer to boys proposed for licence being eager to emigrate, and being encouraged to do so, mainly to Australia. Kibble's records have a few brief follow-up reports on these boys but most of the information we have on them has come from an Australian historian, Elspeth Grant MA Hons. Elspeth's research quest began with her father, Peter, who was carrying out family history research and discovered from personal papers that his late grandfather, Lewis Grant, had been sent to Australia by 'the Kibble Farm School' in July 1914. The family had no idea about Lewis's Kibble background until after his death, when Peter discovered papers referring to his means of immigration. Lewis had always claimed that he stowed away on a ship to Australia, perhaps because of the potential stigma attached to the real story. Elspeth subsequently researched and wrote her Honours dissertation on the groups of boys who went to Australia, via Kibble, during this period. We were delighted to welcome her on a visit to Kibble in July 2008, during her trip to the UK, and to allow her to see Lewis's original Kibble records.

Motivations behind the South Australian government's scheme to recruit British boys for its farm apprenticeship programme were basically twofold: on the Australian side, it was a key component of the government's strategy to boost the state's rural population, with long-term settlement of the young migrants in their country being their ultimate goal. On the British side, there were aspirations on the part of Thomas Sedgwick, a civil servant who led a committee comprised of managers of boys' clubs and other social workers, and managers of lads' clubs themselves, to break the cycle of "blind alley" (dead end) occupations and unemployment. They aimed to achieve this by gaining long term employment for their charges on colonial farms.¹

¹ Grant, E., "Opportunity for Boys to Become Farmers": The South Australian Government's Scheme for the Emigration of British Lads, 1913-14, Unpublished undergraduate dissertation, University of Adelaide, Oct. 2007, p.21

Later Cases:

Initially reluctant to accept ex-reformatory boys due to fears that they were incapable of reform, the South Australian government was reassured that they would become 'good and useful citizens'.² Kibble supplied most of the ex-reformatory boys to the scheme, sending seventeen boys in three different groups between October 1913 and July 1914. It appears that Kibble's governor, Mr James Love, tried to provide some of his most promising pupils to the emigration scheme: George Kirkhope McPhail and James Pettigrew were successive school captains; Alexander Simpson had been Secretary to the School Council for three years; the other boys also had good reports. It also seems that Mr Love was attempting to provide these boys with the best opportunities available when they were discharged from Kibble, as some of them had no homes to return to or, as ex-reformatory boys, may have faced prejudice in their local communities. Emigration could have offered them a fresh start.

² State Records of South Australia, GRG7/53, 'Letters received by Immigration Department from the Agent-General, London, 1911-15, 12 December 1913 report, cited in Grant, E., 2007, p.32

Their fortunes in Australia were mixed, with some moving on from their initial placements to other employers and industries. In 1915 and early 1916, sixteen of the boys enlisted in Australian Imperial Force (AIF), while one remained on the home front in Australia with the 74th Battalion of Australian Military Forces. Six of the boys died in WWI, in 1917-18, and were buried in Scotland, England and France.³ In a very poignant case, Alexander Simpson died thirty minutes after Armistice Day (11th November 1918) ended and was consequently afforded a full military funeral near the Australians' Monte Video Camp in Weymouth, England.⁴ The surviving boys were repatriated to South Australia when the war ended, with the exception of William Arthur who was one of very few AIF soldiers discharged in London. It is not clear why he was granted this privilege but he intended to return to Glasgow.⁵

³ Grant, E., "Opportunity for Boys to Become Farmers": The South Australian Government's Scheme for the Emigration of British Lads, 1913-14, Unpublished undergraduate dissertation, University of Adelaide, Oct. 2007, p.40

⁴ National Archives of Australia (NAA), B2455, Simpson, cited in Grant, E., 2007, p.40

⁵ NAA, B2455, Arthur; and Clement Lloyd and Jacqueline Rees, *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia*, Melbourne UP, Carlton, 1994, p.119, cited in Grant E., 2007, p. 40

Later Cases:

One of the original seventeen boys, Hugh Lawson, had a more chequered life than some of the others, deserting in 1915 then enlisting again under the name of Robert Taylor (the name of one of the other Kibble boys). He deserted again before re-enlisting as Lewis Grant (Elspeth's great grandfather's name), which he adopted as his pseudonym for the rest of his life. Numerous convictions and prison sentences, linked to alcoholism, followed during the 1920s-1950s.

The real Robert Taylor also used aliases and followed a life of more petty crime. He eventually settled in Adelaide, where he was repeatedly arrested for begging, drunkenness and generally being a 'rogue and a vagabond'.⁶ Three other boys became known criminal offenders, one of whom died in Melbourne in 1932 and another who was a resident of the Northfield Mental Hospital when he died in 1959.

Although none of the boys became farmers after the war, three to four of them settled in South Australia, married and raised families. George McPhail's grandson, Graeme Parsons, visited Kibble with his wife and son in October 2008 while on a trip from Australia to the UK. Like Lewis Grant, George had never told his family about his association with Kibble and they only discovered this through Elspeth Grant's research and Kibble's Lasting Legacy project. Graeme and his family enjoyed their visit to the school and the opportunity to see George's original records and view the locations where George would have lived and worked almost a century ago. George joined the Australian Infantry and fought in the trenches during the First World War. He made his only visit to Glasgow in 1917 while on leave, to visit his mother Lizzie McPhail and his four sisters. On his return to Australia he worked with engineering and agricultural businesses.

⁶ *Police Gazette*, 1928, p.291; 1934, pp.96, 101, 187, 200, 286; 1935, p. 189; 1938, p. 420; 1939, pp. 217, 324; 1941, p. 332; 1942, photo supplement (no. 1852), pp. 54, 246, 257, 271-2, 309, 364; 1943, pp. 7, 27, 169, 291; 1944, pp. 15, 40, 79, 105, 322, 349, 403, cited in Grant, E., 2007, p. 43

Later Cases:

He later developed a plan to turn South Australia into a centre of a heavy chemical industry based on local salt supplies. It is particularly touching in this Homecoming Scotland year that George's daughter, Judith now aged eighty-two, has travelled from her home in Australia along with her son Graeme and his wife and her grandson Kieran to attend Kibble's 150th anniversary events. Kibble is delighted to welcome three generations of George's descendants to join in our celebrations.

Another instance of child migration in Kibble's records during this period tells the story of Maurice Magulsky, the son of a wine and cigar merchant, of 'Jewish parentage'. His home was 'a fine house in the West End of Glasgow'. Maurice's father wanted to get him a situation in France, 'where he would pick up the language and ultimately be useful to his father in business'. Maurice was described as above average in mental capacity and bright and original in his ideas. His occupation in school was a box maker and his conduct was very good. The record predicted that he would do well in the world 'if he keeps on the straight and narrow'.

(Kibble Minutes of Education Committee Meetings, Minutes of Dec. 1912 meeting)

However, follow-up reports on Maurice indicate that he chose a very different path from his father's preferred choice. Discharged from Kibble on 30th May 1913, a progress report from September 1914 states that he was a missionary in Kingston, Ontario, in Canada.

(Kibble Report on Progress of Former Pupils 1898-1913, p. 66)

A subsequent report says that he had become a 'minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Garden City, NS'. Despite trying to trace what became of Maurice after this, through Canadian records, no further information was found.

(Kibble Visitors' Book 1859-1963, March 1916 entry)

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1920s Cases:

Kibble's archive records only a further twenty-nine cases of child emigration between 1920 and 1930, all of whom went to Canada. Some of them went to stay with relatives in Canada; others took up various employment roles, including farm service, shop assistant, lumber worker, and hotel steward. These boys were not permitted to return to the UK until they had reached the age of nineteen. The youngest boy to be sent under this scheme was sixteen years and one month old and the oldest was eighteen years and eleven months, so their legally required duration of stay could vary considerably.

During their time in Canada most of them kept in touch with Kibble by letter, which would have been a requirement of their licence conditions. In addition, school staff would occasionally visit boys' parents in order to receive updates about their progress. Although most of the boys did well in Canada and expressed that they liked the country, the majority of them seem to have returned to Scotland; some at the first opportunity and others after spending longer than the minimum legally required time.

1920s Cases:

The last two boys emigrated from Kibble were Joseph Watson and Peter Shedden (or Sheddin), aged seventeen years five months and seventeen years seven months respectively. Both boys sailed on the *Albertic*, a White Star Dominion Line ship, on 7th April 1930, arriving at Halifax, Nova Scotia one week later. Peter went from there to Ontario but there is no information on Joseph's onward destination. Kibble received news from Joseph's mother in August 1930 that he was in prison; however no further details of this are recorded. He returned from Canada in March 1932 and visited the school a few days after his arrival, saying that he had good prospects of work in Glasgow; by the end of July 1933 he was in the army and doing well.

(Kibble Discharge and Licence Register 1929-1934)

Peter wrote to his parents in July 1930, saying that he liked the country and was doing well. His Kibble record says that he sent a letter to the school in January 1931 and that he 'seems to have landed with good people and is very happy'. Peter visited the school in June 1937, having returned home permanently. He was 'on lookout for work' and 'looking very fit'.

(Kibble Discharge and Licence Register 1929-1934)

There are no further references to officially sanctioned and facilitated child migration in Kibble's records after 1930.



Conclusion:

Organised, official initiatives and programmes to facilitate the migration of British children were in operation between 1868 and 1925, with around 100,000 British children sent to Canada under the auspices of around twenty five individual charity organisations. Over 7000 Scottish children were sent to Canada by Quarriers alone, between the early 1870s and the early 1920s. Others went to Australia and the former Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).⁷ Kibble's contribution to child migration numbers was, therefore, relatively very small.

The impact of the Great Depression was affecting Canada very severely by the late 1920s and early 1930s. Canada therefore became reluctant to support immigrants and they refused to take any more "Home Children". Nevertheless, migration of other groups of British children to other parts of the world continued until 1967.

The importance of migration to Australia is demonstrated by this 1928 quote from our Visitors' Book:

'The Kibble Institution is a veritable seed-plot for growing the true Empire Stock. I hope to secure many of its planting for my own country.'
WJ Grant, New South Wales, June 18th 1928

⁷ *The Heatherbank Museum of Social Work, Glasgow Caledonian University, Factsheet 9,*

150 years

Kibble



Lewis Grant, arrived in Australia on the Orsova in 1914 as a young man and spent the rest of his life in Australia.



The boys who arrived in South Australia on the Geelong on 11 October 1913 at the Domestic Helpers' Home, Charles Street, Norwood.



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If you are interested in finding out more about the child migration history of Kibble, or perhaps you would like to contribute to it by telling your own story, please contact:

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