

# Brother, Sister Meet

BELLEVILLE - BIOGRAPHY - ASHCROFT ✓

## After 57 Years Apart

*Intel apr 13/73*

Neither of them will quite know a moment like it again.

For one thing, there are few such moments when a brother and sister like Alfred Ashcroft and Agnes Slater are reunited after nearly six decades.

Their reunion, ending a separation of 57 years — and several thousand miles — came as the Montreal - Toronto train halted at Belleville yesterday.

Even the keen chill of the early spring day was lost in the warmth of the occasion.

"I've been looking for this day for years," said Mrs. Slater, after both had embraced on a recognition that was almost instantaneous for both.

For the day, Mrs. Slater, now a widow, has been saving some time to make the trip from her Essex, England home.

"I knew her as soon as I saw her," added Mr. Ashcroft, a Picton - area resident since his immigration to Canada as a young man. "She looks just like our mother did."

Then the last of a family of 16, they were surrounded by family members of a younger generation and left for the Ashcroft home in Cherry Valley to talk in more detail.

In fact, said Mrs. Slater, that's what she'll mainly concentrate on during her three-week stay on her first visit to Canada: Not travel, but talk.

They'll have much to talk about. Like the ironies of wartime. The first war that separated them. The second that frustratingly delayed their reunion even though they were within easy travelling distance.

Mr. Ashcroft, now 74, last saw his sister when he left home to enlist in the British fleet in World War I, serving aboard a battlecruiser. When he returned home she was

working elsewhere in domestic service. In 1921, they still had not seen each other when Mr. Ashcroft emigrated — first working on a farm in the Picton area, later as assistant lighthousekeeper on Main Duck Island.

Came World War II, and Mr. Ashcroft enlisted again—this time in the Canadian Navy. Several times his ship touched port in England and he was hopeful of seeing his sister. Each time the demands of wartime allowed him no leave. He sailed back to Canada without making contact.

Peacetime found them still separated. Mr. Ashcroft retired after being a stationary engineer.

Meantime, Mrs. Slater had become widowed — and decided to make the reunion trip herself.

"I always wanted to come over and see him . . . so I saved up — and here we are," she said.

On the trip Mrs. Slater, now a grandmother of four — her brother has three grandchildren — was accompanied by son-in-law Reg Turner and his daughter Lesley.

Lesley, at least for a day, will become one of the central figures during the reunion. April 17 she's to have her eighth birthday party.

Ashcroft, Alfred

Intel, April 13 1973