

Evacuation experiences

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MY IMPRESSIONS OF LIFE IN THE COUNTRY.

Life in the country impresses me as being very peaceful. One can sit in a field under a shady tree in complete quietness except for the singing of the birds and the rustle of the swaying boughs overhead. In the country there is not the smoky atmosphere of the city and it is much pleasanter to walk in fields with cows mooing and grazing on each side, than to walk along a grey dirty looking street, with litter thrown about the ground, and smoky houses for surroundings. It is lovely to wake up in the morning to feel the cool keen fresh air on one's face. In the autumn it is such fun to gather in the harvests and it is interesting to see the trees changing into their autumn dresses. There are not many heavy motor vehicles, and speeding motor cars in the country and one can walk freely along the country roads without having any cars hooting behind. The countryside population is very scattered but the people work very hard in order to produce vegetables, fruit and all kinds of other foodstuffs which they take to town and sell on market days.

—Sent by **Ellen Howard**, aged 13 years,
39, Ivy Street, Birkenhead, billeted
at 37, Orchard Street, Oswestry.

Credit: The National Archives

A letter written by Ellen Howard, an evacuee from Birkenhead aged 13.

'Michael Aspel, who was evacuated as a seven-year-old from London to Somerset, recalled the 'punch-ups' with local children "who did not want us there at all". Many country people believed that urban children were dirty, lice-ridden and badly behaved, he added. But the worst thing was not knowing how long he was going to be away from home. "It was bewildering and very disturbing," he said. "The fear was that we were never going to go home. A lot of people had a very dark and troubled time."

Extract of an article from The Guardian

“ We were herded like cattle around the streets of Oswestry, officials knocking on the doors of those who had put their names down as wanting an evacuee. That person come out of his house and chose whom they like the look of. It was total chaos. Some children were still being walked around the streets at midnight. ”

Margaret Corlett

Credit: The National Archives

Memoirs of Margaret Corlett, who was evacuated from Birkenhead to Oswestry

BORDER COUNTIES WELCOME CITY CHILDREN

GREAT SCHEME CARRIED OUT WITHOUT A HITCH

MAGNIFICENT WORK BY LOCAL RECEPTION WORKERS

The great scheme of evacuating some three million children and mothers of infants under five years of age from what are regarded as vulnerable areas to less vulnerable areas came into operation on Friday.

By yesterday (Tuesday) the evacuation was practically complete. Everything proceeded “according to plan” and the whole scheme went through with such smooth precision as to call for the highest admiration for the enthusiasm and efficiency of all those taking part.

To the Border Counties have come thousands of these children and it can be said that they received a real kindly Border welcome. Oswestry as a distributing centre saw the arrival of some 4,000 mothers and children for the borough and the Rural District spread over four days.

The various reception committees threw themselves into the work with whole-hearted enthusiasm and the smooth way in which the children were detained and conveyed to their destinations by buses to the rural areas and by private motor cars in the borough is worthy of the highest praise. And not only the committees but the various urban and rural officials, the railway staffs, the bus conductors, the owners of private cars and the people who have taken the children into their homes have worked with a unity of purpose.

Credit: The National Archives

Newspaper extract from a local paper, Oswestry, Shropshire.

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Credit: Trinity Mirror / Mirrorpix / Alamy Stock Photo

Evacuees returning from Leicestershire play in the street in the East End of London.



Credit: piemags / Alamy Stock Photo

An evacuee feeds pigs on a farm in Pembrokeshire, Wales.

"We found it difficult to keep them entertained outside school hours. These boys had been brought up to regard the cinema and fish and chip shop as essential to their lives."

William Abingdon, a volunteer host.

"I want to come home. I want to come home."

Emily Gertrude in a letter to her mother.