

ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE



‘Another Time, Another Place’

Peter Prasadam: Head of School

Year Six teachers: Claire Cull, Vikki Rowland and Rachel Rennie

Project Artists: Nicky Dupays, Brendan Jackson, Geoff Broadway

Evaluation and Learning advisor: Vicki Stinchcombe

World War 2 evacuees advisory group:

Pat Law, Jean Davis, June Lum, Marion Williams.

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www.walsallbluecoatjifederation.com

Believing. Celebrating. Succeeding.





This book is dedicated to all the men and women who in difficult times find it in their hearts to offer their hospitality and care to those in need – people like Mr and Mrs Sparkes of Malvern, Worcestershire, who took in evacuees during the war.



Pupils and evacuees begin the journey into the past on the Severn Valley railway

Foreword

Living history is all around us – from the names of our cities, towns, villages and streets, from the stories of our elders to their photographs of the past. Living history is rooted in who we are, as well as where we and our forebears come from. It lives because we live and we are bonded with those who came before. It is in the words we speak, the poems we write, the pictures we paint, the recordings we make.

Living history projects embrace varied and dynamic forms. Whatever the medium chosen, the aim is to encourage young people to learn more about where they live and their place in the world and their connections to national and international events.

The excitement, importance and value of living history have been recognised at Blue Coat Junior School, Walsall, with their innovative and imaginative ‘Another Time, Another Place’ project. It ran over 12 months and was led by Peter Prasadam and Nicky Dupays, involving Year 6 teachers and pupils, along with volunteers who were child evacuees in the Second World War. They worked alongside artists Geoff Broadway and Brendan Jackson to create a book and exhibition, a series of short films, an oral history DVD and accompanying education pack.

The project began with a special trip on the Severn Valley Railway, so that the pupils could retrace the steps taken by children in 1939 as they were separated from their parents and sent to an unknown destination and uncertain future. The children interviewed evacuees about their war-time experiences and have also explored stories with parents and other individuals who have left their homeland, migrating because of conflict or for political or economic reasons, leaving behind everything that was familiar.

They have eagerly listened to personal stories from many diverse places: Walsall, West Bromwich, Birmingham, Bosnia, Poland, Africa, the Indian sub-continent. They have been able to embed these stories within the broader contexts of time and place by research in local history archives, and by sharing the work in progress through public events. These have included open days at the school, a church exhibition, and even a pop-up shop in Walsall town centre with exhibition material and 1940’s films – creating valuable opportunities to engage with a wider audience. This book invites to you share in their journey and reflect on their experiences, to become part of our living history.

Carl Chinn

*Writer, broadcaster and Professor of Community History
at the University of Birmingham.*



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Introduction

A little girl stood at a waterfall in Wales, delighting in watching the water tumble down. She was with her parents – foreigners in an alien land. An old lady stood watching the delight of the little girl trying to catch droplets. Week after week the same thing happened until there was an invitation home for a cup of tea. Thus began a friendship which was to last the rest of the old lady's life. She became an aunty to a family who had no one in a foreign country and the little girl's family became the family she never had.

Every year, no matter where they lived, for the 6 months of winter, when it was cold, the old lady lived with her new found family. And every summer when it was warm and beautiful, there were long, lazy holidays with her in Wales. *“Your people will become my people. Your God will be my God,”* said the old lady to the little girl, remembering the story of Ruth and Naomi from the Bible. And they all delighted in each other.

This is no fairy tale, but a real life story. It is the story of my wife's family migrating from Calcutta, India to settle in Caernarfon, North Wales in the 1970's.

'Another Time, Another Place' is a fascinating collection of memories and reflections of evacuation and migration. It will take you on a journey back to the experiences of child evacuees at the outbreak of World War Two in 1939 as well as exploring more recent migration stories. These stories were collected by Year 6 pupils at Bluecoat Junior School, Walsall during a year long project.

The original catalyst for the project was the discovery of still existing air raid shelters from 1939, under the school grounds. We invited former pupils from the period to talk about their life then, and went on to meet a number of evacuees. Many of their stories resonated with the modern day experiences of migration within the local community and so the children had the privilege of sharing these too.

Children at the school worked with storytellers, poets and dramatists, building up a rich resource of materials. These include imaginative poems, diaries, plays and ballads. The work then developed into a longer term project, resulting in the publication of this book, a DVD, teachers pack and an exhibition of themed suitcases.

The accounts depict character forming moments: experiences which have shaped lives. They narrate times of danger, loss, grief, surprise, joy and excitement. They paint a literary and factual canvas of what life was like for children during wartime, and of the emotions and experiences of immigrants arriving in Britain to begin a new life. Exploring the common elements of some quite varied experiences is a powerful

catalyst to understanding across generations and cultures. The collection celebrates the uniqueness of each individual's story, opening up a world of learning and fascination to young and old alike.

The anecdotes are profoundly moving: the story of Jean Davis protecting her friend Beryl; the bombing of Stella Dennant's house; Anna Rogozinska's grandfather escorting her expectant mother through troop-filled streets. They recount engaging moments: Jim Hammer's excitement at watching dog fights in the Battle of Britain; Jack Haddock's audacity in cycling to Coventry after the famous bombing raid; Isi Agboaye's amazement at seeing salt sold to aggressors in the Nigerian-Biafran war. Each of them invite us to step into another time and another place and celebrate the determination of the human spirit. They stand as a testament to the power of sharing memory, telling stories and dreaming dreams. Photographs, illustrations, family snapshots, together with imaginative writing by pupils and original material sourced from the Imperial War Museum and Walsall Local History Centre, provide the bigger picture.

We are indebted to the generosity of the storytellers and the enthusiasm of the pupils and artists. Enjoy their inspiring stories.

– Peter Prasadam, Head of School, Blue Coat Junior School, Walsall



Former evacuees with pupils at an open day. All the stories in this book are enriched by a wealth of electronic materials and resources including an archived DVD and teachers lesson plans stored on the Blue Coat Junior School's website: www.bluecoatwalsalljifederation.com

Baltic Sea

Germany



Why Hitler, why attack



invaded



Evening Standard



GERMANS AND BOMB BRITAIN
Ten Polish Towns Annexed: Big Decla

Hungary

Lithuania

N

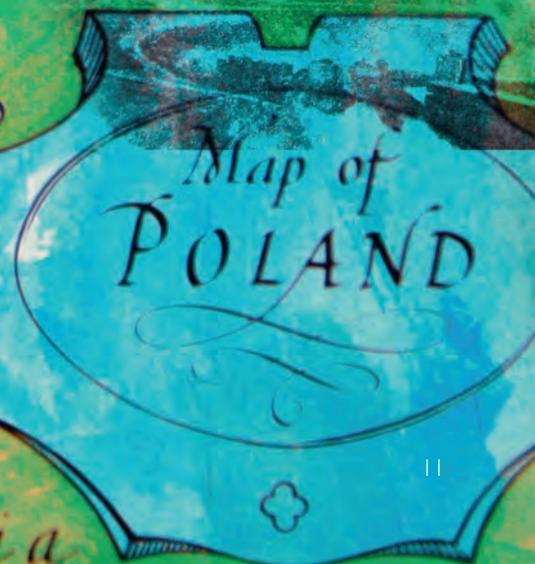
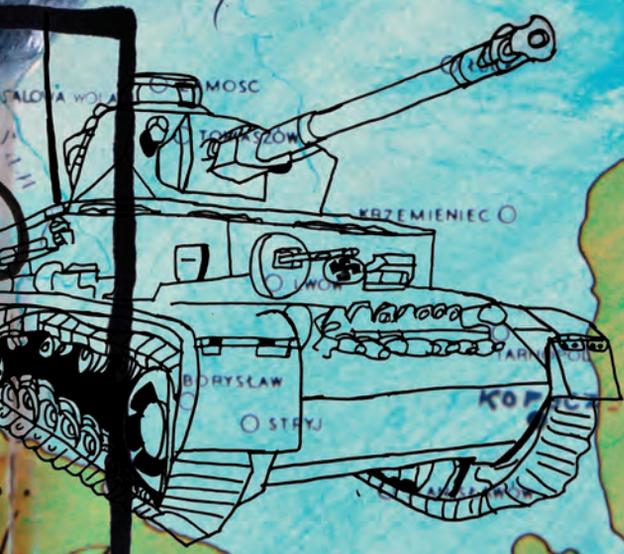


Poland

WARSAW'S AGONY: THE LESSON THAT IS



NAZI PROPAGANDA: "This Is What We Did to Warsaw..."



Rumania

Young historians



World War Two began with the chaos of World War One, which Germany lost. This war was supposed to be the war to end all world wars. Germany lost everything, their army size became smaller and they lost some of their land. The people of Germany were angry. Then an election was held and Adolf Hitler was voted into power. - *Precious Olaofe, Year 6 pupil*

Adolf Hitler promised Germans he would make the country better. He became very powerful. Germany started to invade other countries. The British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, met with Hitler and he said 'Peace in Our Time'. There wasn't any peace. Germany lied to Britain. Instead they invaded Poland and persecuted groups of people like the Jewish community. So Britain and France went to war with Germany. - *Ben Lockley, Year 6 pupil*

When war broke out

“Our family regularly went to visit my grandmother who was living in West Hagley, some miles west of Birmingham, in the country. At the end of the summer we went there because my father was worried that war would break out and we should get bombed, so we went to stay there. My dad, his brother Graham and his sister’s husband Claude were playing bowls in the back garden on the Sunday morning war was declared. They began to dig a big hole straight away. Then they rushed down to the railway station and came back with several wooden rail sleepers which they used to make a roof over the hole. The sleepers were impregnated in tar and my uncle was

wearing his cricket whites, as he had a match in the afternoon. When they came back, uncle Graham’s cricket whites were completely black. My grandmother wasn’t very pleased with that. They then covered the roof with the soil that they had dug out. This was to be our air raid shelter, in case of any air raids. Because Hagley was in the country there was less fear of bombing than in the cities so my grandmother persuaded us to stay there. We were evacuees...” – *Brian Wilkes, evacuee*



World War Two started with an unprovoked attack on Poland on September 1st, 1939. Britain and France declared war on Germany because Hitler refused to abort his invasion. The war involved 61 countries from all over the world and 1.7 billion people (three quarters of the world's population). - *Brandon King, Year 6 pupil*

DID YOU KNOW?

- On January 31st 1916, a German Zeppelin unloaded bombs on Tipton, Bilston and Wednesbury, believing they were bombing Liverpool.
- The last bomb fell on Bridgeman Street, Walsall, destroying a tram.
- One of the victims was the Lady Mayoress, who died of her wounds. The cenotaph marks the spot in the town.



REFUGEES IN WALSALL.

AUSTRIAN'S COMMENTS ON CONDITIONS UNDER GERMAN RUTHLESSNESS.

DREADED SHADOW OF GESTAPO.

"Hitler is in fear. He would like to draw back but in desperation feels that he must now go on."

This judgment on the German Fuehrer's Danzig speech last week was given to an "Observer" reporter by an Austrian couple who, having been driven from their Viennese home by the Nazi tyranny, reached Walsall recently and are now being afforded sanctuary in a Methodist minister's home.

"We listened to Hitler from a German wireless station," they told the "Observer." "We have heard him before; and, listening carefully, we could tell a different, strained note in his speech and its delivery. It was very surprising to us, too, to notice that he said not one word about the Jews, although after he seized Austria he said that if war came all the Jews in Europe would be destroyed."

It is their Jewish faith—although they are not Jews by race—that has cost this middle-aged Austrian couple their home and possessions. The husband—a constructional engineer by profession—served with the Austrian Forces in the war of 1914—1918, and his father had held a distinguished position in the Civil Service of the old Austro-Hungarian empire.

Moderately prosperous in circumstances and happy in their home life, this Austrian couple led lives typical of their English middle-class counterparts. In 1938 came Hitler and with his coming went all their comfort and security.

Operation Pied Piper

Preparations for war had been in place for some time. In 1935, the British Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, published a circular entitled Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.), inviting local authorities to make plans to protect their people in the event of a war. These plans included forming a civil defence organisation, building public air raid shelters, and the evacuation of children. The British Air Ministry predicted a million casualties and the complete destruction of London. In 1938 a committee on evacuation considered how to get children to safety. They decided to organise evacuation through the schools, sending children to private households under a compulsory billeting order, with the government contributing to their keep. Local committees were set up and County Evacuation Officers appointed. It was code-named ‘Operation Pied Piper’.

By the summer of 1939, the fear of air attack was acute. The devastation caused by the bombing of civilians in the Spanish Civil War, led by German planes, was uppermost in the minds of local people. That conflict had only ended in April and Walsall itself hosted child refugees from Spain, most of whom had lost their families. *‘When the first 50 children came to Aldridge they shivered in terror if a plane winged over from nearby Walsall airport,’* the Evening Despatch reported in June.

The local newspapers also carried reports of the experiences of Jewish families fleeing the Nazis. In July, the Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle told the story of one young girl refugee from Vienna, now living in Walsall. *‘It is now a year since I lost my homeland and every day of this year was waiting and hoping to be released. The memory of this is like a nightmare. I long to wish it were not true. When at last, I had the news that somebody was so kind and was willing to give me a home in England, it was like a ray of sunshine in the dark night. The thought that people of another country were trying to help us in our distress, keeps us from despair.’*

Parliament was recalled on August 22nd under the Emergency Powers Defence Act, setting out wartime regulations including the blackout. The BBC broadcast a notice on August 24th, recalling teachers to their schools on August 28th, and children in evacuation areas were brought in for a dress rehearsal. The final order *‘Evacuate forthwith’* was issued at 11.07 am on August 31st. Evacuation began the following day, as 40,000 left Leeds, 30,000 went from Southampton and Gosport, 22,000 from Birmingham, 36,000 from



NATIONAL SERVICE

WOMEN WANTED

TO HELP THE CHILDREN

FROM EVACUATED AREAS



THE CHILDREN LEAVE FOR SCHOOL



A TALK IN THE VILLAGE HALL



EFFICIENT COOKS AND HELPERS PREPARE THE MID-DAY MEAL



PLAYING AFTER SCHOOL HOURS



THE AFTERNOON DARNING AND MENDING CLUB



DOMESTIC HELP TO KEEP THE CHILDREN HEALTHY AND HAPPY

THESE ARE JOBS WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE DONE. ALL WOMEN LOVE CHILDREN AND LIKE TO HELP THEM. OFFER YOUR SERVICES

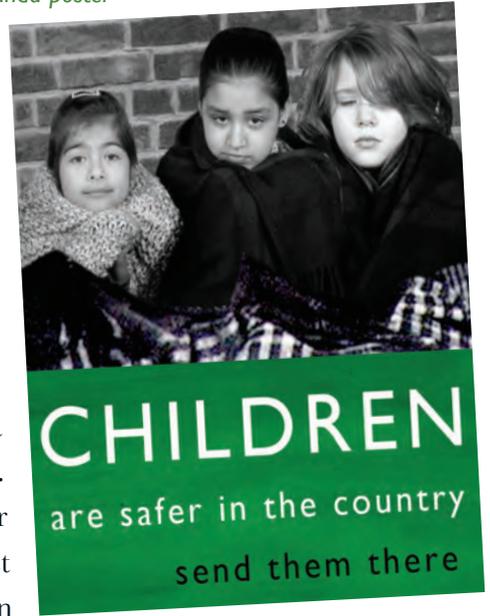
**APPLY TO YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL
OR LOCAL BRANCH OF THE
WOMENS VOLUNTARY SERVICES**

Pupils recreate World War 2 propaganda poster

Liverpool, 6,000 from Middlesborough. The country was divided into three areas – designated evacuation, neutral and reception. The first were urban districts where heavy air raids were expected – these included Birmingham and the Black Country. Neutral areas would neither send nor take evacuees. Reception areas were deemed to be safe zones from the conflict, usually in the countryside. The evacuation of children was a priority and it was carried out on a voluntary basis.

300,000 people were moved in the first four days of September alone. When Wielun, the first Polish city to be attacked by the Luftwaffe on September 1st, had three-quarters of its buildings destroyed, soon to be followed by the terror bombing of Warsaw on September 25th, it confirmed in the mind of the British government the vulnerability of our cities to a single massive air attack.

The dreaded air raids on Britain failed to materialise that autumn, so many evacuees went back home. Then in April 1940, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway, and in May launched the Blitzkrieg on France. In July, Hitler issued Fuhrer Directive No. 16, the order for the sea-borne invasion of Britain. A second huge evacuation of children took place at this time. As France fell to the Nazi armies, the Battle of Britain raged in the skies above, it seemed a German invasion was inevitable. Throughout 1940 and 1941, Britain fought on alone, enduring the Blitz in isolation. For the young people affected by the conflict, uprooted from their homes and separated from families and friends, from familiar surroundings, sights, sounds, smells and tastes, ‘Operation Pied Piper’ was to be a life changing and unforgettable experience.





Sashadean Barnaby and evacuee Marion Williams at Severn Valley Railway

Following the evacuees' footsteps – the Severn Valley Railway Trip

We embarked on a steam train from Kidderminster on the Severn Valley Railway. It was an amazing place. Next, we split into groups and learnt about rationing books and visited the travelling post office. We interviewed the evacuees and wrote a short story about the story they told. My group interviewed Pat and Stella. The best part of that was asking the open questions and not just getting simple yes or no answers. We had long complicated answers.

- *Matthew Fizer, Year 6 pupil*

We were in a steam train and saw animals standing on the grass and fields. We saw a river and people fishing there. The river was dirty with mud in it. In the steam train the old people were telling us stories about when they were children. They were very good stories too. We went over a viaduct – it was so scary and high. Everyone was happy inside the train, even me. And everybody was singing. We took cameras on the train. We took photos of the river and different things. - *Canaan Homela, Year 6 pupil*

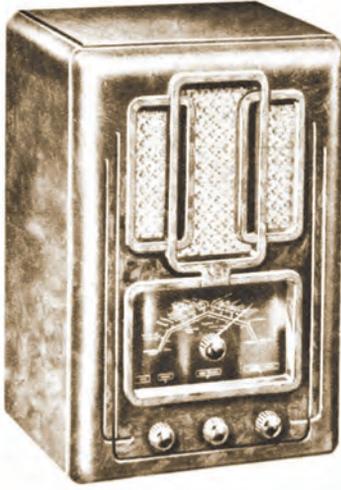
For the project we went on the train, made postcards to send them home, went in an air raid shelter and learned how to put out fire with a bucket chain. - *Mahjabin Nuha, Year 6 pupil*

It looked like there was fire everywhere. I had never been on a train before, so it was a fascinating and exciting experience. It felt like I was an evacuee. I felt how they felt, devastated and forlorn.

- *Aamna Khan, Year 6 pupil*



Imagine being an evacuee

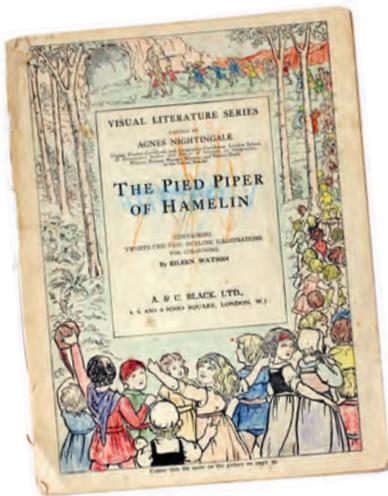


The house felt really empty. She woke up alert. Why would Hitler bomb Britain? She went downstairs. Her sister was writing an essay for her homework, her mum reading the Bible, her nan knitting a scarf. The house was in silence. She tried to make conversation but they just went ‘Mmm’ or nodded. She had an ominous feeling that something was going to happen. They got changed to go to church. She had to carry her gas mask with her, just in case. Will Hitler drop a bomb? - *Leonna Laing, Year 6 pupil*

She listened to the wireless whilst squeezing all the water out of the laundry for mother. Then suddenly she heard the Prime Minister talking. While he was speaking her pulse was racing, her mind spinning with one thought only. The War!!! Her heart was beating inside her like a broken drum and she was confused about it all. She had so many questions. Who was Hitler? When’s he coming? Will she die? Where will she go to? - *Sashadean Barnaby, Year 6 pupil*

Before the evacuation

“I lived with my father at 23 Grange Road, Aston, Birmingham. Aston was a very populated area, mostly long streets of terraced houses, but Grange Road had been built in 1929 in rows of four, a road with pavements and streetlights. We moved there when I was one. We played out on the streets, the traffic was mostly horse-drawn carts. Before my mother died of cancer, my dad bought a motor-bike and sidecar and we had camping holidays and Sunday afternoon drives. My father had a big drawer full



of maps. We did so much together. My last memory of my mother was on the back of the bike with me in the side-car. The cancer was found during pregnancy and when Shirley was born she went to live with our grandparents. It was a very happy time for me, although I would have liked my baby sister to have lived with us. Also, I never expected my mother to die. I was a book worm. My dad took me to the library every week. He too was a bookworm. I attended Albert Road Junior School and it was from there I was to be evacuated...” – *Pat Law (nee Heaton), evacuee*

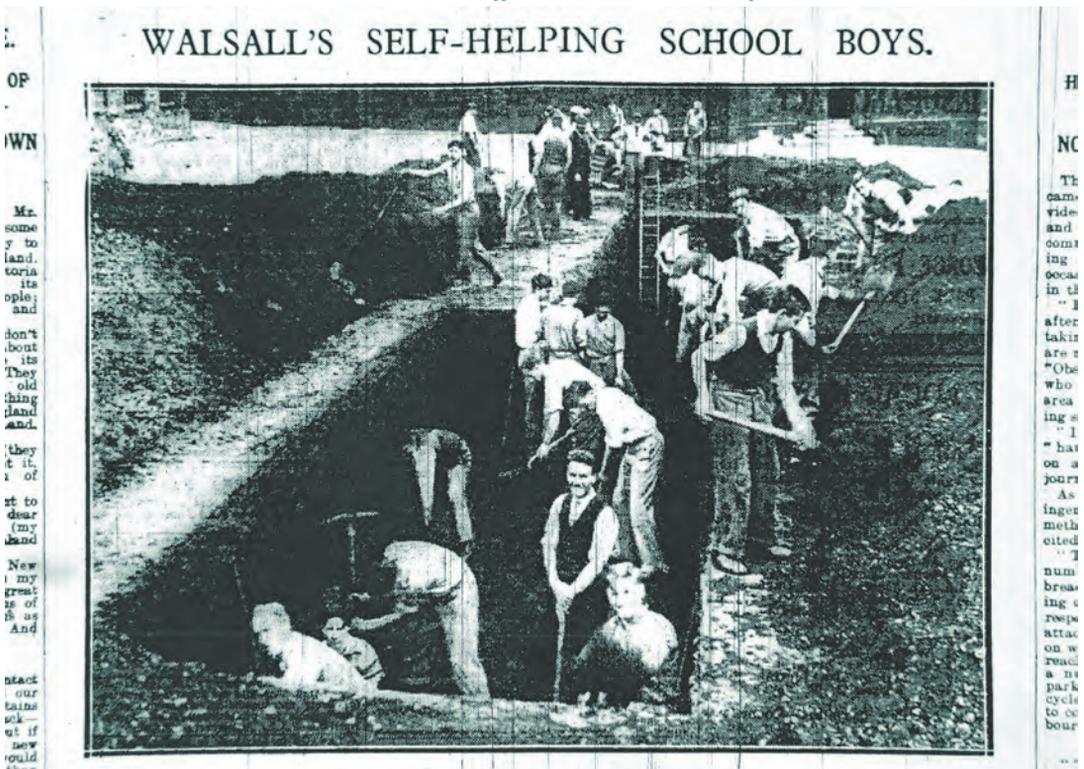
Young researchers



Children undertaking research at Walsall Local History Centre

'Birmingham and Smethwick were the nearest places to Walsall which were included in the evacuation plan announced on Thursday, and yesterday between 70,000 and 80,000 children were despatched to various places in Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire. Birmingham City Transport Department carried some 15,000 children whose schools were beyond reasonable walking distance from the nearest railway station, and in carrying out their scheme, they utilised 240 buses.'

- Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle, September 2nd, 1939



Pupils at Queen Mary's School digging out air raid shelters in their playground

Evacuee ballads



These ballads were written by Year 6 pupils, working with storyteller John Edgar. They were inspired by evacuees visiting the school.

The Children Moved Away

In September 1939
The children moved away,
Because the Germans were coming
And so we couldn't stay.

So we packed our bags and walked to school,
Then we marched down to the train.
We waved good-bye to our mums and dads.
When would we see them again?

It was called Operation Pied Piper
Because we were led like rats.
We put on our coats, we put on our gloves,
We put on our scarves and hats.

We didn't know where we were going,
We just did what we were told.
Would it be fun? Would it be frightening?
Would it be hot or cold?

We were taken to the village hall
And made to stand in line.
Grown-ups came and looked at us
And said, "That one is mine."

Some of us had a wonderful time,
Some of us were scared,
Some of the people were cruel and mean,
Some of them really cared.

We missed the people whom we loved
And they missed us as well.
Some of us were homesick,
More homesick than we could tell.

Some of us went home a lot,
Others were away for years.
Some had no homes to go back to
So their memories were filled with tears.

World War Two carried on
Until nineteen forty-five.
Some of our families were all gone,
But most of them survived.

It was quite an adventure,
Fleeing from the barrel of a gun,
But now the war was over
And we were glad that the allies had won.

In September 1939
The children moved away,
Because the Germans were coming
And so we couldn't stay.

Leaving

Although the sun is shining,
It's raining in my heart.
Goodbye Mum, goodbye Dad,
Now we all must part.

Because there's going to be a war;
They're sending us away.
We've got no choice, we've got no voice,
We're not allowed to stay.

Where are they going to send us?
Where are we going to go?
Will the people be kind or cruel?
We really do not know.

Nobody told us anything,
So we haven't got a clue
About what's going to happen to us,
Or where they're sending us to.

Some of us were feeling scared,
Some were terrified,
Some were happy, some were sad,
Some of us just cried.

We've got labels round our necks
So folk know who we are
When we get to the end of our journey,
When we have travelled far.

We're on the train, we're on our way.
Our journey has begun.
We hope we'll see you all again
When the war is won.

Air Raid

Dear Mother, thank you for the card,
Being away is very hard.
I'd rather be at home with you,
I'm sure you feel the same way too.

Life here in the country's fine.
The forest smells of wood and pine.
We've got a super Christmas tree,
The finest that you'll ever see.

We're living on a pleasant farm.
The animals don't do any harm -
Except the bull that frightens us:
We walk by without any fuss.

Christmas will not be the same
Without you calling out my name.
Although the people here are kind,
We still feel we're left behind.

Can you do me a favour, Mum?
Can you tell Santa where I am?
And tell him I want nothing more
Than my Dad back from the war.

I'll think of you on Christmas day,
When we are many miles away,
And as I sing a Christmas tune,
I hope I'll get to see you soon.

Peace and goodwill to us all,
As I sit and watch the snow fall,
And if the war ends, Mother dear,
We can share Christmas Day next year.

★ **You Must Know These Things** ★

BILLETS BY ORDER, IF—

A FEW householders who have so far been unwilling to receive evacuees are asked not to force the Government to exercise compulsion.

Cinemas, Theatres Close to Cut Risks

NAZIS BOMB HOLY TOWN THESE WIVES REPORT NOW

BRITISH-BORN women who are of German or Austrian nationality by marriage are no longer exempt from registration by the police

SAUSAGES GO BETTER WITH H-P SAUCE



WHEN THE SIRENS GO

Every Trade Unionist Urged: "Help to Win War"

WHAT FUEL RATIONS MEAN

DON'T . . .

THIS is intended for YOU.

Read it, remember it, pass it on to your friends. First, and most important of all things is

Don't Listen to Rumours

You will get all the news that matters—bad or good—in your newspapers. Disbelieve anything else you hear—particularly alarmist news. Next thing to remember is

Don't Broadcast Information

You may know that there is an anti-aircraft gun cunningly concealed in the field next to your garden. But that's no reason for passing on the information. It may reach someone who should not know it.

Don't Lose Your Head

IN OTHER WORDS—KEEP SMILING. THERE'S NOTHING TO BE GAINED BY GOING ABOUT WITH THE CORNERS OF YOUR MOUTH TURNED DOWN, AND IT HAS A BAD EFFECT ON PEOPLE WHOSE NERVES ARE NOT SO GOOD AS YOURS.

SO EVEN IF A BOMB FALLS IN YOUR STREET—WHICH IS UNLIKELY—KEEP SMILING.

Don't Listen to Scaremongers

You will always find scaremongers about. Just treat them as you would a smallpox case—move on quickly. The enemy loves to spread rumours. Part of his campaign was to panic

Britain—and he will still try it, hopeless although it is.

Don't Cause Crowds to Assemble

THE POLICE HAVE ENOUGH TO DO. IF YOU SEE PEOPLE GATHERING AND THERE IS NO REASON FOR YOU TO JOIN THEM—WALK ON. IN OTHER WORDS—MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS.

AND ABOVE ALL DON'T FORGET THE OLD ARMY ADAGE.

Be silent, be discreet, enemy ears are listening to you.

NOW GET AHEAD, DO YOUR JOB AND DON'T WORRY.

DID YOU KNOW?

- By the outbreak of war, there were 1.4 million Air Raid Wardens in Britain. Many of the steel helmets they wore were leftovers from the First World War. They were quite heavy to wear, as these pupils soon found out, as they disembarked from the Severn Valley steam train.





Targets 

When rounding to the nearest tenth what digit do you look at to tell you if you are rounding up or down?

Which whole number is 2.9 closer to?

2 3

round up →

rounds to

0.4 0.5 0.6 0.7 0.8 0.9 1.0 1.1

Jean Davis speaking to pupils about her experiences

Jean Davis (nee Pearce) was evacuated from Birmingham at the age of six, first to Malvern then to Berkswell, Worcester and Welshpool and was finally sent to Pipewood near Rugeley, one of 50 school camps that were opened for evacuees. She was away for most of the six years of war, with only a few weeks at home in between.

“ **In 1939 I was six years old, living a very happy life with my parents in a small terraced house in Aston, Birmingham.** My grandparents, with my youngest aunts and uncles, lived in the same terrace. There were eighteen houses in the terrace and we were like a small community, as we were cut off from the rest of the houses in the street by a factory garage. This was on one side of us, the school was the other side and opposite was the factory, where some of my family worked. Our houses had two bedrooms and a box room, which was used as a bedroom – a bed had to be shortened to fit in there. Downstairs there was a front room, kept very polished and neat for Sundays, visitors and special occasions. We mostly lived in the kitchen, where we had a cosy coal fire in a black-lead range. In the corner was a bricked in boiler for the washing, with a small oven at the bottom where we put hot coals to heat the water. It was also used to boil the puddings at Christmas. Our toilet was across the backyard, one to each house though some had to share with neighbours. Next to the toilet was a ‘miskin’. This was like a stable door without the top. You just threw the rubbish in there and they collected it. Later we had a dustbin to put in there.

In that small terraced house I was living happily, blissfully unaware of the fears of war my family were feeling until one day my father sat me on his knee and told me there was going to be a war. He was a territorial soldier. He had an ordinary job during the day and then a couple of nights a week he’d go to the army camp and train as a soldier. I was used to soldiers. He told me there was a man in Germany named Hitler who was doing naughty things and our soldiers had got to go and stop him. So he was going to send me away to the country to be safe. He told me I’d got to do my duty, obey orders and be brave, like soldiers. Little did he know in telling me this, he was going to cause a problem for an unknown lady in Malvern.

The morning came and my mother took me down to the school. Outside was a line of Midland Red buses and we said goodbye. As I was about to climb on the bus, my next door neighbour, who’d got a little girl named Beryl, came rushing up to me and told me I must look after Beryl, I mustn’t leave her, she’d got to stay with me. That sounded like an order, so I took Beryl’s hand and we climbed on the bus. We had carrier bags with food to give to whoever we would live with to start us off.

We were taken to Malvern into a big hall in a school. We all sat round the walls on benches and every so often a lady would come in, go to a desk where some teachers were sitting and then they'd leave with one of the children. Finally she came up to me and said *'You're to go with this lady to live with her,'* so I stood up. I said to Beryl *'Come on!'* but she said *'No, Beryl's not going with you, Beryl's going somewhere else.'* I just stood there and said, *'No! Beryl's got to go with me, her mother said so!'* They tried to talk me round but I stood firm. In the end I sat down again. Beryl was crying and clinging on to me because she was a year younger than me. She was only five and she was a very timid little girl.

In the end all the children had gone to new homes except us and the lady in charge came over and said, *'I'm going to take you to my house where you will stay while I go round the town and see if someone will take two.'* Her house was rather big and posh. We were sat on two wooden chairs in the back room where they did the washing. She came back with an old lady. She looked a bit like Queen Victoria the way she was dressed all in black. She didn't say hello to us or anything, she just stared at us. She then said, *'Sit there, don't move, don't touch anything!'* and left us. We sat there and by then it was late afternoon, we'd had nothing to eat since we'd left home. Beryl started to cry and said she was hungry. So I looked in my carrier bag and found a bag of biscuits. The old lady must have heard the rattle of the paper bag because she came through the door and she was angry. I'd not seen anybody so angry and she said, *'You're a wicked*



girl! You're stealing! Those are not your biscuits, you're not to have them,' and she took them off me and she took both of our bags. She said, *'You can go and stand outside.'* She opened the door and we went into the back yard. She thought she was punishing us but when I got outside, there was this lovely garden! There was a path up the middle – on one side there were fruit trees and on the other side was all flowers. I'd always had a lot of fruit at home, but I'd never seen them on trees, only in the green grocers, and I wandered up the garden. Beryl was still crying and saying she was hungry and at the far end there were three steps going up and I

Jean at the beginning of the war

could see, on the lowest branch, a pear. I thought, *'If I stand on tiptoe I can reach that pear.'* So of course I did that. I gave it to Beryl and she took a big bite out of it, but the old lady came charging up the garden, shouting at me again that I was stealing, that I was a wicked girl. She took the pear off us. I never got a bite.

She marched us round to the front garden. There was a bench under the bay window and she told us to sit there and not move. It got a bit boring sitting there, nothing to do, so I decided I would have a look in the front room to see what the house was like. When I looked through the window, opposite in an arm chair, was an old gentleman fast asleep. He'd got one of those great big long beards that was lying on his chest, and as he breathed the beard was going up and down, up and down. It made me giggle. Beryl climbed up and had a look and we were both giggling. The old lady came round the corner and she was furious. This time she made us sit in the middle of the lawn on the grass and she didn't leave us. She stood by the gate, looking for her daughter. After a bit she came back and said she'd found us a home.

She took us to this other house, to a lady with two daughters. One was old enough to go to work, the other one was still at school and the father was away in the navy. I don't think she really wanted to have us, but if you had a spare bedroom you were obliged to have a child, you had no choice. I don't ever remember having a cooked meal there. All I remember is jam sandwiches. It was the youngest daughter who looked after us, the mother went to work. After about two weeks a man and a woman came and took us away. My mother told me later the reason was the lady next door had complained that we were not being looked after properly.

Then they took us round to another house, to Mr and Mrs Sparkes and the welcome there was completely different! She made a great fuss of us, she told us to call them auntie and uncle and I was really happy there and that is where my cousin June came later and joined me. Beryl never settled and after a while she left and went back home, so June and I were the ones to remain there. They were quite elderly and it was quite good of them to take on two young girls at their age, but they were very, very loving people. They made us welcome



Jean at the end of the war

and looked after us well. We came home from school one day and he'd built us a see saw in the garden! They even took us out to Worcester for a day out. Our mothers came to visit and we soon found out they were frightened of cows. We went out for a walk the one day and while we were out the farmer had put his herd in the field. The pair of them at the gate nearly had a fit, they weren't going to cross. June and I, both seven years old, had to herd the cows into one corner so our mothers could cross the field. I've never seen them move so quickly in my life. We were doubled up in laughter. Auntie Jess went like a rocket across that field and my mother right behind her.



My father told me I was going on an adventure, but by the time that old lady had shouted at me three times I was fed up of the adventure and I wanted to go home. But it was an adventure really. You met new people, made new school friends. But it didn't do much for our education because sometimes you'd go to school and they were way in front of you and you'd go to another school and they were way behind you! You were doing it all over again. And if you weren't very clever, and I wasn't, you found it difficult.

It wasn't all sad, we did have funny things happen which made us laugh. One thing my grandmother always grabbed was the insurance policies because she said if they bombed the house, she was claiming off her insurance and she always kept them in a bag hanging on the back of the passage door. So as she ran down the stairs she grabbed that bag and that's what she took down the shelter with her.

There was one toilet in the shelter, that was all. It wasn't a normal toilet, more like a big round large bucket with a wooden seat on it. There was no door on the toilet,

it was just in the corner. It had a curtain to go behind. Granny went and while she was in there, a bomb dropped nearby and the blast shook the shelter and blew her off the toilet! I wasn't there – I wish I had been – but granny told me the story. She came through the curtain, landed at the feet of a man sitting on the end of a bench and she'd still got her knickers round her knees. For years afterwards, she would tell me the tale and she would laugh about it. Funny things did happen, but the blast mostly caused serious injuries. You didn't have to be hit by a bomb, it was the blast that did a lot of the damage.

When a bomb case breaks up, you get little bits of metal called shrapnel flying all over the place. My mother was injured by shrapnel, one piece entered her skull. She was in the A.R.P., working on the ambulances. She was on duty the night a bomb dropped at the side of the public shelter where my grandmother was. A policeman she was talking to was making his rounds and mom said *'I'll come with you and see if my house is still standing'* She was half way down the slope when the blast hit them. It killed the policeman and injured the Air Force boys who looked after the barrage balloon. It had been a cold night and she'd put her own woollen coat over her uniform. When we received the coat back, all that was left was the two shoulder pads and the rest of the coat was in ribbons of about an inch wide. She kept it for years. She had got a tin helmet on and that metal went through the tin helmet and into her skull. My mother also had a broken arm.

My father went up to the hospital when he heard. He'd been discharged from the Army on health grounds and joined the Home Guard. They told him that her name was on the death list. Well of course he sat down and cried. He sat down on a bench in the corridor weeping. A doctor came along and asked him what was wrong and he told him. He asked what her name was and he said *'Stay here'* and he went away. He came back and he said, *'Your wife has not been killed, we've just operated on her.'* Now that bomb also caused the shelter to cave in and so my granny and my auntie and the others down there had to be dug out, but they lived. ””

DID YOU KNOW?

- In 1939 between 3.5 and 3.75 million people were evacuated from areas in the UK thought to be vulnerable to aerial attack.
- The Minister of Health, Walter Elliott, described the evacuation as *'an exodus bigger than that of Moses. It is the movement of ten armies, each of which is as big as the whole Expeditionary Force.'*
- Population movements in September 1939 alone affected nearly a third of the people in Britain.



Stella Dennant at parents open day event

Stella Dennant (nee Gilmore) moved from Surrey to South Lambeth, London at the age of eight in 1942, during a lull in the bombing raids. She was finally evacuated to Leicestershire when the German V bombs started to rain down on the city.

“**When war started you sensed the fear.** We were close to Battersea Power Station – it was quite an important target, so we were targets. Schools closed down because of the bombing. This didn’t seem right as we were supposed to be defending other countries. There was a real threat that Britain would be invaded. I can remember my mother saying a silly thing, *‘You know if Hitler comes here he is going to put your head in the gas oven.’* But that’s what mums are like sometimes.

I saw bombs dropping and fires as well – and the V2 pilotless bomb when it came over. It was like a rocket and what happened was you’d hear it overhead making a hum hum noise then silence. You knew when the noise stopped, it was coming down and when you heard the bang you knew someone had been hit, possibly killed. Then you thanked God it was not you, but we were still frightened. I cannot say we weren’t because we were.

It was very difficult for my mother at this time. She was heavily pregnant with my brother Thomas. God knows how she coped with this and three other children to look after. I just do not know. Just after she gave birth we were told to go to the shelters at night. The shelters were underground, and held about 300 people. You went down sloping steps to get down there. The escape hatches were something like the ones on a submarine, with ladders fixed to the sides. They were there in case the shelter was hit and caved in, to give a chance of escape.

Our house, 35 Thornycroft, was bombed. It was flattened, so we had nowhere to live. We went to what was called a rest centre at Vauxhall Gardens. This was a place where they put people who were homeless, and at night we lived in the shelter. We were in the shelter all night and the rest centre in the day. Some people had Anderson shelters, but not us. Of course you can’t live at the rest centre for very long. The authorities decided things were getting too bad for us all in London so we would be evacuated.

We went from Marylebone Station to Loughborough, which is near Leicester. I can’t remember much. I was nine or ten. I just remember crying. You had clothes with you, just a few things you know. We didn’t have much. I hadn’t got much from the bombed house left, so I just took what I could. I missed my mother, yes I did. I was



Will they make any friends?

Will they miss my cooking?

When should I visit them?

Are my children safe?



really sad. When we arrived at Loughborough they took us to a big hall. It was chaos. They said, *'You are going with these people'* and that was it. You had no choice.

The family just suffered me, let's put it like that. They just suffered me. The parents weren't unkind, just indifferent. The children were unkind. They didn't make a fuss of me, I can tell you that. I think it was something that was forced on them and that was that. They didn't really want you there but the money was good, you know what I am saying? There was the mother, the father, three girls and one boy and it was a three bed-roomed house. Two of the girls were older. They went out with the American soldiers and they used to give me letters to take to the American camp. It was called Quorn Camp, in the grounds of Quorn House.

I just try and block it out, I just don't remember. I know my sister went to another family, but straight away she wrote to my mother and my mother took her back, and then went to Hull with the two boys. By then I had no choice but to stay where I was. I was just left there. I was separated from my parents and I wasn't happy, so it was no adventure to me. It was strange. You feel like you are living on another planet. Being evacuated from London, the children had lost most of their possessions and clothes due to the bombing, so they felt they had no identity or sense of reality. They were tired, frightened and hungry. They all wanted their mum and for the first time she was not there.

The war changed my whole life. My father was in the army during and after the war. My mother and father separated and divorced after the war ended. My mother went to Canada with the two boys and my sister and I stayed here with my father. This made me stronger in later life, to accept things that happened to me. You know, it really did help. ””

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Blitz was the sustained bombing of Britain by Nazi Germany between September 7th 1940 and May 10th 1941. It began with 76 consecutive nights of bombing of London.
- Over one million houses were destroyed or damaged in the capital.
- The V1 and V2 attacks on London from June 1944 sparked a second wave of evacuation from the capital. The V2 was the world's first rocket and travelled at such a speed it was undetectable.
- The V2 attacks killed and wounded 115,000 people.
- After the war, Werner Von Braun, the chief German rocket scientist, worked for the Americans and was the man behind the Saturn rocket that took the Apollo mission to the moon.

Imagined letters home

Dear Mum,

I feel so upset about leaving you mom. I don't like this. I want the war to end right now. I want to come home. I am feeling a bit homesick. I miss you so much. Someone picked me up from the station. I was picked up by a nice young lady called Lotty. I know what you're thinking: she's nice and you want to come home? But I am really missing you. It was a lovely day today, nice and sunny with a slow breeze. I only do a little bit of work and they praise me a lot. When I say a lot, I absolutely mean a lot. Write back tomorrow, miss you, see you later. - Aroosa Asghar, Year 6 pupil



Dear Mum,

Last Wednesday I was evacuated. I got on the train and felt like jumping out of the window. I didn't want to go I was so upset. It felt like I cried a river! We got off the train and a man and lady called Pauline and James came and took me and my sister to their house. It was beautiful. There is ivy climbing up the walls and there are flowers all around the house. When I walked through the front door I felt like I was going to faint. There was a long wooden hall with gorgeous lamp shades. My room is amazing. It has a lovely wooden bed, beautiful lamps and a white wooden dressing table and I have a fantastic view of the countryside. Also, because James works in a sweet shop, I always have chocolate, sweets and ice cream! The best part is they have a baby and I always look after her. She is called Brenda. - *Rhianna Bennett-Peace, Year 6 pupil.*



Poems

No-one to hold onto

Screeches from a distance,
Sighs from all around,
All the adults bawling,
The children don't understand.
It was as melancholy
As a funeral.

Howling gale,
Darting rain,
You get drenched
From head to toe.
The train rushes by,
People sigh
Of the disaster
Their children are going through.

Catastrophe struck,
Another train arrives,
All their family turned to them,
Children wept, families wept,
Yes... the clouds did too...

The last child
Was about to step on,
Showing no mercy,
The warden
pushed her along.

No-one to cry to,
No-one to hold,
She tries to be valourous
But no... she is alone,
The train then speeds along.
- Danielle Clarke, Year 6 pupil

That journey

I sat there waiting.
The day had finally come,
I was being evacuated.
The steam from the train was
asphyxiating as it coiled around
me like a snake in a thicket.
There were children
crying
moaning
crying and moaning.
The train was like a shooting rocket,
whizzing past here and there,
but the steam spoilt the fresh
country air.
My brother and I ate our lunch,
It was fresh and creamy.
I gazed out of the window
and saw all types of animals.
They were as still as statues
Munching on strips of green grass.
The smells were delightful.
Suddenly the train came to a halt.
It stopped dead in its tracks...
Then shot again down the railway.
The country life was a blur,
Running as fast as it could.
After all that
It was time to step off
And then I knew I would
Never forget that journey.

- Saskia-Rose Ball, Year 6 pupil



Dragon train

Frightened, the children trembled
As they walked to the station,
Like a terrified maiden being held by a
Ferocious dragon.

Fumes of smoke from the top
Of the dusty steam train
On this important day.
They heard the cries and squeals
Of the train setting off
As they bid their parents farewell.
- Zara Naaem, Year 6 pupil

Where's Mum?

She was just standing there,
all alone, no-one to comfort,
no-one to care, fiddling about,
twirling her hair.

"Where's mum, where's dad?"
She had to be evacuated,
all because of something bad.

Screaming and crying,
she thought Hitler must be lying.
Hurt, angry and ever so tired,
she's still wondering has Hitler even fired?
She doesn't like it here,
it's so crowded.

Lumbering onto the train in despair,
more trains pull along with
all the children there.
The carriages were crying,
watching all the children waving
goodbye.

As cold as ice she quivers in fear,
She doesn't want to go,
Where's her mum? Is she here?
She glares out the window waving 'bye',
as another melancholy train pulls by.
- Sashadean Barnaby, Year 6 pupil



Safe arrival

Sparkling
was the sun
and the sky.
But a sad day
for children,
the day the children
were evacuated.
They were so unhappy,
they didn't want to leave
but they had to.
Arriving safely
at their new homes,
worried how it will be?
Two boys are chasing
each other
full with joy,
entering the garden
with berry smells.
The glowing sun was shining
his power onto the garden.
The children smiled
and had a look at
the berries and said,
"Let's take them for lunch."
Baking in the oven
was blueberry pie
for everyone.
"Ready to eat,"
said the mother,
cutting a slice.
"Tastes delicious,"
said the children.
"Now go out and play,"
she said.

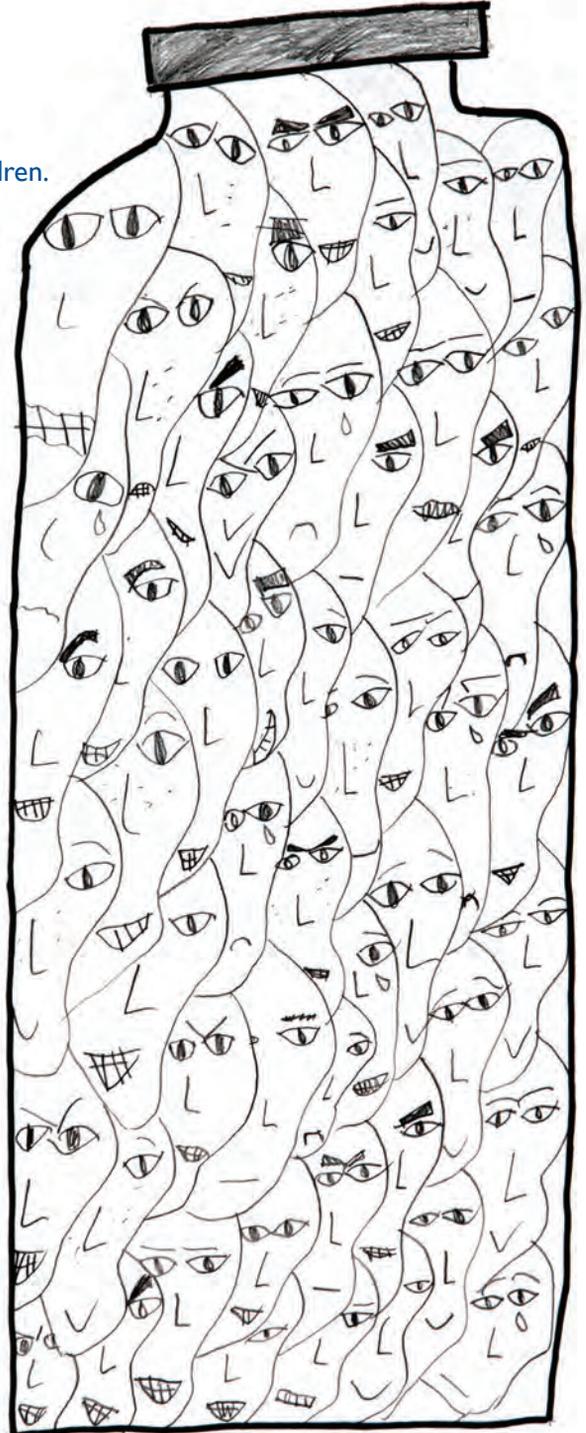
- Maryam A. Kausir, Year 6 pupil

Sad salty tears

Salty tears and crying fills the air.
Hear crying, see crying as far as the eye can see.
A world of black and white sadness.
The only pleasant sound is the train,
It whistles like a singing nightingale
Floating through the gritty atmosphere.
A black and white movie,
A broken tape,
Playing the discomfoting tune of crying children.
Yearning for family and siblings,
The children are like threads being torn
apart from a delicate wool blanket.
As they are seperated from family,
Making jobs harder for
unconvinced billeting officers.
Praying nothing is wrong,
Praying the children could stay,
Praying for the war not to happen.
Like dying, the sadness was unbelievable,
Like a hospital at midnight, silent,
Except for grieving family members.
Ending the crying at the station
Silence stuck in the air,
Ending the movie of tragedy,
Silence and hot salty tears.
- Cerys Normanton, Year 6 pupil

Try and smile

It was early in the morning
when my mother said,
"You need to pack your bags
and get out of bed!
You're going to a safe country place
to avoid the bombs dropping
on our place!"
So the sun smiled and said to me,
"Go on the train and follow me,
You're going to be jolly!"
I saw friends as happy as could be
But I was scared and devastated
To be leaving my family.
- Jack Asbury, Year 6 pupil



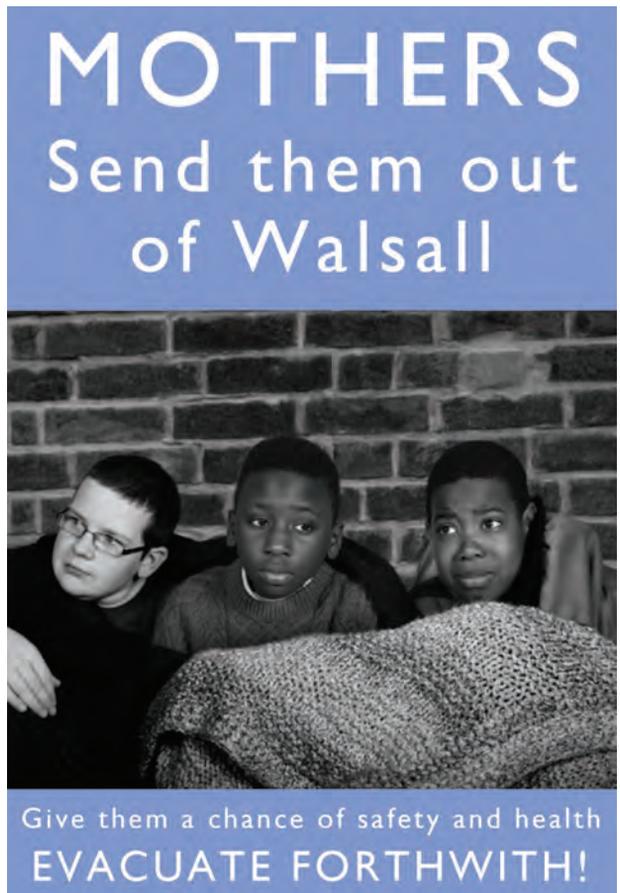


You're coming with me

The children have been told
To turn up with a packed lunch
And fresh clean clothes. They arrive
At a train station not knowing
What's happening.
They have to leave because
Bombs will be dropped
On ice cold Britain.
They got on a train
And the train raced off
To another place.
They have a brown tag
So the people know their names.
They have old strict people
Looking after them on the train.
The poor children
Were put in a room
And random people said,
"You're coming with me"
And one unlucky child had
To be chosen last.
Some of the families were wonderful,
Some were angry unpolite people
And the kids put up with their
Nagging and moaning.
- Denzel Padya, Year 6 pupil.

All aboard

Eagerly a train master beckons
Children onto the train bellowing
"All aboard! All aboard!"
Very confused, they peer ahead
As teardrops fall from their eyes.
Beginning her long walk back,
A heart-broken mother weeps.
Using loud voices they shout goodbye.
A faithful teddy bear clings
Onto a girl who wonders,
"Will this really be an adventure?"
On every shoulder a bag,
Standing there, inside they're sad,
The train starts, the engine roars
Like a lion.
- Immanuel Badley, Year 6 pupil.



Pupils recreate World War 2 propaganda poster



Olive Baker at parents open day event

Olive Baker (nee Jones) was evacuated at the age of seven. She went from Walsall to Wheaton Aston with her older brother and sister.

“ **For me, living here in a very poor part of the town, the evacuation was absolutely lovely because it was to the countryside.** All green. It was really only about 17 miles away, but then it seemed a very far distance. It would have been perhaps about an hour but because we had never travelled it seemed enormous. It was absolutely fantastic because we were on a bus – a double decker – and I even went upstairs. It was very exciting because we were so poor. Wherever we went we walked, no matter how far. Nobody had a car. The bread and the milk and the coal was delivered by horse and cart.

I was excited. I was only a little girl. I had never gone out of this town. We didn't even have a suitcase. You didn't have a suitcase till you were married. When I was seven, I wasn't sort of forward thinking as you girls are now. At seven, we were babies. I remember meeting some of the Spanish children refugees in the town, because of the civil war there, but I didn't realise how important it was. Of course, in the country we didn't hear the sirens. The air raid sirens were horrible, they were frightening. All I can remember is having a carrier bag with a packet of biscuits, a tin of condensed milk and a tin of corned beef. Unfortunately, most of the children had eaten the biscuits before we got to where we were going. And I can remember one boy who opened the tin of corned beef with a pen knife. Because nobody had ever had a tin of corned beef that's what he did. I can remember that quite plainly.

My older brother was fourteen the day war broke out and he had got a mind of his own. He was supposed to look after me and my sister. Instead he walked to the railway station and borrowed a penny to catch the train to Wolverhampton. He said he was a big boy, or he thought he was, and my mother nearly had a fit. She said *'Oh dear, oh dear, why did you leave the girls?'* Shortly after that he joined the army under age. He wasn't old enough but he did, and so he went in the army and served. If you have got initiative, you will get there.

In Wheaton Aston we stayed with Mr and Mrs Evans. They were very kind to us and made us lovely food. Mrs Evans used to bake all her own bread and cakes and pastries and we had the most delicious cooked food. Oh, it was lovely. She was a marvellous cook. You could go and pick an apple off the tree in the garden without

having to ask. We couldn't believe it. This family had their own little orchard, it was lovely. I didn't miss home. There was plenty of food and fresh fruit, which we weren't used to because we were desperately poor. The house we stayed in was a two up and two down. Me and my sister had a nice comfortable bed, but it was on the landing.

I can't remember making friends because we had the children that we went with, on the same bus, from this area, so we sort of kept those friends. When I look back it must have been very strange for the children already there to have us because we spoke with a Black Country accent. I haven't lost my accent in 80 years. I can remember it raining a bit, but we seem to only remember the sunny days. I remember it must have rained because the fields flooded and we had to walk a long way round to school, about two miles. It wasn't too bad for us, because when I was a little girl you did what the grown ups told you without question. So it was easy, you just did it.

We were only there for a short time. Then my mother brought us back home because, by then, Walsall wasn't a dangerous area. Places like Birmingham and Coventry were dangerous for being bombed but Walsall wasn't considered dangerous. I don't think the Germans thought much of us! They said your mum is going to take you home, and that was on Saturday and I was disappointed because I liked it where I was. I did like it. My sister wanted to come home, but I didn't. Strangely enough when we came home, we couldn't get a place in school.

There were only four rooms in our house in Walsall, two bedrooms and two downstairs but the lavatory as we called it – the toilets – were across the yard. They were outside and you went across to the bottom of the yard. When you went to the toilet in the snow, the toilets would be frozen and your mum would have to come out with a bucket of hot water before you could go to the toilet. We had a kettle. We used to boil the kettle on the side of a fireplace.

We were rationed during the war, but regardless of that, when I was a little girl, we were in the poorest, poorest part of Walsall. Desperately poor. We had a penny pocket money. When you'd spent that penny, whatever you'd spent it on, there was no more until the next Friday when your dad got his money from work. You couldn't go up to your mum and say *'Can I have a ha'penny?'* because there wasn't any to spare but we didn't mind. We could buy chocolate, a ha'penny bar which now would cost you about 57 pence. Then it cost you a ha'penny, a little bar of Cadburys. Rationing didn't make much difference to us. The rations we were allocated were more than we usually had. We just went on living. ””

Fact finders

Before the war, Great Britain imported 70% of its food – usually 55 million tons a month, but after the war started this number dropped to 12 million. - *Saskia-Rose Ball, Year 6 pupil*

Rationing was introduced because in war time food was scarce. To make getting food easier people now had rationing cards. To make Britain weak Hitler was stopping ships coming with his U-boat submarines, so we didn't have much food. The government thought that rationing would be fair, as we would all have the same amount of food. Rich people couldn't have all the food and poor people could have food as well. Rationing began on January 8th, 1940. It lasted for 14 years, until July 4th 1954. - *Kareena Saleem, Year 6 pupil*

An adult was allowed in one week: 4 oz of bacon or ham, 2 oz of butter, 8 oz of sugar, 3 pints of milk, 2 oz cooking fat, 3-4 oz of cheese, 1 fresh egg (or 1 packet of dried eggs every four weeks), 2 oz of tea. You could also have 1 lb of meat a week, 1 lb of jam every two months, 12 oz of sweets every four weeks. - *Mohammed Isa Arshid, Year 6 pupil*

If we start food rationing ourselves we can eat more but growing vegetables will not be easy. It will take determination and buckets of potatoes. Everyone needs our meals to get strong. We will learn that growing our own tomatoes and herbs will make us keep us strong. - *Manraj Singh Randhana, Year 6 pupil*



Tray containing a ration book and the weekly ration of sugar, tea, margarine, 'national butter', lard, eggs, bacon and cheese as issued to an adult in Britain during 1942.



Jean Field (nee Lowe) was evacuated at the age of six, leaving Birmingham for Ross-on-Wye in Herefordshire on September 1st, 1939.

“ **It was all like a bit of a dream really.** We were taken maybe 65 miles away, so I suppose it took a couple of hours really and you didn’t know where you were going to end up. It could have been anywhere. When you are six and a half things like that don’t mean an awful lot to you, but we knew we were going to be separated from our parents. Some people didn’t send their children, they decided they would look after them – but you can’t when bombs are raining down from the sky. There would be no way that you could protect them. I don’t know if you can remember being that young age and imagining how you would have felt if you were taken away from your parents? You wouldn’t be very happy would you? Not knowing where you were going, or what was going to happen. It was very, very sad. I was fortunate because I had a sister and she was three years older than me. She was a comfort to me. My parents used to come and visit. They had a bus that used to come about every three months.

We got used to them coming and then going off again. At first we were upset because we thought they had come to take us home.

I used to go for holidays back to see my parents. I once stayed with them for six weeks' holiday. It was lovely. Your parents are your parents all your life aren't they? You can't substitute your parents no matter how much of a nice time you were having. They are still your mother and father. You wouldn't hurt them, would you? How would your mum and dad feel if you said that you would like to go and live with someone else? It wouldn't be much fun would it? But the new home was posh, yes!

When we came back, first we lived in a rough part of Birmingham, a place called Hockley and they didn't speak very nice there. When I started back at school you know, the kids said '*Oh doesn't she talk posh!*' It was embarrassing really. Where we went to stay in the country, they had a market garden and we used to help to pack the vegetables and go to market with them and we always had something to do. Or we could go and collect the eggs from the hens. Coming from the back streets of Birmingham to somewhere like that, it was lovely. I used to love seeing the apples on the trees and the flowers everywhere.

I can't recall being scared. It was a bit sad when we had to go away from our parents but I wasn't scared, because we had nothing to be scared of. We weren't going anywhere where it was dangerous. I was a bit scared of starting school, a new school and new people but it wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. It was an experience, although one I could have done without. We had to get up fairly early because it was a long walk to get there. In the country, schools are not on your doorstep. We would probably get up about seven o' clock.

We stayed with an elderly man and woman and their daughter. Their daughter was called Dorothy. She was the one who looked after us really. We kept in contact with them up until they died and they never forgot our birthdays. Oh, it was beautiful. It was like a mansion, yes. It was huge with beautiful grounds. It was lovely. It must have been five bedrooms. When you came out of the front door and you looked down, you could see the River Wye.



She's in the Ranks too !



CARING FOR EVACUEES IS A NATIONAL SERVICE

ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

I don't know whether it was a story or not, but they said that one of the aircraft came and dropped the bombs in the river by mistake! I don't know if it was true but it was something that went around at school. The chap who had the fishing rights to the River Wye used to very often come to school and bring us parcels of salmon to take home. They all treated us very well but we had to pull our weight. They said they had got a lot of work to do to look after the extra children.

We all had to share because there were a lot of evacuees who descended on people in the countryside. Some people came from seaside towns. They were afraid of the enemy landing on these seaside places. We had to turn the beds around and sleep across the bed so you could get four people in. You had to do it that way. There wasn't room you see, so we had to sleep across the bed instead of length ways.

We did lots of different things. We used to go rambling quite a bit, walking round rough countryside. We played cards, any sort of card games – my favourite game was Whist. We did jigsaw puzzles, every day things that you do now, anything that didn't cost a lot of money! We did a lot of knitting. I knitted socks for the soldiers too. I remember the first time I turned a heel, I really felt proud! We used to spend a lot of time knitting and undoing things that were already knitted to get the wool, because you couldn't just go and buy wool. There were a lot of things you couldn't get during the war. Sweets were rationed. You couldn't go in a shop and say *'Oh I will have half a pound of those sweets'* because they were all rationed. We made a lot of friends there. We got invited out quite a bit to people's houses for tea. I think they all felt sorry for us. Everyone was kind. I think it brought out the best in people, the war. ””



Wartime sweets



Brian Wilkes lived in West Bromwich. At the outbreak of war, he was eight years old and his parents took him to stay in Hagley.

“**We were living with my grandmother and we were soon joined by other evacuees from Saltley in Birmingham.** Two girls and a lad: I remember the lad in particular because he had a protective metal plate on the back of his head, held on with a black band. He had some accident. It was a bit unusual but that’s how you tend to remember things.

This was the time of the ‘Phoney War’ and nothing seemed to be happening. My father and one of his sisters went to work at RAF Hartlebury, which was a Maintenance Unit a short train ride away. He worked as a store-keeper there. I can well remember them struggling back from Stourbridge Junction rail station in deep snow in February and looking like ghosts with icicles hanging off their hair and eyebrows. He then got called up and went into Army Ordnance, stationed near Carlisle. They were forming a photographic unit so he applied and got a transfer to Pinewood Studios. He had

been in partnership in my grandfather's photographic business since 1923, doing football and cricket photographs.

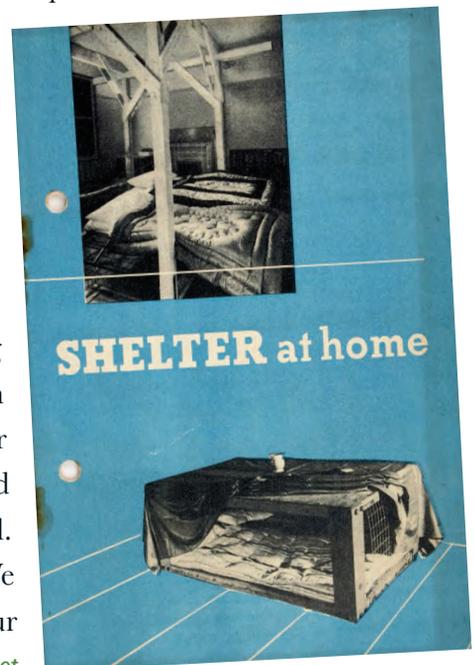
So we stayed in Hagley during this 'Phoney War' period. We all went to school at the local village school. It was about a mile from where we were living. It consisted of two rooms: a small room for the infants and a large room for the rest of us and the room was divided into two by a green curtain, and being a 'Wilkes', I sat at the back! They always say the naughty ones sit at the back, don't they? I was by the big curtain, so I used to get two lessons for the price of one because I had next door's lesson and my own. So that was my early experience.

By Spring 1940, with no air raids, all seemed to be quiet so we decided to go back to West Bromwich. On going back to my old school I can remember having to practice putting on our gas masks which we had to carry with us at all times. I can remember the smell of the rubber that those masks were made of to this day. Not very pleasant and I am glad we did not have to wear them for real.

I experienced the November Blitz of 1940. We didn't have an Anderson shelter in our garden. There wasn't enough room because my dad's printing works and studio took up all the space. We had a Morrison shelter, which is like a big table made out of thick steel. It used to be in our kitchen at home. It was very heavy and very strong, like a wire cage, mesh sides like pig wire. You had to get down on your hands and knees to use it. If the house collapsed it was strong enough to keep us safe inside it. We used to have our meals off it and we had a bed under it. We hardly ever used it but the dog did. He used to sleep in there. Oh the dog loved it!

We took shelter under the stairs that led to our cellar, sitting on the cold stone steps. We could hear the bombs whistling down, the ground would shake and the whitewash off the ceiling would cover us all in dust. It really was quite frightening. The morning after a raid we didn't have to be in school until ten o' clock, so we spent most of the time searching for the tails off incendiary bombs and bits of exploded anti-aircraft shells – that's what we called shrapnel. We used to go out and pick up bits of shrapnel. We used to have competitions for the best ones. On our

Wartime information leaflet



No 12. High Street
West Bromwich. 12³/₄ 6"
Main fractured under
Debris. 20-11-40.



Image from South Staffs Water documentation of bomb damage

No 14. Oak Road,
West Bromwich
6" Main fractured
20-11-40.

way to school we would have to clamber over blown down trees, walls, lamp posts and jump over fire hoses that were still snaking over the ground as firemen tried to contain the fires. We had two bad fires, one was in a flour mill that went up like a great big blow torch and the other was in a candle factory. The wax got into the drains and sewers and needless to say it created a lot of problems for a long time afterwards. One land mine dropped on a street of houses not very far away and forty-seven adults and children were killed.

My dad had got a weekend bungalow at Bewdley and after these raids we went down there to get away from the bombing. We had no gas, electricity or sewage. I had to go and collect water from the stream by the bungalow. Our lighting was by candle or oil lamp and the toilet was a bucket in a little shed down the garden. Not very nice by today's standards, but you soon got used to it. Whilst I was there, after about six months, my mother got in contact with a boarding school in Ludlow and I went there in 1941. My parents decided it would be safer. It was called Fishmore Hall. It was a Georgian building. It's still in existence, not as a school. It later became a Borstal. Unfortunately, we had to do quite a lot of work to keep the school running. We had to chop logs for the fires, pump water from the wells under the school, clean out the carbide generators which supplied gas for lighting – that was really a filthy job.

Fishmore Hall had children who were evacuated from Gorleston-on-Sea on the Norfolk coast. Their school had actually been bombed. The Germans had posted a bomb through their letter box, literally! They used to come in skip bombing! Bounced the bomb off the sea and it was on the front and it went straight through the school letter box! I learned how to trim my first hedge at Fishmore in the summer of 1942. It was ten foot high and about a hundred feet long. We used to watch Lysander planes land in a small field across the way. Little did we know they were practising to land secret agents in Holland and France who would send information back to the Army Chiefs who were making plans for the D-Day invasion. We only had one bomb drop there in the war – it killed a cow. The whole town of Ludlow turned out to look at the big hole in the ground. ””

DID YOU KNOW?

• The period from September 1939 to April 1940 was called 'The Phoney War' because of the lack of major military land operations against the Germans. In France, it was known as 'The Funny War' (*drôle de guerre*) and in Germany as 'The Armchair War' (*Sitzkrieg*).

Moreen Wilkes (nee Hall) was evacuated at the age of three from Liverpool to Oxfordshire in 1939. She later returned home to the city to experience the Liverpool Blitz of 1940-41.

“**The war had barely begun.** I remember being evacuated and I remember coming back home again. I was evacuated to a village near Oxford. I don't really know how long the journey was, but it seemed a very long time to me because it was by train from Liverpool to Oxford and then it was a coach from Oxford to the village. Because trains were in danger of being bombed the train driver would try and make his way into a tunnel and wait until planes passed over. I seem to remember it was dark as well, travelling by night.

As far as I remember, I quite enjoyed it because it was like going on holiday and I had got my mum with me. But it wasn't really like that all the time. Sometimes the other children in the house, they were not very kind to me. They didn't get on with me very well, because being from Liverpool I had a Liverpool accent. People just didn't understand you and made fun of you. I think for most people it was all right but some people didn't want children from different places, particularly children from cities because they thought that they were poor and ill behaved. When that happened, you'd hear your mum talking about it to somebody else.

I called the man we stayed with 'Grandpa Lapper'. It would be lovely to see him again. He was a very kind, elderly gentleman who worked on the railway. He was the signal man in the little village that I stayed in. Everywhere was lit by candles and you had a candle stick that you would carry up to your bedroom. Because I was under five and the only child, my mother was allowed to go with me, to begin with anyhow. She brought me back home again after about three months so I didn't stay there very long.

Back in Anfield, where we lived, we had an Anderson shelter in our garden that my dad and my uncle Tom dug and put in the garden. It regularly flooded with water and I hurt myself climbing into it. My dad then said, '*This is no good, we're either going to die of pneumonia or die of a bomb.*' So he dug it up. He sold my mother's furniture from the parlour and he put the shelter in the front room. He worked in a brewery in the middle of Liverpool and he brought home some very thick planks of wood. He screwed the shelter down onto the planks and put it all together, just as it was in the garden. He put a wooden door on the front, which had angle irons with ball bearings, so the door rolled backward and forwards on them. Some men came from the council and told

him he must take it out. He said, *'I'm not taking it out, you can take it out.'* In the end they let us keep it there and it was there all through the war and we used it most nights, particularly during the May Blitz. Once it was in the front room with the bunks in there, we used to go to bed as though it was bedtime upstairs.

My mum had recently got a big new kitchen cabinet that had only just come out and that was considered very posh. It had cupboards at the top and drawers at the bottom and a drop down enamel shelf. The kitchen was at the back and the door to the garden in our house was straight opposite the front door. The rail yards were nearby, a couple of hundred yards away. You could hear the trains going up and down the whole time. When the bombs hit one of the trains full of mines and munitions and it exploded, the blast took off the front door and took the kitchen cabinet straight through the back door into the garden. They reckoned that if the Liver birds were damaged or came off the Liver buildings, then Liverpool would fall. I can remember my dad saying if the May Blitz lasted another two days that would have been the end of Liverpool. The whole of the area after the raid was covered in gun cotton. It looked as if it had been snowing. I said to my mum I wanted a May procession. She said, *'We've had a bloody May procession all right.'* ”



**THE NEW
INCENDIARY BOMB
IS HEAVIER** than the older
bomb and penetrates deeper



Search all floors including basement

Imagined diary



Dear Diary,

My little sister started to cry. I was really scared but I had to be brave because my sister was scared. We left home and went to the train station. I hugged my mum and I told my sister to say 'Bye Bye.' All the mums went back and the train went. I was trying to be brave. My sister was asleep. She was on my lap. It was uncomfortable. Some people came. I was scared. I was alone, thinking in my head, 'Will I go back to my mum or not? Please save me, someone please.' It was night time as the train went past a lovely field. My sister woke up. I gave her a biscuit and a drink, thinking what will my mum be doing now? Thinking about the past, looking out of the window. What shall I do? Be brave. What shall I do? Tears dropping from my eyes. It's time to cry, not to be brave. My sister woke up. I wiped my tears and she was asking me 'Why are you crying?' I said, 'No, I am tired...' I was praying to be safe. - Saniya Aneesa, Year 6 pupil.

in a raid_

Open your door to
passer-bys. They
need shelter too.



*Year 6 pupils recreate a World War 2 poster;
and World War Two civil defence armband*

“There was a big air raid shelter just across the road and when the sirens first went it was the most horrible sound. It was worse than the police sirens, much worse than that and frightening. But after that, my brother had gone to war and my sister and myself, we slept down our cellar for safety. When the bombs fell the houses would be falling, but for some reason the staircase was left standing, so people slept under the stairs. After the people who were bombed in Coventry and Birmingham and London, we realised we were just as safe down the cellar. We had two large cellar areas and they were absolutely safe. My mother made a bed down the cellar and when the sirens went we just ran down out of our beds, down to the cellar. We went to sleep and got up for school the next day.” - *Olive Baker (nee Jones), evacuee*

“There was a munitions factory nearby and when the bombers came over and they overshot, they just dropped their bombs anywhere. They peppered them around the district because they didn’t want to take them back. My overriding memory of going down in the shelters was the smell. It was the dampness of the soil mixed with candles in little earthenware jars, the smell of the burning candle fat and the damp soil. It was a pervading distinctive smell. I could recognise it if I came across it today.”
- *Brian Lysett*



Dear Diary,

Today was the most painful day ever since the war began. I saw my dearest friend George get bombed. I saw his face. It was scared and vulnerable and I knew that something bad was going to happen but I never helped. I just stood there watching him get bombed. Although there was bombs, guns and explosions, all being shot in every place, I would look and see the dead body of my friend being dragged off the floor.

Seeing people die and every two minutes the sirens going off left me scarred for life. It's torture. I have nightmares and I don't even get a wink of sleep. It is terrifying thinking to myself that it could be my last day. Thinking that I might not see my family. I wonder to myself if I would be alive fighting or whether I would be dead in my grave, if I would be able to wake up and see a new day. This leaves me anxious.

PS. I hope it goes well and that this is not my last diary.

- Bushra Begum, Year 6 pupil



DID YOU KNOW?

- On November 14th 1940, Coventry was bombed for eleven hours. The medieval city was gutted, the cathedral ruined, one third of the houses were left uninhabitable, half the buses were destroyed and drinking water polluted. It left 554 dead and 1000 injured.
- Between September 1940 and July 1941, Birmingham was attacked 76 times. The worst bombing took place on the night of December 11th 1940, when 200 German bombers pounded Birmingham for thirteen hours.
- On November 19th 1940, hundreds of bombers raided West Bromwich, causing extensive damage. The District Hospital on Lombard Street was successfully evacuated, with Dr. William Stanley Walton and Matron, Miss Moore, winning the George Medal for their work that night.
- In Liverpool, over eight successive nights starting on May 1st 1941, 681 planes dropped 870 tonnes of high explosives and over 112,000 incendiaries on the city. 1,746 Merseysiders were killed. In the docks there, 69 out of 144 cargo berths were disabled. More than 90,000 homes were destroyed or damaged and 75,000 people were left homeless.



- West Bromwich girl Charity Bick lied about her age to join the A.R.P. service at 14. Two years later she won the George Medal for her bravery in dealing with live incendiary bombs that fell on the town.



DID YOU KNOW?

- German cities and civilians were to pay a high price for the aggression of the Nazi state. During a week of attacks, on the night of July 27th 1943, the British dropped 2,000 tons of explosives and incendiaries on Hamburg, creating a firestorm which practically destroyed the entire city. It killed over 42,000 civilians and wounded 37,000. Nearly a million people were made homeless by these attacks.

Sonderausgabe

Ausgabe Nr. 2 Stand: 1940

Nur für den Dienstgebrauch!

Walsall 2° 0' 119568

BRAVE CORPORAL

HONoured BY SPECIAL HOME
BB 17k GUARD PARADE

RESCUED BLAZING 'BUSES

After Bomb On The Walsall
Transport Depot



BB 17k (GB 8

25 Staffordshire Iron
68 Birchill Street Wo

- Kaserne
- Eisenbahnanlage
- Bergwerk
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- Gaswerk
- Eisenindustrie
- Stahlwerk (Hoch
- Eisengießerei
- Gewehrstoßfabr
- Chemische Fabrik
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- Sägewerk
- Steine u. Erden
- Ziegelei, Steinbr
- Straßenbahndepo
- Sonstige Industri
- Kläranlage
- Eisenbahnbrücke
- Straßenbrücke
- Schleuse
- Überführung einer

B. C. N.
WYRLEY & ESSINGTON
CANAL

LXIII. N. E
30
LAT. 52° 36'

1940 German bombing map of Walsall

Jack Haddock was born in 1927 and stayed in Walsall during the war. At the age of fourteen he started work at Birchills Bus Depot, which was soon to be bombed.

“**There was no complacency in those days.** Most citizens had seen cinema newsreels a few years previously of the new style of aerial warfare during the Spanish Civil War. Many men rearing families had served in World War One so they were under no illusions as to what the future could hold. Despite the uncertain future it was surprising how citizens made the spartan accommodation of the Anderson shelters into a place to live in. After many houses had been blitzed they were to be home for a considerable time.

During the long winter nights of 1940 and 1941 most of the Webster Road citizens slept all night in these shelters, as there were air raid warnings most nights. They were reasonably comfortable, mainly thanks to the housewives who somehow managed to drape curtains and cloths around the bunk beds. Some laid an electric cable from the house, while others made do with candles and torches. When sleeping at night there was the problem of condensation. I well remember waking in the morning to look up and see the galvanised sheets wet with condensation falling on the beds like raindrops. Most shelters were heated by Valor paraffin stoves. Fortunately there were ample supplies of paraffin available in the local shops. It was with a certain amount of pride that many people grew flowers on top of the shelters whilst the rest of the gardens were filled with vegetables.

Our family became firm friends with the Coopers, living at 84 Webster Road. They had two sons, Carl and George and a daughter Madge. We decided to lift the gloom of shelter life by installing a telephone between our respective shelters. It transpired that a junk shop in George Street had quantities of redundant phones, earphones and crystal radio sets. For about two shillings and six pence we acquired a job lot of the equipment including many yards of wiring. Soon we had a line established between our air raid shelter and also between George Cooper's bedroom and my bedroom, with the lines tied along the house spouting. Our family had an old fashioned wind-up gramophone so that when we tied the speaker to the gramophone earpiece with string we could then broadcast to number 84's shelter.

All this was very crude, despite our choice of records purchased from various junk shops and market stalls. Our favourites for some unknown reason was the Scots

Guards playing 'Sons of the Brave' and 'Colonel Bigg', a record of two waltzes 'Estudiantine' and 'España', and a record that was popular with our mothers, 'In a Monastery Garden' and 'In a Persian Market'. Often during an air raid we would be listening to the quiet bird song of 'In a Monastery Garden' at the same time hearing the thud of anti-aircraft shells exploding over Birmingham.

The day after the famous raid on Coventry I decided to cycle there to witness the damage – unknown to my parents, who thought I was train spotting. Once past Meriden, I caught the first sight of enemy action – a small garage almost burnt out and on the road a once proud new Leyland Tiger coach still blazing away. I reached the Coventry by-pass and from this point to the city centre problems arose, for most of the highway was festooned with fire hoses, lined up to the many factories still on fire from the previous night's attack.

The only traffic in sight consisted of fire engines and A.R.P. rescue vans. I got to the position where I could see the burnt out shell of Coventry Cathedral, when a policeman enquired if I was looking for someone. When I told him I had just made a cycle ride from Walsall he immediately gave me my marching orders to return home at once, stressing the fact that the Germans could make a daylight visit. So I retired home with the smell of burning in my nostrils and a memory I shall never forget. On the way home I stopped to watch trains at Castle Bromwich. Every few minutes trains full of war produce would be on the move. From the nearby aerodrome came the constant roar of aero engines from a variety of aircraft, including Spitfires, Hurricanes, Defiants and Wellingtons.

When I finally arrived back home, father enquired about my absence and did not believe me about my expedition. When he realised what I had done, I received a very stern lecture and was advised to keep away from built up cities. But we still did occasional sorties into Birmingham after air raids. It was definitely an adventure, it was exciting to us lot, even when the Germans were overhead and the shells burst.

One night in 1942 Walsall suffered its worst air raid. Early evening the sirens sounded and many German planes passed over, heading north. About midnight we received the all clear siren but decided to remain in our shelter. About 4 am the warning sounded again. My father and myself had to report for work at Birchills bus depot within a few hours so we decided to get up and look outside. I said to my father 'Hark at that heavy rain falling in the distance,' fully expecting to get drenched at any minute. 'That's no rain,' he replied. 'It must be incendiary bombs.' It transpired he was right, for over

a thousand incendiaries fell in the vicinity of Bloxwich Road and Birchills Bus Depot. After about ten minutes the sky was lit up as the incendiaries found their mark.

We were informed later that the bombers we heard earlier were on their way to attack Liverpool and on the return trip some of their planes still had surplus bombs still aboard and passing over Walsall saw the inviting structures of Talbot Stead's tube works and Birchills Bus Depot. We decided to stay in our shelters for a time, fully expecting some high explosive bombs to be jettisoned into the chaos, but to our relief no more planes were heard and the Germans must have retired back to France as daylight was near.

The all clear sounded and we ventured onto Rutland Street railway bridge to see Hawley's Tent Works ablaze. The whole of the grass railway bank near Forest Lane was burning furiously. I saw several of the telephone poles on fire and falling amid a shower of sparks across the main Cannock line. There was another glow in the sky that came from the Butts district. Another Hawley's firm received a stick of incendiary bombs and was completely gutted. Number 2 bay at Birchills Depot was also ablaze and from this inferno a Home Guard man on duty, Corporal Kitson, a bus driver, drove seven flaming buses onto the apron by the nearby ticket office. Unfortunately, the fire brigade and auxiliary fire service were too busy attending to Number 1 bay, where there were four petrol pumps and one diesel pump containing thousands of gallons of fuel.

By a miracle, a great explosion was averted. The residents of Bloxwich Road were temporarily evacuated. When I arrived for work all that was left of the seven buses was their twisted chassis. Corporal Kitson might as well have left them in Number 2 bay. However, he did qualify for a medal for his efforts. We found hundreds of incendiary bombs that had been extinguished with sandbags plus many that had failed to explode. I found my way through the debris to one bay pit to find the bus we were due to test completely destroyed. One bus had a hole in the roof and midway between the top deck seats was an incendiary bomb, covered with a sandbag. The Home Guard and firewatchers probably saved the whole of the Depot from being destroyed. In spite of the destruction approximately half of the buses entered service that morning, but to my knowledge no one received any thanks for their efforts in preventing a serious fire or at least trying to run a bus service for the war workers. ””

DID YOU KNOW?

- One and a half million Anderson shelters were given to householders with gardens.

Jim Hammer was born in London. He was ten years old at the outbreak of war and lived with his parents and seven year old brother in Dulwich, South East London.

“**I still remember Sunday, 3rd September 1939 vividly.** At eleven o'clock in the morning we tuned in to the radio. The Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's words still resonate – *'Yesterday our Ambassador delivered a note to the German government saying that unless we heard by 11 this morning that German troops were withdrawing from Poland a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you now that no such reply has been received and we are therefore at war with Germany.'* Shortly afterwards there was the wailing of the air raid sirens and we prepared to shelter under the dining room table as someone said *'They're not wasting much time.'* Then to our relief came the all clear.

While we were still on holiday our little school, Brightlands, had been evacuated to Lenham in central Kent, curiously enough rather nearer to the coastal front line. Our aunt, who had a car, drove us down that afternoon and my brother, Mark, and I were taken in by a kindly farm labourer's wife with a comfortable cottage. Mrs Ifield fed us on chunky bread, great thick rashers of home-cured bacon - which hung as great joints from the kitchen ceiling – and plum jam. It must have been a bumper year for plums as I remember pots and pots of it in the larder. As far as I remember we only argued over one thing and that was her refusal to let me read the paper – *'It's not for children like you.'* This was very frustrating as I had long been an avid reader of my mother's Daily Sketch with its accounts of murders and cat burglaries at country houses. But not only that. I was reasonably well informed about the vicissitudes of the Spanish Civil War, the destruction of Guernica, the Italians' bombing in Abyssinia and that of the Japanese in Shanghai.

The term passed without, as I remember, any serious work being done. One day Mark and I decided to explore the hill across the valley on which was carved in the grass a very large chalk cross – by then covered in straw to prevent its being used by planes for navigation. There we discovered an old rubbish tip from which we rescued a variety of broken saucepans and kettles and the odd car part. We were told in no uncertain terms that the area was out of bounds as we had seriously disturbed the farmer's pheasant chicks. The route across the fields to the village was endlessly fascinating with hedges and trees and the stream to investigate. And there was the day that I tried to walk all the way with my eyes closed, relying solely on Mark's directions,

which somehow failed at the bridge over the stream with somewhat wet and muddy consequences. This idyllic interlude was not to last.

Our headmaster had been in the RAF Volunteer Reserve so he was soon called up. His much older cousin agreed to start a new school with those from Brightlands as its nucleus. He got hold of a former hotel/guest house on the ridge above Heathfield in the middle of Sussex and that is where the spring term started. We travelled down by train from Victoria. Apart from the charming but sickly matron the staff was something of a mixed bag. The retirement age classics and history master was most interested in, and fascinating when talking about, the significance and interpretation of dreams. The young, medically unfit son of a then well-known author could fill in with a good spread of subjects. I suppose we must have learned something.

The highlight of this time was the Battle of Britain in summer and autumn 1940. The location of the school gave us the best ringside seat. During the most furious battles we were meant to stay in the main building or under the staircase. It required careful judgment to out manoeuvre one's mates and decide when things were hot enough to suddenly say *'Please Miss, I want to go badly'* and then leg it upstairs to the loo, throw open the window and see what was going on. After it was over we would rush out to collect the machine gun cartridge cases and cartridge belt links which showered into the grounds. A top rare find was a canon shell case – worth a lot as a swap.

Every Sunday after lunch we were required to write home and a few years ago when clearing the loft of my parent's house I found a shoe box full of all those sent by me between 1940 and 1942 and Mark's until 1945. They are now archived in the Imperial War Museum in London. But I remember snatches from them – *'I saw a terrific dogfight this week. A Hurricane was shot down but the pilot bailed out. We beat the day-boys at football. Funds are running a bit low, please send two and sixpence.'* But it was a serious time too. On a Saturday night in early September 1940 while still on holiday in London I remember the terrible glow in the sky as the docks burned. In 1941, our grandparents were killed by a direct hit in a daylight raid and our own parents, who were living with them at the time, only missed being in the house by a matter of minutes by going to a library. All in all being evacuated gave us experiences which we would never have had in suburban Dulwich, and as far as I can tell did us no serious harm. It was certainly different. ”

DID YOU KNOW?

At the beginning of the war, 38 million gas-masks were handed out to the population.



June Lum speaking to a class

June Lum (nee Coop) was evacuated from Birmingham at the age of seven, first going to Malvern, staying with two different families. She was also sent to Berkswell and, at the age of ten, she went to Pipewood School Camp near Rugeley until the end of the war.

“ **My cousin Jean had already been evacuated to Malvern.** Shortly afterwards my mother took me to stay with Jean and another girl called Beryl at the home of Mr and Mrs Sparkes at Court Road, Great Malvern. I was a bit sad to be leaving my mum and dad but I thought of it as a little holiday. I didn't expect to be gone a long time. They were a lovely couple and we were happy there, except for Beryl who was younger and didn't settle and later went back home.

I can remember the water pump in the kitchen and making mud pies in the garden. There was no television then so we played outside most of the time, until it was time to go to bed – unless the weather was bad. At the bottom of the garden was a low stone wall and over the wall was a field where we used to play. There was a little metal ladder, we used to climb down it into the field. Sometimes there were cows in the field, but most of the time nothing. One day we found two dead birds; an owl and a blackbird. They were in good condition so we wrapped them up in a blanket and put them in a basket to play hospitals. Mrs Sparkes was horrified when she saw them, but we thought nothing of it. We had a good time there.

They had a granddaughter named Pat who was about twelve. She used to make little plays up and dress us up and when our parents came to see us, we used to do a little play for them. I had my 8th birthday party there. My parents and aunties came and Mrs Sparkes laid out a table in the garden with a nice tea and a birthday cake.

We went to the school just round the corner. I was a bit scared when we were going up into the next class because we were going to do joined up writing. I didn't sleep very well at the time. I remember having Christmas there and they had a huge tree in the classroom and we all had a present from it. I had a little box with little balls of knitting wool in and two knitting pins in it. That's when I first tried knitting.

After a while, when we were home on holiday, Mr and Mrs Sparkes were asked to billet soldiers instead and as they were getting on in years soldiers would be less work for them. So we had to move from their house and we went to stay at the caretaker's house at the school but it wasn't so good there. One day my mother came and took us home. When I asked why she said '*Because you've got holes in your socks!*' When we were 10 years old we were evacuated to Pipewood Camp School at Blithbury with my best



June as an evacuee in Malvern

C. D. Walton
Court Road Studio
Malvern

friend Elizabeth and we stayed there till the end of the war. It was a nice place. We used to get up about 7 am, put our coats on and go across to the washblock to wash. All the toilets, wash basins and showers were in there. We were in a dormitory and we would have to make our own beds, which were bunk beds, before we went to school.

There was a large shed with rabbits which we took turns to care for. If we were on rabbit duty we used to have to get up earlier. We would go to the kitchen and get a big tray of baked potatoes and take them down to the shed and mash them up with bran and cod liver oil and feed the rabbits. Later we would have to take a sack and go down the lanes to pick green food for them – clover and grass. Sometimes rabbits needed to be killed for food. Afterwards we would skin the rabbit and clean it out. Fur mittens would be made from the pelts, which would be nailed to a board, then the fat would be scraped off. Then there was this special paste which was spread on and it would be left to go hard. Later it would have to be worked by hand to soften it up, then the shape of the mittens would be cut out. We also went round the lanes picking rosehips, which were made into rosehip syrup for babies. One day, some of us went potato picking for a local farm. Jean was upset because she was too young to go, but when she found out I'd picked up a toad by mistake she was glad she didn't go! We often went on country walks, always walked to church on a Sunday and sometimes into Rugeley. We also knitted for the troops. I knitted a sailor's blue balaclava

We always said grace before our meals at Pipewood. One day we were given tripe and none of us liked it. There were six of us left and we were told '*You must eat it, we can't afford to waste food.*' But we couldn't eat it, so we waited until the teacher had left the room then we scraped it all on to one plate and put all the other plates on top and took it back to the kitchen. Nobody ever said anything. They never gave it to us again. People did the best they could with what food they could get. You couldn't get tins of fruit like you can now. A tin of fruit was precious during the war. If mom managed to get a tin of peaches or was lucky enough to get a tin of salmon it used to be saved for a birthday or Christmas. Once I had ice cream made out of potatoes. I don't know how they did it. It tasted a bit strange. ””

DID YOU KNOW?

- The war years were a good time if you were pregnant or a baby, due to the greater allocation of services and care directed to babies and children, particularly those less privileged.
- The birth rate increased in wartime, with 4.5 million children born.
- Infant mortality declined and life expectancy increased during the war.



Marion Williams speaking to pupils at an open day event

Marion Williams (nee Nicholls) was evacuated at the age of ten from Kingstanding, Birmingham to the village of Lower Hartshay, near Ripley in Derbyshire. She was later sent to Pipewood School near Rugeley.

“ **In August 1939 we had just moved from Aston to a new house, then I was evacuated.** I was evacuated twice. The first time I went on a bus and they took us to Derbyshire to a village hall. It was our own school that told us we were going to be evacuated, so mothers just packed us a case and we had to go to the school and we were put on buses. They split us up on different buses and took us to different villages. People came and picked you out and took you home with them and I was taken to live with a miner and his wife. They looked after me very well but it wasn't like a town. They hadn't got a proper toilet – you had to go outside and there was no chain to it. It was just a wooden thing outside with a door on. It was spotlessly clean. They used to come and empty it in the night. It was different to being at home, where we had hot water and the toilets and everything. When you went there it seemed very primitive. And they had no bath. But they were very kind and they looked after me. There was always a lovely fire because he was a coal miner and they had plenty of coal!

It was all countryside and mines. There were also farms all round there. There were horses and haystacks. It was very quiet, but you could enjoy yourself. I made friends with people who lived there who'd got a farm. I used to go over there and help with the hay making. I learnt to milk a cow while I was there. It was an old cow and the farmer said *'It's very docile,'* so I could do that one. I had this little stool and he showed me how to do it. As for the others he said I wasn't allowed to touch them, just this one. Never done it since mind you! We had butter which came straight from the farm. I never had any margarine when I was there. The milk was fetched every morning in a jug. I used to go and fetch it for them from the farm over the road. The miner would be up early and there was always a lovely fire when you got up in the morning.

I had to sleep with the daughter who was fourteen. I can't explain to you, it was very strange – you went up the stairs, there was a space and the husband slept there. He was out early in the morning being a miner, really early, and when I came home from school he used to be asleep on the sofa. But the other side of the stairs there was no door – it was a large room with two double beds in there, and the mum slept in there with the baby, who was a year old. I used to take him out in the pram for her. There was always lots of stuff going on and I was a bit of a one for roaming off on

my own when I was a child. I'd go fishing. I fell in the river more than once and come home soaking wet. I used to like to go off and do me own thing.

I stayed for a year and I was very happy there. I came home for a holiday and decided that I didn't want to go back. So I came back to my mum and went to school in Birmingham for a year. Then the government decided they would have to evacuate some children out of the city to a boarding school so I decided I would like to go to Pipewood. We went by train that time.

At Pipewood, we all just did what we were told. We had three good meals a day and we used to grow loads of stuff ourselves. We had a lovely garden and we used to keep bees and all sorts of things. We kept chickens and ducks and rabbits. We used to have to look after them as well. We all kept ourselves busy. It was a nice time, even though I missed my mum and dad. I think it did me good. I enjoyed it as well, I've got to be honest. When I left school, I could fend for myself.

I'd read lots of books about boarding schools and I thought it would be midnight feasts so I thought, *'I'm going there!'* We didn't have any midnight feasts but I stayed there from when I was twelve until I left school at fourteen in May 1944. I enjoyed it. I had two lovely years there.

I learnt lots of things and I think it made me feel responsible. I would have to look after myself to a certain extent, but it was also nice having all these girls, like sisters, because I didn't have any sisters. I had lots of friends, and we did lots of things that we would never have done at home. It was lovely there. We learnt painting. All outside was bracken and grass, so we used to do our painting outside, in the woods. Sometimes

we didn't have our lessons till later if it was nice weather so we could be out and play. It was lovely there actually. We had woods. We used to go round the lanes gathering hazelnuts, blackberry picking and we could go up to the farm and get some apples and pears. There were lots of things going on. There was a lot more going on than compared to home. We used to have treasure hunts. The teachers used to hide stuff and then give us clues and we could have half a day going round to find things. We used to put shows on ourselves.



Girls at Pipewood School Camp

Vegetable gardening at Pipewood School Camp

We used to learn country dancing and Greek dancing. We had films and we went to church every Sunday. The air force used to come over from the base nearby and they used to put shows on and we'd go over to them. We won a gardening cup for the best garden, out of thirty-one camps.

We had to do a lot of knitting for the navy. We used to do these big grey sweaters and socks at Pipewood. Everybody had to knit, even the children, in the war. The chaps used to wear knitted balaclava helmets and the girls used to



wear woollen hats. I did know how to knit with four needles for socks and gloves. And you can do it just as quick when you do four needles. We learnt to do all these different things. I learnt a lot more about gardening and my dad was a keen gardener.

I was at home when Birmingham was bombed. It was during the time I'd come back from the miners. We were down the air raid shelter one night. It wasn't very nice. It was very damp sometimes. Sometimes you would be down there all night and you didn't get much sleep and you had still got to go to school the next day. That's why mums wanted you out in the country, so they knew you'd be safe and well looked after.

We'd gone down, but then we'd gone back to the house to make a drink of cocoa because it was pretty quiet. While we were in the house we heard a blast so we just left everything and ran back down the shelter. The next morning when we got up, the two houses near where I lived had been blown up.

We had no water because it blew all the water pipes and everything. I remember having a bucket and going to collect some water from the dairy to bring back to the house. The lady who lived there was an elderly lady and her son said she wouldn't go down the air raid shelter. She had wanted to stop in the cubby hole where you hang your coats. He'd gone down the shelter and she had said '*I'm not going.*' He was all right, but she died.

My dad worked at the Dunlop factory. He had been in the First World War and when he came back he was too old to go in the Second World War. He worked at Dunlop for forty eight years making tyres for the aeroplanes. I had uncles who worked on Spitfires and things like that. All the men had to work and the women had to go to work as well. Dad worked on Saturdays and Sundays and also did the fire watching



It's the women we need..



**Women ambulance drivers, women wardens,
women for first aid and casualty stations.**

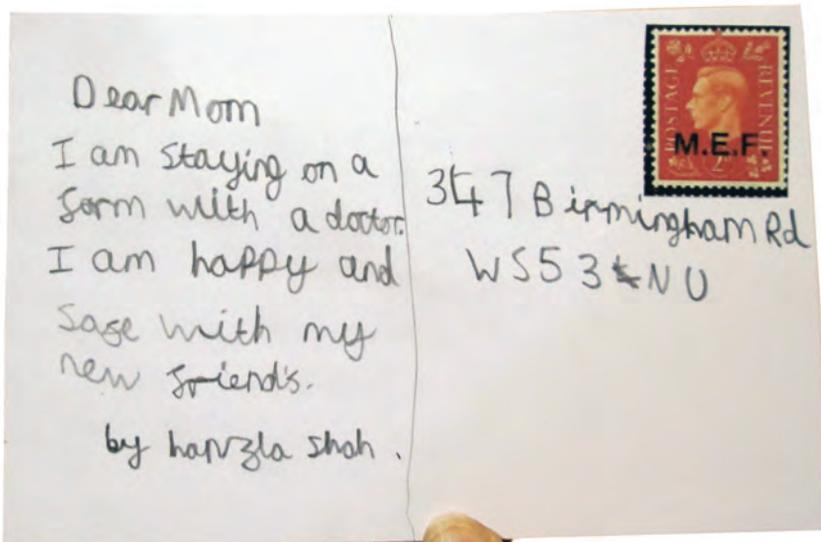
ENROL AT ONCE!

when he came home. Everybody had to go to work if you were capable of working, because the young men had gone to war.

Not far from where I lived used to be ICI and that's where they did ammunition. At Castle Bromwich was where they used to build the Spitfire planes. So the Germans used to try to bomb these places. They thought they would be winning to bomb those places and stop production. If they had a few bombs left on the way back, they would just drop them on the city and the houses. The Bull Ring in Birmingham was different then. It wasn't like it is today – it was the old fashioned Bull Ring. There was a market, a fish market. Nothing like it is now, a completely different place. It was all bombed during the war. Oh, I didn't like it. Nobody did, did they?

Well, the war was an experience – it wasn't nice because of all the people that lost their lives, and the soldiers and the children injured, and all those things that happened. People were losing people. My auntie's brother in law had his leg blown off in a tank. It was horrible. But it's all part of life isn't it? The things that happen in your lifetime! I suppose in some ways it did me good, going away, and mixing with lots of other people. It made it better for me in my life and who I am now. I can stand up for myself and I can go anywhere and not worry about anything. I suppose it actually did me good in that way, but it's not very nice to be without your mum and dad. ””

When they were first evacuated, as soon as they arrived children were issued a postcard to write home. This is an imaginary postcard written by a pupil.





Roland Hargreaves was evacuated at the age of seven from Ladywood, Birmingham to Putley in Herefordshire.

“ **When we lived at home we had a metal bath which we used to have to fill with water.** It was a tin bath and we used to have to share the water. Being the youngest boys we had the first bath so we had all the clean water to start with. It got dirtier and dirtier as other people got into the bath and just topped it up with hot water because we couldn't afford to waste the water, because it was warm. You see we had to boil the water in a big tub, a copper tub to get the hot water, but that used to cost coal to make it burn to get it hot and we couldn't afford to throw all the water away and then fill it up again, so we just had to tip in more hot water to keep it warm.

Father was ill. He had been injured during the First World War. He'd lost a lung because of the gas. Things were very tight and poor at our house. There were eleven of us altogether in our family; eight boys and three girls. The older four boys went into the Forces, two of my older sisters stayed in Birmingham. Four brothers and a sister

were evacuated from our family so we were a little group. I think our family saw it as a good opportunity for us to be looked after better than being where we were. And we were looked after, oh extremely well.

As soon as the war was announced we were evacuated. War was declared on September 3rd and we went on the 5th or something like that. No one told us we had to leave, but the school told the parents we could leave if they wanted us to go away. It was a voluntary thing. We weren't made to go. We understood we were going away, but I don't think we understood what war was. No, we wouldn't. We understood we were going on a journey and our reaction was excitement. It was a very exciting time, because we'd never been on a train before. We hadn't seen animals in fields and we'd never been on holiday, so this was like Christmas all over again for us. We enjoyed the trip. We'd never even been to the country and this was a very good opportunity for us we thought. I think I just wanted to survive and not be hungry because we were quite hungry at home.

We went away with nothing. We hadn't got any toys. The clothes we'd got we were wearing. We were a very poor family. We carried a suitcase, but I think that was just because we didn't want to be the only ones there without a suitcase. We didn't take any food with us. We didn't get food until the evening when we got to the farm. The boys only stayed there for one week – but our sister stayed there for the next three and a half years.

Shall I tell you about the house we then went to live in? We went to a house called Putley Court in Herefordshire, near Ledbury. Let me tell you about my foster parent. He was called Mr Todd and he was a widower. His wife had died in 1939 and he took us four boys into his house, but he did have seven maids to look after him, and three gardeners, a cook and a chauffeur! Miss Riley, she was like our nanny that looked after us and our cook was named Miss Wright. And we had a butler, a lady butler, and her name was Miss Powell. It was a very large house. It was built for the squire of the village. It we had a lovely house to live in.

We were very well looked after and anything that we wanted to do we were allowed to do as long as we didn't damage anything. We had our own bedroom with four beds in, we had a playroom where we could play in during the wet weather and we had a private bathroom which we never had at home in Birmingham. We had electricity, which we didn't have in Birmingham. We lived in a very good house! There was hot water! Oh, it was luxury. We were very, very lucky. This was all new for us. There was



***DON'T** do it,
Mother—*

**LEAVE THE CHILDREN
WHERE THEY ARE**

even a phone at the house, because Mr Todd was a rich man. I know my parents rang him sometimes to see how we were, but we weren't allowed to use the phone. Our parents only came to visit us once I think but they used to talk to Mr Todd to see how we were.

I don't think we made many friends because we were a little group and we stuck together. We were our own little gang really. We were lucky to get to stay together. We saw our sister every day at school. My eldest brother was my best friend. He was the sergeant of the little group. Mr Todd made us into a little group of soldiers. Mr Todd would meet with us most evenings, to ask if we had any problems and to make sure we were behaving ourselves and generally checking on our welfare.

I didn't go back to Birmingham for a visit until 1944. My parents stayed in Birmingham but they didn't get hurt in the bombing, just windows broken and things like that. They didn't have an Anderson shelter in the garden, because we had no garden. There was one in the street. My eleven year old brother could not settle down and eventually decided to run away back home and managed to get a lift and arrived safely after two days travelling. When my other brother turned fourteen he returned home to start work. So there were three of us left at Putley, with my sister at the farm. My brother was a year younger and he became ill with epilepsy and it was up to me to look after him when we were outside the house. Finally, my parents took him home. I was there for four years until I left the village school at eleven.

The school was one small room and there were sixty children in it and they were aged from five years to eleven years old and there were only two teachers. So we didn't have a lot of schooling. We weren't taught very much because it was almost impossible for the teachers to teach that many. I enjoyed school because we used to go out picking fruit and getting the hay in and all that sort of thing when we were there.

There was rationing on of course, but if you lived in the country you could grow your own food and you could keep a pig to eat and keep chickens so that you had eggs. Things like butter and cheese were rationed, but things like eggs and meat and that sort of thing weren't rationed for us, because living in the country we were able to provide it for ourselves. The first year we were there at Christmas the cook wanted us out of the kitchen so that she make Christmas dinner. So one of the girls that lived down at the lodge, who was the daughter of the head gardener, took us carol singing. That was the first time that they'd sung carols in the village apparently and you know they still keep that tradition up today. ””



Keith Masters lived in Acocks Green, Birmingham throughout the war. He was aged one when the war started and was not evacuated. Evacuation was on a voluntary basis and his mother decided they should stay at home.

“ We were very near a big munitions factory called Lucas, which still exists but they don’t make munitions and war equipment now. They did then, so it was very popular with the Luftwaffe, the German air force. I remember bombers coming overhead and you’d hear the sound as they were dropping their bombs. When the sirens made a noise we went into the garden shelter. I had a tin hat, a soldier looking hat, and a metal tray, and I walked down the garden to the shelter with this hat on and the tray. I hated it. You never knew when the next lot of planes would be coming in and there was a particular sound of the siren and then you would hear the drone of planes. You know the noise they make, and then there would be a silence and then there’d be a ‘zzzzzzzzzz’ sort of noise and this was bombs being dropped. I can only remember once a bomb dropping close enough to shake the shed and shake the shelter where we were.

My parents had a chemist's shop which was providing medicines and so on and they felt they couldn't move from there. They felt it was important to be in the community – the shop acted like a mini-doctors. I was an only child and they wanted to keep me with them. They weren't going to send me away. They said they'd rather have me take the risk with them.

We had a shelter in the garden. We used it about two, three times a week. You spent the night there. We had this in our garden and the neighbours came in from either side to share the shelter because they hadn't got a shelter in theirs. We also had a big square metal table, a particular sort of shelter in the house. An absolutely solid steel table and you just went under that – and that was also your protection against bombs dropping. A lot of Birmingham was bombed. We were quite lucky where we were.

It was the only life I knew and you go day by day. Each day was another adventure, if you like. There were two or three other children in the houses of the shops alongside. We'd meet together in the daytime and play and, of course, we were too young for school so we didn't have to go anywhere particular. I didn't actually see any bombs on the ground unexploded, because the idea of the bomb was that it hit the land, then blew up. But we used to go round picking up shrapnel – the fragments of metal blown off the bombs. There was quite a collection.

We ate whatever we could get. It wasn't a question of being fussy. Sometimes the meat ration for a family would be one lamb chop. I think we were allowed a small piece of meat per week, per person. That didn't actually go very far. But all sorts of things were rationed. Milk was rationed, butter and spreads were rationed, cheese, meat – anything like that, they were all in very short supply. I never saw a bar of chocolate. There was no chocolate, no sweets until the Americans entered the war quite late on and then they started bringing in things like that. So, I think I saw my first bit of chocolate towards the end of the war. I think we were reasonably lucky because when you've got a block of shops, the people would come into the chemist shop and perhaps they'd want some cough mixture or something, or anything that was in short supply. On the other hand, if they had a shop like a grocers you might be able to exchange your goods for their goods. Sounds a bit naughty but it's what people did then. It's the only way you could get any provisions. ” ”

DID YOU KNOW?

- For protection, 400 million sandbags were piled round the entrances to shops and public buildings.
- Pillar boxes were painted with yellow gas-sensitive paint to warn of poison gas attacks.

Please Miss, can I have some more?



School for evacuees; everyday life at Marchant's Camp School at Hindhead, in Surrey, 1944

“We very much missed tea. It was a very small ration of tea and you used the tea once or twice, or even three times. You didn’t empty your teapot after you had the tea, you kept it and used it at the next meal.” - *Pat Law (nee Heaton), evacuee*

“We occasionally had a parcel from home with sweets in but it was really their ration. Grown ups were very good in giving their sweet ration away. When we went home on holiday, we used to get a ration card given us and the shop where my mother went wouldn’t accept the card because they didn’t have enough provisions. So I used to have to go to a big shop on my own and get my ration. One time I was walking out of the shop and they called me back and said *‘You’ve forgotten your lard ration!’* You had one ounce of lard for doing all your cooking. It was so small I missed it and left it on the counter. Living in the country, you did get certain fruits, because they’d be growing there but you didn’t get bananas and oranges. Any fruit that was grown abroad we lost, but we had strawberries, apples, pears and redcurrants, whatever could be grown.” - *Jean Davis (nee Pearce), evacuee*

“We didn’t see many sweets in the war. I used to like eating swede and carrots and things like that when I was a kid and it’s supposed to have been very good for you. When I got married and I had my first child, things were still rationed in 1953, so it was on for a long while after the war. If you had got the money, you could buy clothing coupons. So if people didn’t have much money, they would sell you their clothing coupons. That’s how it was done. Otherwise you would have to go to second hand shops and see what you could get.” - *Marion Williams (nee Nicholls), evacuee*

“My mother used to help out with our sweet supplies. She used to make some of her own using dried milk, sugar and some cocoa powder, mix it with water, make it into little balls and roll them in icing sugar. Sometimes she used peppermint essence instead of cocoa. She would send them to me at Pipewood and we would share them.” - *June Lum (nee Coop), evacuee*



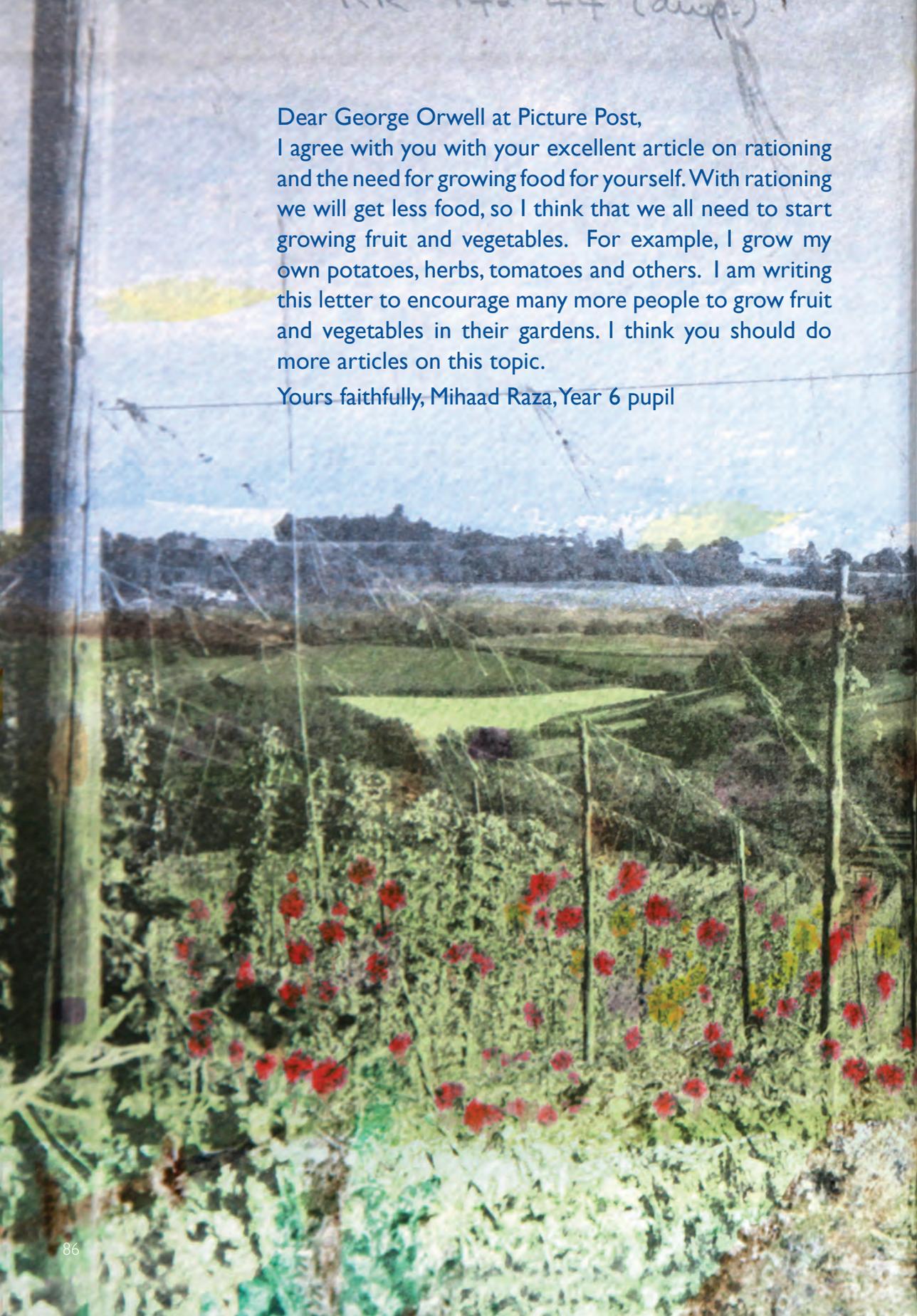
One of a series of wartime advertisements to encourage children to eat all their vegetables.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Ministry of Food launched its ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign in October 1939.
- Due to restrictions, consumption of meat fell by 20%, poultry and fish by 40%, sugar and syrup by 30%, tomatoes and citrus fruits by 50%. Consumption of potatoes rose by 40%.
- A cartoon character, Dr Carrot, led a campaign to encourage people to eat carrots in a variety of forms: curried carrot, carrot jam, carrot puddings and a homemade drink called Carrolade. Children were photographed eating carrots on a stick in place of a lollipop. ‘Carrots help you see in the dark’ was a popular saying at the time. The government encouraged children to believe that carrots had magical properties that could help you see in the dark or the blackout, and that night fighter pilots ate lots of them. This not only helped reduce the surplus vegetables. It also helped to mask the chief reason for the RAF’s success in night time air battles: the increasing power of radar and the secret introduction of an airborne version of the system.

Dear George Orwell at Picture Post,
I agree with you with your excellent article on rationing and the need for growing food for yourself. With rationing we will get less food, so I think that we all need to start growing fruit and vegetables. For example, I grow my own potatoes, herbs, tomatoes and others. I am writing this letter to encourage many more people to grow fruit and vegetables in their gardens. I think you should do more articles on this topic.

Yours faithfully, Mihaad Raza, Year 6 pupil



..every available piece of land must be cultivated



GROW YOUR OWN FOOD
supply your own cookhouse

PRINTED FOR THE PROPAGANDA OFFICE BY J. WEINER CO. LONDON, W.C.1. 31-10782

FR 42

Ministry of Food poster from 1942



Olive Greaves (nee Burckett) was evacuated at the age of ten with her twin brothers Peter (pictured) and Alan, from Kingstanding, Birmingham to Alfreton in Derbyshire.

“ **We spent a lot of time in the school air raid shelter – which didn’t take every class, it would only take some.** That is one of the reasons we were evacuated in the end. Another reason was because we hadn’t got any fresh water in the street. It was November. The water works had been bombed. We had a modern house in those days with a tap with cold water – not hot water, just cold water. Because nothing was coming through the tap, you used to have to go and walk with a friend carrying a bucket with a broom handle through the handle of the bucket. We would go to a house two roads away and they had a pipe where you could go and get some water. We would stand in a queue and get a bucket filled with water. So the water that was in that bucket had to be boiled up to make it pure enough to drink.

I don’t remember too much about going on the train. We only heard the day before that we were going! So it was an adventure for us. We went to Derbyshire from the

Chester Road station. We had to carry our gas mask with us and you used to have to carry that everywhere you went. It was just in a cardboard box, but if you wanted to be a bit posh you had a case made for it. My mother owned a sewing machine and she used to buy some leather material and make all these little cases and then sell them to people. I suppose that was one way to survive, making gas mask cases.

After we arrived, it was nine o'clock in the evening before they finally decided somebody would look after us. So there I am, standing there, a little girl with two little six year old brothers, and I would not let them go! I wouldn't let anybody take me without them. In the end one lady decided she could take the three of us. She was only supposed to accept two, but she had three. So what her husband said I don't know. We never found out.

They were very good to us really. It was a flat in the high street, plenty of shops around. Peter and Alan used to just run around. I used to go to school because I was ten but they managed to get out of it for a little while. Then one day somebody said to the twins, *'What are you two doing walking along the road, in a strange area? You must go to school!'* The twins said *'We haven't got a school'* and the person replied, *'Oh well, we will find you one!'* So they went to school at age six. We stayed there but when it was safer to go home, we did go back – so we didn't stay away too long. Some people went to nasty places but we had a nice place. We were lucky in that respect.

They only had one large bed. The three of us had to get in the large bed. One up, two down. I think we went straight to bed actually. The first meal would have been breakfast afterwards. I don't think the lady was prepared for three of us. We had our Christmas there. The people went away to see their own family and I was left to mind my brothers. They opened up the front room, and we had never been in there because we always had our meals in the big kitchen. We went in there and there were lots of lovely cushions, so we all had a pillow fight. I was worried to death when I saw the feathers flying about what Mrs Randall would think.

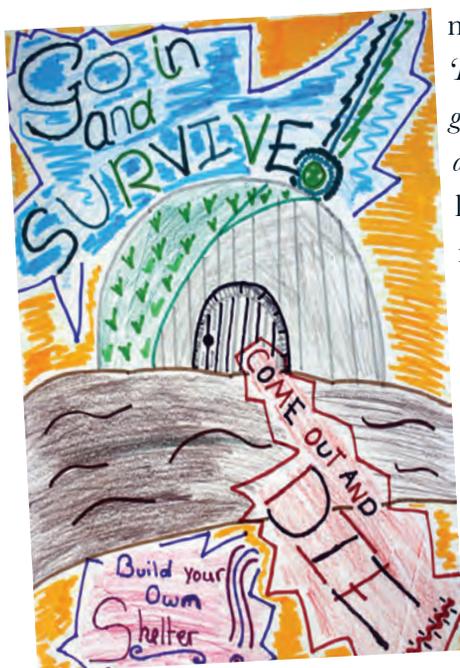
When we were living there as evacuees, the twins used to go in the tailor's shop, which we were living above. The men in the shop were very good to them. If anybody came in to be measured, they used to hide these two twins. They were only little boys you see and they had to be quiet! We had ration books. I haven't got one now but I did have one years ago, just in case I wanted it again! It did tell you how much you could have. Because I was very fond of butter I was taught early on to have Lurpak butter and I rather liked the taste of it. So my other brother, Alan not Peter, had my

entire cheese ration and I had his butter. When we were evacuated, I don't remember having any sweets. We used to go shopping for the lady where we lived. Sometimes she would give me a list and I would go to the market. I don't ever remember buying sweets. When we were back home, we were a bit lucky because the lady next door but one had sweets. If you were under five, you had free milk and orange juice. Cod liver oil was an extra ration for little ones.

We didn't see our father because he was a fireman. He had a job all day and at night he went out fighting the fires, so we just didn't see too much of him really. He had a brother killed in the war, in the air force, over Egypt. So dad wanted to join up, and get his own back on them. But they told him, *'You are too old. Go home, you've got a family.'* He went on fighting fires in the Blitz then. We were always down the shelter a lot. If it was a moonlit night, we got prepared early to go down the shelter because we knew the planes could come over in the moonlight.

We did listen to the radio and that's when you found out who'd been bombed sometimes. But they had to be careful what they said because it was secret and they didn't want to give information to the enemy. So we don't really know if we heard anything truthful come over the radio.

You know they had a film of the evacuation, did you see that? They showed the sirens going off, and it turns me over a bit, because it brings it back to me. An old man lived next door and he used to bring a big jug of cocoa and it was made with hot water,



no milk in it or anything. I used to say to my mum *'Do we have to drink this?'* and she'd say *'He's being very good. All his sons are in the army and he's got nothing else to do, only make cocoa for you poor children.'* And we didn't like it! Down the shelter, it was very cold. There was no heating at all. We used to sing *'Ten Green Bottles'*, and we used to play a game *'Stand up, sit down'*, and we had to sit on these hard benches when we played that game, so that gave us a bit of exercise. It would also take your mind off what was happening outside, if there were bombs dropping. We had no central heating or anything like that in those days you know! In the house we used to have a big oven downstairs and we used to wrap up warmed up

plates in an old blanket and then we put them in our bed to warm it up. It was a big adventure I suppose, in one way, but you didn't get many of the bombs coming down right where we were.

We knew as children which planes were flying over because the German planes made a different noise to the English planes. Because our dad was into that sort of thing, we got to know the difference. One night we were in the air raid shelter with our mum, before we were evacuated, and our dad was in Birmingham, fighting the fires. Someone knocked on the door and our mum thought it was a German Parachuter who was going to shoot us all! So mum said, 'Get under the bunk quickly!' So the three of us lay under the bunk and this man outside said 'Open the door!' and she opened the door, expecting a German but it was a man with goggles on! He had arrived on a motorbike and he said he wanted Fireman Burckett – that was my dad's name. He said 'Fireman Burckett is wanted on duty in Birmingham tonight.' My mum said, 'He isn't here, he's fire watching at his factory!' So we didn't get shot that night! ”



Peter Burckett was evacuated at the age of six with his twin brother Alan and his older sister Olive from Kingstanding, Birmingham to Alfreton in Derbyshire.

“ **We didn’t even have a suitcase, our mum packed everything into a Kit Bag.** I don’t know where she acquired it but it caused a lot of merriment among the other children and teachers, who immediately called it *‘Burckett’s German Sausage.’* The two of us had to carry it between us on our shoulders. It was all our clothes mainly. We had identity labels – we had to have them hanging round our neck – and our gas masks. There were various types of identity cards depending on your age.

We didn’t think much of it. It was an adventure to us, we didn’t realise just how serious it was. Nobody told us where we were going, they just said you are being evacuated. We were young six year-olds, so we were excited really I suppose and just surprised. We never expected it because it was our parents that decided we should go. We hadn’t got a clue. There were hundreds going, I mean the train was completely chock-a-block with people.

At first it was very exciting but then when we got to this school and nobody wanted us, because there were three of us. It was a bit sad. They wanted one child or maybe two, but three was out of the question... until the very end when there was only one lady left and she said she’d take us. We were crying our eyes out because we didn’t want to get separated and then, when she did take us, I can remember her saying *‘I don’t know what my husband will say when I get home! You can bring one or two he said but what he will say when he sees three of you, I don’t know!’* She hadn’t got any children and her husband worked during the week in Nottingham, so he only came home at the weekends. She was a lovely woman.

I saw her again many years later. When I was twenty I was doing some training in the army and we were going to watch Sunderland play football. The coach stopped at the place where we had been living as evacuees so I went along and had a look and the flat was still there. It was 14A High Street. The flat that we lived in was right opposite to the Odeon Picture House and behind there were the barracks for the soldiers. We used to sneak through and get chatting with the soldiers, and get singing war songs with them.

We hadn’t got a clue where we were. We didn’t even know where we’d gone when we got there! It was some time later when we realised where we were living. We didn’t stay

all that long. We were very home sick. We did have friends sent to the same place as us, but we didn't see them for quite a few days. We were walking around and then some teachers saw us and asked why we were not in school. It was a good thing we went to school because otherwise we would have been quite unruly! It was beautiful in the countryside. If we'd been to the cinema, we would come out pretending to be Cowboys and Indians and things like that. You didn't have any iPads or that sort of thing! It was an adventure to us, not realising how serious it was.

Back in Birmingham, we had spent so much time in the shelters that we had our beds in there and we didn't go to bed in the house, we went straight to bed in the shelters. We used to sit in the shelter and we would be singing all these songs, like *'We'll Meet Again'* and *'White Cliffs of Dover'*. Some of our aunties lived in the really bad parts that were bombed in Birmingham. We did have one or two stray bombs nearby to where we lived. And when we heard about them, we used to go down the street to see if we could find bits of shrapnel from the bomb. Actually, for kids it was quite exciting. You didn't realise the enormity of it then. My brother and I were really excited when we were in the air raid shelters and whenever our mum wasn't looking we would sneak out of the shelter to see the searchlights and hear the bombers droning overhead and our mum would be frantic when she realised what we were up to. ” ”



DID YOU KNOW?

- Families billeting evacuees received a payment of 10s 6d a week for one child, or 8s 6d a week each for more than one. This was intended to cover board, lodging and care – but not medical expenses, which were provided by the local authority, or clothes, for which the parents were still responsible.
- For children accompanied by a mother or another adult, the householder received 5s a week for the adult and 3s a week for each child. The payments were to 'cover shelter and access to water and sanitary accommodation'.



Marian Masters being interviewed at an open day event

Marian Masters (nee Ward) was two years old when the war started. She spent most of the war in Birmingham and the war in Europe ended near to her 8th birthday.

“**As soon as Neville Chamberlain said ‘Peace in Our Time’ my father prepared for war.** Our air raid shelter was specially built. My father was in a protected occupation, which was insurance, which I find amazing. He was involved with insuring planes. My uncle manufactured windows, which was also a protected occupation. I was two when it started. Do you know what I can remember from when I was two? I can remember eating the last banana that we were ever able to get and that was in the autumn of 1939. After that there were no bananas until after I was eight, that was when we had another one. My mother had to show me how to peel open a banana because I didn’t know how. Can you believe that? Oranges were a treat, but mostly it was English fruit that we got – pears, apples, soft fruit.

You know, I can still remember the number of my identity card! It was QBRO146/4. And shall I tell you how my mother taught me to remember it? QBRO was ‘*Quick Brother Raid’s On*’ – the air raid was coming – then ‘146’. I was the fourth person in the family so I was ‘/4’. That was my identity number and we had to know it by heart.

I was only evacuated for a short time. We went with my big brother who was nearly seven, and my little sister who was a baby, just a year old. My sister had a baby’s gas mask and my brother had to learn how to pump air into it, so it would go through the filter and the baby could breathe. We went to a farm in Ludlow with my mother and my aunt and my three cousins.

I was told that I cried a lot but my baby sister was very good, she didn’t cry. I can’t remember what else we took. I expect that my mother took some dresses and baby clothes and we had a toothbrush. But we didn’t have toothpaste like you have now – we had like a tin, and you rubbed your toothbrush on this pink powder that was in the tin. It had a picture of a castle on the tin. For the baby she would have had nappies but not like disposable ones you can throw away, they were like small towels and you had to wrap your baby in those.

It was only for a few months and then we went back to Birmingham because my mother and my aunt thought they would rather die from a bomb with their husbands than have them die without us. So that’s how you felt: there may be a bomb at any time and it will kill you.



Bombing of Hamstead by unknown artist

We had a bomb in our road perhaps about a hundred metres from our house and it fell in a little field by a church but it took out the side of one house. You could see into the bedroom, because there was no wall left. Our house shook from the bomb and after the war finished, two years later, my bedroom ceiling fell on me one night because it had been shaken like that. It fell straight down on top of me in bed. It mostly fell on my nose as the rest of me was under the eiderdown, which is much heavier than a duvet, so it protected me. It was full of feathers.

We could all draw planes. We knew the difference between the English planes and the German planes when they were flying over. I used to have nightmares of a bomb dropping on me and I still do. I heard them and we collected the shrapnel that fell through our glass side passage roof. It seemed like night after night in the shelter. Eight of us could sleep in the shelter. The five of us and the next door neighbours who shared the shelter with their daughter. It was above ground and a very solid brick built one with a special entrance and a thick concrete roof and three-level bunks. Our walls were lined with old bedspreads with cork. That took up some of the damp.

In the war we didn't have many toys at all but Monkey was a great favourite because if we hurt ourselves, my mother had Monkey. Monkey used to come up and tell us that we were going to be better soon and it would be all right. So that is why I have still got Monkey, and it is one of my best toys. In the war we had very few books or toys. There was no television then. The radio was 'the wireless' and there was no

plastic, so I bought my things in a brown paper bag and that was the sort of bag we carried everything in. My very favourite book was called *'The Happy Music'* and it cost 2 shillings and 6 pence – that's twelve and a half pence now. I thought it was a most beautiful book, with beautiful, beautiful pictures about this little girl who has an adventure and meets all the fairies. My other favourite book was called the Little Picture Hymn Book. We used to play quite a lot of family games like Chinese Checkers and Chinese Whispers. We also played marbles and collected stamps. ””



Marian's Monkey puppet, still going strong after all these years



Pat Law (nee Heaton) was evacuated at the age of ten from Aston, Birmingham to Sandhurst, a village near Gloucester. At fourteen, she went to work in a hardware shop, finally returning home when she was sixteen.

“ **On the day of evacuation I had to go to my school, Albert Road Juniors, on my own.** My mother had died when I was quite little and my dad was in the air force. He was gone by the time I was evacuated. He was 40 but he was called up. He had to look after me on his own, and he was probably quite happy for me to go and live in another place. I don't really know as I never asked him. I was supposed to take some clothes, but I didn't. All I had was my gas mask, no toy or anything. At the school, standing in the playground were our teachers, with Women's Voluntary Service women dressed in green, parents and children crying. Why, I thought? Dad had said it would be an adventure. Most of the children had their clothes in brown paper carrier bags. I don't think anyone had a case. We left the parents at the school and walked two by two with the W.V.S. women to Aston railway station, not very far away. An old fashioned (to us now) steam train was waiting for us. This was exciting as

I had never been on a train. Eight to a compartment – no corridors. As we went in, the W.V.S. women gave us another brown paper carrier and said ‘*When you get to the house where you will be going to stay, hand this to the lady and say, This is our food for one week.*’ You see, they didn’t know when we were coming, so they were not prepared. The train started and after a bit we settled down and decided to look in our bag of food.

There was corned beef, condensed milk, cocoa and things I have forgotten – but best of all, a large bar of Cadbury’s chocolate. You can guess what we did. We ate it of course! The Cadbury’s factory is in Birmingham and the then owners were a very generous family. I think that it was only Birmingham evacuees who received the bars. In the days before the war you could buy a half penny or one penny bar of the chocolate. I didn’t have any pocket money until after the war, not even a half penny, and I had never seen a bar of chocolate as big as this. We had a lovely time eating it.

Every station we went through had its name painted out, so that the Germans, if they did land in England, would be lost. We didn’t know where we were going either and to us it seemed a very long way. Were we lost? When the train stopped these bossy women lined us up and took us outside to a line of empty charabancs – single decker buses. This happened on September 1st. It was Gloucester station we went to in the end. When we left Birmingham, I saw a poster advertising the seaside. I thought that was where we were going. I was so excited. But we ended up in the middle of the countryside. There was nothing there. I hated the countryside

The charabancs filled up and off we went into the country, along lanes and between fields. We stopped outside a small school which was next door to a church and vicarage. This was the village of Sandhurst. This school was for infants and juniors. We went into the largest of the two rooms, and lined up against the wall. They said, ‘*People are going to come and choose which children that they want.*’ It was very horrible. People came in and stared at you, looking at each one and saying things like ‘*Oh, I think that one would be nice.*’ It was terrible, like a market. Guess who was left, not picked? Me. I don’t think I was a very pretty child and I’d got very ugly hair.

I was just left in this school room with the W.V.S. women. The two teachers from our school had already gone to their billets. One of the women came up and said, ‘*Nobody wants you. I suppose I shall have to take you to my house and find somewhere for you tomorrow.*’ Well, I couldn’t understand all she said. The country folk spoke differently to the way people speak in Birmingham, so you didn’t always know what they were saying, but I got the message. She wasn’t going to like me. I don’t remember having anything to



1939 news images of happy evacuees

eat and she didn't show me where the lavatory was. By this time, I was crossing my legs. I was so frightened of her that I didn't ask. So I went to bed and when she had gone downstairs, I got out of bed and looked for the bathroom, not knowing that the lavatory was in a shed outside in the garden. I didn't think of a house not having a bathroom. So I wet the bed. I had no clean clothes. I was terrified. When she came in – well, she said I was dirty and all sorts of horrible names that I had never been called. In Aston the favourite name I had was wench. If someone said '*How am you, me wench?*' that's a nice thing in Birmingham. It was always said in such a loving way.

She then took me to this house. We went along the lane to a house in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by fields. It was isolated and I was frightened, but as we walked up the path I saw that it was very pretty. The garden was full of flowers and had a pool with a tree nearby. We knocked on the door and Mrs Juggins answered it. The W.V.S. woman said '*This is your evacuee*' and she was off. Mrs Juggins didn't have a chance to say '*I don't want her*' or anything.

Before we went inside, Mrs Juggins said that there were two rules in this house. To me they were odd rules. Rule 1: you must not walk on the 'drugget' – that was a new word, referring to some rough material that went up the middle of the stairs, the wooden sides being painted. This meant that you walked up or down cockeyed – or some say skewiff – and you only went upstairs when you went to bed. This was okay, as I now knew the lavatory was outside and you had to use a chamber pot in the night. Rule 2: you never went into the room on the right side of the house, as this was for visitors. I was there six years and no-one ever came. It was not furnished except for a plant on a stand. At home we also had two rooms with fireplaces and my dad always lit both fires. We then went into the room on the left, which was almost unfurnished, just a table and chairs. There was very little furniture and I thought '*Have they brought me to an empty house?*' Where I lived in Aston we had got armchairs and cupboards and all sorts of things – we'd got a piano, we'd got a gramophone – but when we went into this room, it was nearly empty. There was no lino, no carpet, nothing. There was electricity downstairs but you went to bed with a candle.

Mr and Mrs Juggins had two daughters. June was ten and Josephine seven. We didn't get on very well. I don't know why. When the war was over and I went home, we never kept in touch. June and Jo didn't own a single toy or book. The whole of the time I was there, there were no toys of any description – which of course I missed, because I had a doll's pram and a doll, a scooter, a ball, a skipping rope, all sorts of

things in my house and we had a pile of books. Those two children had a very hard life. Those girls never had a birthday card or Christmas card. They had nothing at Christmas, birthdays weren't mentioned. Mr and Mrs Juggins treated me exactly the same as their daughters. In one way they were good people, they didn't swear and they didn't hit you, but the one thing they never did – and they never did it to their own children or me – was to show any love. They never kissed them. In Birmingham I had a grandma who cuddled me and aunties and cousins. It was so lonely. Nobody from my family visited me – not even my dad. He never wrote to me either.

Mr Juggins had been a Sergeant Major in the First World War so as soon as the Home Guard was formed he was conscripted to serve in it. His normal work was with railways. This left him very little time for gardening and bee keeping, so guess who did it? We had to look after two enormous vegetable gardens and the orchard with trees and fruit bushes. Apples, pears, plums, redcurrants and blackcurrants. We also had to look after the fowl. I hadn't heard that word before. They never called them hens. '*Go and feed the fowl,*' they said. I didn't know what they were saying at first. Corn was in short supply, so you fed them on scraps, pig potatoes – the very small ones – and vegetable leaves.

We didn't have enough scraps, so we went round and collected the scraps from other houses. We had an outside fire and a pan like a witches' cauldron to boil up all this stuff for the fowl. We put in one teaspoon of Karlswood Spice, a bright orange powder which made the egg yolks a good colour. We never sold any of the eggs though. Outside was a well with a pump in the kitchen to bring the water to a cold water tap. Before going to school we girls had to pump this handle fifty times each. It was such a chore. No hot water unless you boiled the kettle.

The best thing about being an evacuee was the lovely food. As we grew so much food and had fruit and eggs, we were very well fed. Mrs Juggins had been a cook in a very big house before she got married, so she was a marvellous cook. She had a baby in the maternity hospital but unfortunately it was born with a cleft palate and hare lip and had trouble feeding and died. I never knew if it was a boy or a girl, nor its name. June was dreadfully upset. Mrs Juggins also had a terrible burn on her whole arm from a chip-fan fire. She was badly scarred. I often wonder how she got help as there were no telephones and the cottages and farm were at a distance away.

In the orchard they had 13 beehives. I hated the beehives. We had to make furniture wax from it and fill jam jars. We never got stung. We didn't go near the

hives, Mr Juggins did all that, but we had to go and collect the jam jars. We three girls had to cycle into Gloucester to sell the honey. Sugar was rationed, so people wanted it. When the honey is extracted it really makes your arm ache, because it's in a round extractor with a handle at the top and you did it in the greenhouse, because it was warmer and it made the honey more liquid. Then you had to wash all the jam jars and fill them up and you'd get it all over your hands. The smell of honey nearly makes me sick, even now. Then you had to clean the outside of the jar to stop it being sticky. And you put a paper top on and then the honey had to be delivered. The wax that came off the board made solid blocks of wax and we had to grate it on an ordinary cheese grater and it took the skin off your knuckles. It was for furniture and shoe polish.



We went to Church-Matins and Evensong, where Jo was a choir girl. I made friends with a girl there, a maid from the big house. I think we giggled and whispered throughout the service, but I still know the words. At the age of fourteen, the Vicar said that we could be confirmed. The lessons were held in the vicarage, which was a treat because it had furniture. I still cherish my memories and certainly try to do the things that he taught us, they are old fashioned now, I suppose. In those days girls wore white dresses with a white veil and the boys were in white shirts, grey shorts and a bright blue sash. What was Mrs Juggins to do as clothes cost coupons? She found a good friend who gave up her wedding dress and veil to make our dresses. I never knew her name. It was so lovely, but there are no photographs. The service was held in Gloucester Cathedral, which was packed with children, in April 1943. The almost best day of my life. This was the only special thing that happened to me in the six years I was there.

Services had to be held in the day because of the blackout. After the service the Vicar took us to the Kardomah Café for lunch. I had never been to a café. We were given gifts too, a small red book of the Holy Communion Service and a reading book called 'The People's Life of Christ', which I have read every Lent since. We all had bikes and in the summer holiday the Vicar took us for a day out in Tewkesbury. It was

a special day. We went round the Abbey and hired a boat for a trip on the river. The Vicar was very naughty because you're not supposed to leave the boat, but he tied the boat to a branch and we all got out and sat by a haystack to eat and drink. I was worried the farmer would come and shout at us. It was such a beautiful place and I loved going there.

I went to Sandhurst school for one year where all the juniors were taught together in one room with one teacher. It was dead boring after Albert Road school. At least I was taught to knit and darn, which was very useful later on. We made such things as scarves or socks, always in navy or black wool as the finished garments were for sailors. Socks were always getting holes in the toes and heels and we mended them using a darning mushroom. I quite liked darning. After one year, June and I moved to the senior school, Longlevens Elementary in Gloucester.

We were fortunate as we had full time lessons, from 9am to 4pm. In the towns many children had lessons in their front rooms as it was thought safer not to have a full school. My husband had very little education, so I consider myself very lucky. This school had a six day timetable. The boys had one whole day doing gardening and bee-keeping. The girls had one day doing Home Economics. We did washing, ironing, housework, but only a little cooking because of the rations. We thought that was a waste of time. Well, I did. The three 'R's' were the best: reading, writing and arithmetic. I left school at fourteen, sadly. Mrs Juggins found me a job at Timothy Whites and Taylors, part

chemist's and part hardware. So many households had been bombed and hardware was hard to get. When we had goods in, there would soon be a queue as people would say to complete strangers, *'So and so shop has got candles, matches, crocks...'* Crocks were unadorned and many preferred enamel which didn't break, only chip. Beware of sitting on a chamber pot if it has a chip!

One day at the shop I was taken ill with Scarlet Fever and sent to the Isolation Hospital, where I stayed for some weeks. No visitors were allowed as it was very infectious. Someone fetched me home to Birmingham from there, so I never got to say goodbye or even say thank you to Mrs Juggins.



Pat Law during the war

What a way to end, but at least my bike came home! When I came home I thought it would be lovely, but I had never lived with my little sister because she was a baby when the war started. My dad had got married again to Nancy and at first it was just the two of us, perfect strangers. Then Shirley came, my sister who was now a schoolgirl. Dad came last after being demobbed. Back in Aston, we were really like four strangers living together and I found it very hard. I was sixteen by then and I hadn't got a friend. I didn't know anybody my age. I didn't know my sister. I didn't know Nancy, though she was a very nice lady. And I really didn't know my dad. After the war I was very annoyed with him. I asked him *'How did you get on in the war?'* and he said he'd had a whale of a time. He was in Hyde Park in London looking after barrage balloons and I'd never even seen one. He learnt to skate with some of the men and he liked going to the theatre to see musical comedies. He really thought he'd had a wonderful war and I shook him because I had not enjoyed it at all.

I was very remote, I didn't want anyone to get near me. It affected me so much, not seeing anybody show any affection at all. And it's stayed with me throughout my life. It's the one thing that has affected me most from being an evacuee. I find it very difficult now to even touch people. I've got fourteen grandchildren but I have never once kissed any of them and it isn't because I don't love them to bits. They are wonderful. I have got marvellous grandchildren but I can't touch them and I think that is because of what I saw then, and how it was for me for six years. ””

DID YOU KNOW?

- In June 1940, the War Cabinet approved plans with Thomas Cook travel agency to evacuate over 200,000 children to safety overseas.
- On August 20th, one of the ships carrying evacuees, the SS Volendam, was torpedoed several hundred miles off Malin Head. It was bound for Halifax-New York with 320 children on board. It did not sink and the children were rescued by other ships in the convoy. It was towed to Scotland for repairs, where they found an unexploded torpedo embedded in the bow.
- On September 17th, the SS City of Benares was torpedoed by U-48, 250 miles from Rockall. The ship sank within 30 minutes. On board were 90 child evacuees, of whom only 13 survived. 260 of the 407 people on board were lost. This tragedy brought the overseas evacuation programme to a halt. After the war, the U-Boat Commander, Heinrich Bleichrodt, was held on war crimes, accused of sinking the City of Benares with the full knowledge that it had been transporting evacuees. He successfully denied the charge and refused to apologise to the survivors.

Imagined letters to the Picture Post

Dear Editor,

I am Leonna Laing and I am ten years old. I am writing to complain about the evacuation because children aged 3 - 8 can get really depressed and homesick. They might run away and get hurt. Their new parents may be abusive to them. I strongly agree that the government should ban evacuation because children's health might be at risk – they might not want to go anywhere and not eat anything and they may starve themselves. I think it better that children stay at home with their family. - *Leonna Laing*



Dear Editor,

I am writing to tell you about my new house I live in. It is clean and nice and doesn't smell. But the dog does – it stinks and is never clean. I don't think it has had a wash in two and a half years. When it comes out of the garden it turns the living room into a mud house, mud all over the cushions and the floor. And when I go to bed at night it keeps barking and I can't get to sleep. As for the person who lives here, their daughter keeps wanting to annoy me and keeps distracting me while I am trying to do my homework. Her little brother is always ripping up my books for school and what I read. So I don't think it is fair. I am going to get expelled. The other problem is the owner is always snoring all night and talking in their sleep. Yesterday they sleep-walked. The last problem is the cat. The cat is always scratching my arms and legs. I'm not very happy with this at all. - *Yours sincerely, Gabrielle Spragg*



Dear Editor

I am very glad that my uncle taught me to fish when I was little. It's good to know how because these days it isn't easy to get a fish that quickly. In the olden days the fishing ships could go to the Pacific Ocean and catch tuna fish that you can't catch in England. That was before the war came. I can catch fish in the rivers and canals, so we can add them to our rations. My friend Pat told me that when she was evacuated, she lived by the River Severn and once a year lots of elvers – young eels – came up the river and they went out with a big net to catch them. When you got them on the plate, these tiny fish were see-through and you could see their eyes and their insides. She had to eat them for breakfast but she didn't like them. - *Yours, Marek Badic*

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE ADOLF HITLER



10,000,000,000 pounds
Hitler (Chancellor of Germany) owes us lots of money because of damage to this country. He is manipulative, black-hearted and evil, so do not approach him face to face.

Dear Adolf Hitler,

I am writing to try to persuade you to stop your stupid rule 'only people with blue eyes, fair skin and blond hair can live in your country'. I'm sorry about my rude language but I know it's true. It's true, everyone knows it's true. Firstly, you only allow people with fair skin and blue eyes and blonde hair in your country which is not fair. Hardly anyone has those features. 90%, maybe 70% of people, have black hair, brown, hazel or green eyes and dark skin and you would shoot that 70% of people in your country and only have 30% of people in your country? That is not fair at all! Everyone will hate you even people that like you and I'm sure you wouldn't want that, would you? Do you want your reputation to turn into a diary of all the things you have done bad? Is that what you want? Just think, think hard until the answer pops into your head. **JUST PLEASE THINK HARD!** Your solution for those people who don't have those features is to shoot them. That is wrong. You are a bully and a criminal. Do you want everyone to think that you are a criminal? - *Iffat Khalil*

Dear Editor,

I am writing to inform you that I am furious because the government has ordered all children to be evacuated! I understand the danger and the conditions. However, this doesn't mean that mothers can't go too! A child or some children need their mothers, therefore I would like to go too. I strongly believe that children should be able to spend time with their parents so that they can feel and remain safe. I would also like to say how upsetting it is that Germany is at war with England. My child asked me: 'Mother, why is Germany going to invade England? I think Hitler is so evil. Why is he doing this?' My child is scared. P.S. My child is afraid of most things in the country.

- *Yours sincerely, Zara Naeem*

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you as an evacuee. I am writing to tell you that I have not got any board games and I am so bored over here. My new home is 23 Roter Street. I did not bring any paper, board games or books and it's really, really annoying and I have loads of jobs to do. I want to come home now. The food is horrible. I just want to come home. I wonder how my dad is doing in the war. I hope he will be able to come and visit, and my mum too.

- *Yours sincerely, Ibrahim Mohammed*



MOTOR CAR
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1501-2200
C.C.

1944-45 JUNIOR CB47
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HOLD Pages I-VIII in one hand and TEAR ALONG THIS LINE

PAGE 1

RAGS

are needed to make

- engine wipers
- blankets
- uniforms
- overcoats
- gun wadding
- charts
- roofing felt
- maps etc.

put out rags for salvage..or sell them to a dealer

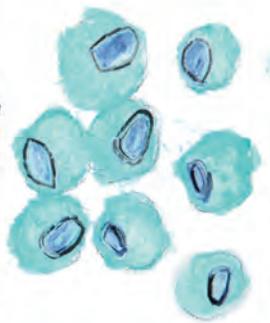
Serial No. of Ration **CP 34729**

IF FOUND RETURN TO ANY FOOD OFFICE

- DID YOU KNOW?
- Britain quickly ran out of money and supplies, so in March 1941 the United States passed the Lend-Lease Act, which provided vital aid.
 - There was no charge for the aid delivered during wartime, but post-war payment was to be stretched out over 50 annual payments, starting in 1951 with five years of deferred payments, at 2% interest.
 - The final payment of £42.5 million for this wartime aid was made on December 29th, 2006.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Clothes and textiles rationing was introduced in June 1941 and lasted until May 1949.
- You were allowed 6 coupons for one year. Coats/blazers were 13 coupons, a dress 11 coupons, underwear 3 coupons, stockings 2 coupons. A man was only allowed to buy a new suit every two years, and new shirt every twenty months. Trousers came without cuffs, pleats or zips.
- There were shortages of blankets, bottles, drinking glasses, pots, pans, cutlery, soap, paper bags, bandages, drugs, bed sheets, towels, paper clips, needles, thermos bottles, carpets, combs, hairpins, cosmetics, toothbrushes and razor blades.
- Wood was in short supply. In 1942 new furniture was rationed and restricted to newly-weds and people whose houses had been bombed.



The following section of the book is taken from a series of interviews (made by Year 6 children) exploring 20th century migration at public open days and parents' events.

The Second World War not only shaped the lives of the child evacuees whose stories are recorded here, but it also remade the maps of Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia – with far reaching consequences which still affect us today. The conflict brought hundreds of thousands of migrants to the UK from the British Commonwealth countries. 1,200 British Hondurans were recruited to fell timber in Scotland during the war and 10,000 West Indians were recruited for wartime service, coming to work in Britain as ground crew in the Royal Air Force. Over two and a half million troops from undivided India had served in the Allied Armies in North Africa, Europe and the Far East. Over 14 million Indians took part in other forms of war work, much of which involved producing and shipping supplies over to beleaguered Britain.

After the end of the war, many were invited to help rebuild the country, alongside displaced nationalities, including resettled Poles whose country was now on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The end of the conflict also laid the seeds for the European Union, with the Schuman Declaration in 1950 aiming to make another war between European member states impossible.

The post-war settlements created in part a world that was increasingly interconnected, a new world of migration, with movement of both capital and people – marking the beginning of the process we now call 'globalisation'.



DID YOU KNOW?

- In the summer of 1940, as the German armies swept toward the English Channel, the British government received a cable from the Caribbean. 'Carry on Britain!' it said, 'Barbados is behind you!'
- Immigrants were recruited to fill labour shortages which arose after the war. Pakistanis came to particularly work in the British steel and textile industries.
- By 1960, nearly 40% of all junior doctors in the NHS were recruited from the Indian sub-continent. In 1963 alone, 18,000 were recruited from India and Pakistan, in a campaign led by Enoch Powell.
- Until the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, all citizens of the British Commonwealth could enter and stay in the United Kingdom without any restriction.

xx♥My fa

Maternal

Nani



Nana



Uncle



His wife



Aunt



Her Husband



MOM



Liza



Dinar



Ahmed



Nariva



Big sis
Anita



Rashida



Farkhna



Her Husband



Aadu



Abi



Sami



My family live all over and the rest in America. I love my dada but I still love him is a pilot. My big sister does psy Nephew and he is too cute a

Family!

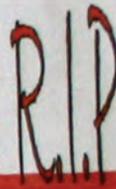


Paternal

Dadi



Dada



Dad



Aunty



Her Husband



Aunty



Her Husband



Uncle



Saida



Shah



Sadeb



Mandi



Muaz



Sami



Tahira



Mustafiz



Mehr



The world, Some in England, Some in Bangladesh
them very much and they love me. I have never met
One of my aunties husband is an actor and shahid
chology and my dad is a buisness man. Sami is my
nd so is my baby sis Mehr



Isi Agboaye telling his story to pupils at an open day

Isi Agboaye was born in Calabar in the Cross River State of Nigeria, although he is a native of Esan, Edo State. As a child he and his family were evacuated from Calabar to Warri because of the Nigeria-Biafran war from 1967-70. He came to England in 1995.

“**Growing up in my part of Africa was very interesting.** There are many stories I could narrate about my past. Would you like to know about my school days, toys in Africa, or how I nearly drowned at break time in the Akwara River? Would you like to know how mum and I would trek for miles with loads on our heads to sell and buy in neighbouring markets? Life on the farm with my dad and uncle was interesting but hard; associated with taboos and tales. Let me tell you about the scarcity of salt during the Nigeria and Biafra civil war. I was about nine or ten years old at this time. I remember how we used to ration the salt in the house. Sometimes we would make do with very little or no salt in our food and the food most of the time tasted bland. In England, we are used to having salt when we go to the chip shop – I like salt in my fish and chips – some people overdo it of course. In this case we did not have any salt at all. Living in Warri, in Southern Nigeria, my parents would complain that there was no salt in the market. At school, children would talk about the tasteless snacks that had no salt. People would openly complain, asking other neighbours for salt. Some who hoarded salt did guard it as a prized commodity. When salt was available in the market, mum said it was very expensive. Why was salt so scarce? We were told that the Biafran Army had less military power, compared to the Nigerian Army. The Biafrans used salt as one of the ingredients for bomb making. That explains why businessmen and women who wanted to make great profits sold their salt to the Biafran side rather than sell in local markets. Interestingly, the business men and women were on the Nigerian side. But they sold salt to the other side, where their salt would be converted to bombs that would rain on them later. Isn't that an irony?”

During the war, we were taught how to take cover or hide under our beds when we heard the siren and planes came to bomb. It was very dark everywhere – the municipal electricity and all lanterns were put out. Although we were not at the heart of the action, we suffered. We would roll under the bed when we heard the loud siren blast – staying there till danger was declared over. From our hiding place, we would listen for the planes that came to bomb. At first it sounded like real fun, but when we saw the expressions on the faces of our parents, we knew it was actually very serious.”



Muhamed Siranovic (pictured right) was born in Tulsa, Bosnia-Herzegovina, in 1961. He left Bosnia-Herzegovina at the age of thirty six and now lives in Derby.

“ **I tell you it’s very hard for anybody who leaves his home and then has to go to another country.** What is the problem? The first problem is you don’t understand the language. The second problem is you don’t understand the culture. The third problem? It’s not very easy to integrate. It’s very difficult. If you leave your country and go into another country, it’s very important how you mix with people and whether people accept you or not. Do they like you or not? Lots of people from Bosnia had to go to another country because of the war and bombing. This was very hard for us. Here in England, the government accepted Bosnians and helped them from the war. Germany also has lots of Bosnian and ex-Yugoslavian people.

In my country, we were never prepared for war. We never thought about this. It is very difficult for children inside a country where war starts, because children need to play. Children just like to play games. They like being free, they like learning, that’s it.

It was very important in the war to think how to keep your children safe. For example, you say ‘Mum, I’m going to play a game over there.’ Mum says ‘Don’t go there’ – because they can send bombs. ‘Don’t worry, I can go...’ Children don’t accept this is serious. But every minute, every hour, every second, they send bombs. I always asked myself, ‘Why are they doing this?’ My neighbour’s son went to play for five minutes, maybe just 20 metres from home. There were bombs and he died. For five years children were in this war, with no electricity, no water. Because they bombed the electric station, the pumps can’t work. There was little food, no petrol or fuel and the shops were not working. A lot of parents were shot because they just needed to go to get water for their children!

You couldn’t send a letter. There were no mobiles at this time and the normal home telephone was not working. Only the army telephone worked. You couldn’t contact anyone or go anywhere because the army’s there. If you tried to go, you didn’t have a chance. You couldn’t go out of the door because of the bombs falling. ””

Anes Ceric (pictured left) was born in 1970 in Sanski Most, Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the age of twenty three, he was evacuated to Birmingham. He is the manager of the Bosnia-Herzegovina UK Network.

““ **Arriving here we had mixed feelings, you know.** When we came here, our lives were saved and for that reason we were very happy. For another reason we were very sad, because our family was left behind over in Bosnia, and there was a war going on, so they weren’t safe. At the time, we didn’t know really whether we would see them ever again. My family came over a year later.

Many friends and families died. So many. During the war so many kids your age were being killed. It is very difficult for you to imagine what the war is like. Can you just imagine that there are no schools because bombs are coming all the time, so it’s not safe to be anywhere? If you just put your hand out, there is a sniper and they’ll shoot you. No water, no food. At the beginning of war it was just madness. There wasn’t any protection or anything, no way out. There are still thousands of people missing that were killed during the war. In 1995, over 8,000 people were killed in a small town called Srebrenica, much smaller than Walsall – in just two, three days, mainly men and boys. Can you imagine?

I do go back now to Bosnia all the time. I was there some months ago and will be going for Easter with my kids. My kids were born here, they’ve grown up here, but they love to go and enjoy the hot weather there. In summer it’s like 35-40 degrees. There 30 degrees is normal. But in winter it can be very cold! ””



Anna Rogozinska was raised in Warsaw, Poland, and moved to Walsall in 2012. She is part of the Caldmore Guerrilla Gardeners group and she works as a community organiser in Caldmore and Palfrey.

“ **I grew up in a district called Muranów.** The main thing about me growing up there, which is quite important for me, was that it used to be a Jewish district before the Second World War. Warsaw was almost totally destroyed in the war and this area was a sea of ruins. The district where I grew up was built right on the rubble of these ruins, so it's slightly raised up. It was then a new district for the workers – lovely big houses, blocks of flats, playgrounds and a lot of green areas. My grandparents moved to a lovely flat. They were given their flat by the factory where they worked, for the new communist society.

I was born in December 1981, just four days after they introduced martial law in Poland. It's like a state of war but nobody invades from the outside, just your country decides that the situation in the country requires some special restrictions and the police and the army control the country. I was born in a military hospital in Warsaw.

There was loads of snow. People couldn't go out in the street after seven o'clock in the evening. There was a curfew. All the telephone lines were cut, so you couldn't call, and on the TV you would only get government messages, so it was a bit horrible. You had the army in the streets controlling the bridges. My grandfather took my mum to the hospital so that she could give birth to me but he had to go with his military friends so he could actually get my mum there. It was very, very dramatic the way they told me.

I can remember that, as a child, there were always very long queues in shops to get anything – a lot of things were rationed in Poland in the '80's. I can also remember at school, in biology class, we had all these cabinets with skeletons of animals and we had a very old skull in one cabinet. One day the biology teacher asked me to take the skull and go around the class and show it to everybody so that they could have a little anatomy lesson. I learnt that this skull was actually dug out in the courtyard so it must have been a skull from the war, of an actual person. It wasn't a fake one. I thought it was deeply wrong to keep it here, but no-one else seemed bothered. When I told my mum she was not shocked, because when my mum was playing when she was little it was quite common that they would find all these bones or skulls, just digging around, – and there would still be some ruins because there were so many people murdered there or burnt.

My grandmother lived on the right bank of the Vistula river, so her family escaped most of the destruction. It was the left bank, the main part of the city, that was completely destroyed by the Germans. In the war, the brother of my grandmother fought in the resistance and he got caught. He got taken to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. The Nazis were making some medical experiments on him, injecting him with tuberculosis. Because of that when he came back he died within a year. So that's probably the worst story I can tell you from my family in the war. The other parts of my family moved to Warsaw after the war because there was a lot of migration from old Poland to new Poland, with new borders, with millions of people having to move. Then in the



Anna's grandmother in rebuilt Warsaw, circa 1950

1990's in Poland, after the change from communism to democracy, we started to learn English in schools instead of Russian. One year, my mum decided to pay for my trip to England for a language course, so I spent a month in Brighton – that was my first proper visit to England. I was about fourteen.

I now live in Caldmore and I really like it. I feel it is a very interesting and fascinating place – to have so many different cultures live in one place. You can learn from each other, so I like it a lot. I love curries. Polish cuisine isn't that spicy. I've never gone for the spicy curry. I've never been that brave in a restaurant, so I don't know how much I can take actually in terms of spiciness. It's quite a multicultural community, so it's a very welcoming place for a new migrant. I have just managed to find my place here. I don't feel very alienated. I am on Facebook and all my friends are on Facebook so we actually keep in touch quite a lot, so I know what's happening back in Poland all the time. So the internet is helping different people from different countries connect.

It was just a little bit complicated when I came here first because I didn't quite understand everything about taxes and self-employment. I still don't quite understand totally how Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs work. When I moved here to be with my boyfriend, I didn't have a job at first, so I started doing a little garden at the corner of my street. It was a bit of land that was always full of rubbish, so I got annoyed by that and I decided to just do something about it. I cleaned it up and I started planting flowers with the help of some friends. I didn't know anything about gardening but I liked it even though it's a lot of hard work. That's our little guerrilla garden, right in the heart of Caldmore. ””

DID YOU KNOW?

- Poland suffered greatly in World War 2, with 17% of its population killed.
- 1.5 million Poles were deported by the Soviets to the Gulag in 1940-41, and the same number of Poles were taken to Germany as forced labour.
- The Polish Resettlement Act 1947 was the first ever mass immigration legislation of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It offered British citizenship to over 200,000 displaced Polish troops on British soil who had fought against Nazi Germany and who were opposed to the post-war Soviet takeover of their home country.

Memoona Mehmood was born in Walsall in 1992 and went to stay in Rawalpindi in Pakistan.

“**When I was seven years old my grandfather passed away and my parents, little sister and I went to Pakistan for his funeral.** At first I thought we would only be staying for a short while, maybe a month or two. We ended up staying there for a year. Even though my village was like my second home, as someone who was born and grew up in Britain it took a long time to get used to being there.

The surroundings and my daily life were a lot different to back home and I did not like it at all. Where I was used to brick houses, tarmac roads and a busy town life, in the village there were fields full of crops, dirt and dusty roads. Right outside the house we lived in, there was a well supplying us with fresh water. There were small orange trees in the courtyard and such big marble houses with open top roofs. Everyone was speaking a different language, Urdu, which I could barely understand. So I refused to speak it and would only talk in English.

We would sleep outside under the stars, which was a new, surreal and exciting experience. Fresh juicy mangoes in the summer. Running around playing games with my cousins. I celebrated my 8th birthday there. My favourite moment had to be that my birthday cake was shaped like a doll!

As a few months passed, we were still in Pakistan so my parents decided to send me to school. At first, I was shocked because I didn't know what school life was like there. I was scared of going. I wondered how I would even make friends with anyone. I soon realised that it was not so different to schools in England, the only difference being I was the only English-speaking person there, whereas they spoke Urdu. I managed to learn the language fluently within six months and became friendly with all my teachers and classmates. Looking back, I miss them very much and wonder how they all are. But I missed my home, friends and life in England and every night I'd ask my mum, *'When are we going home?'*

I did grow to love Pakistan. I saw so much of my beautiful country while I was there and would not give up that experience for anything. I have so many memories which I'll never forget and will always cherish.”



***Shamshad Hussain** was born in Pakistan and came to England in 1969 when she was four years old. She was nineteen before she went back to visit her family in Pakistan.*

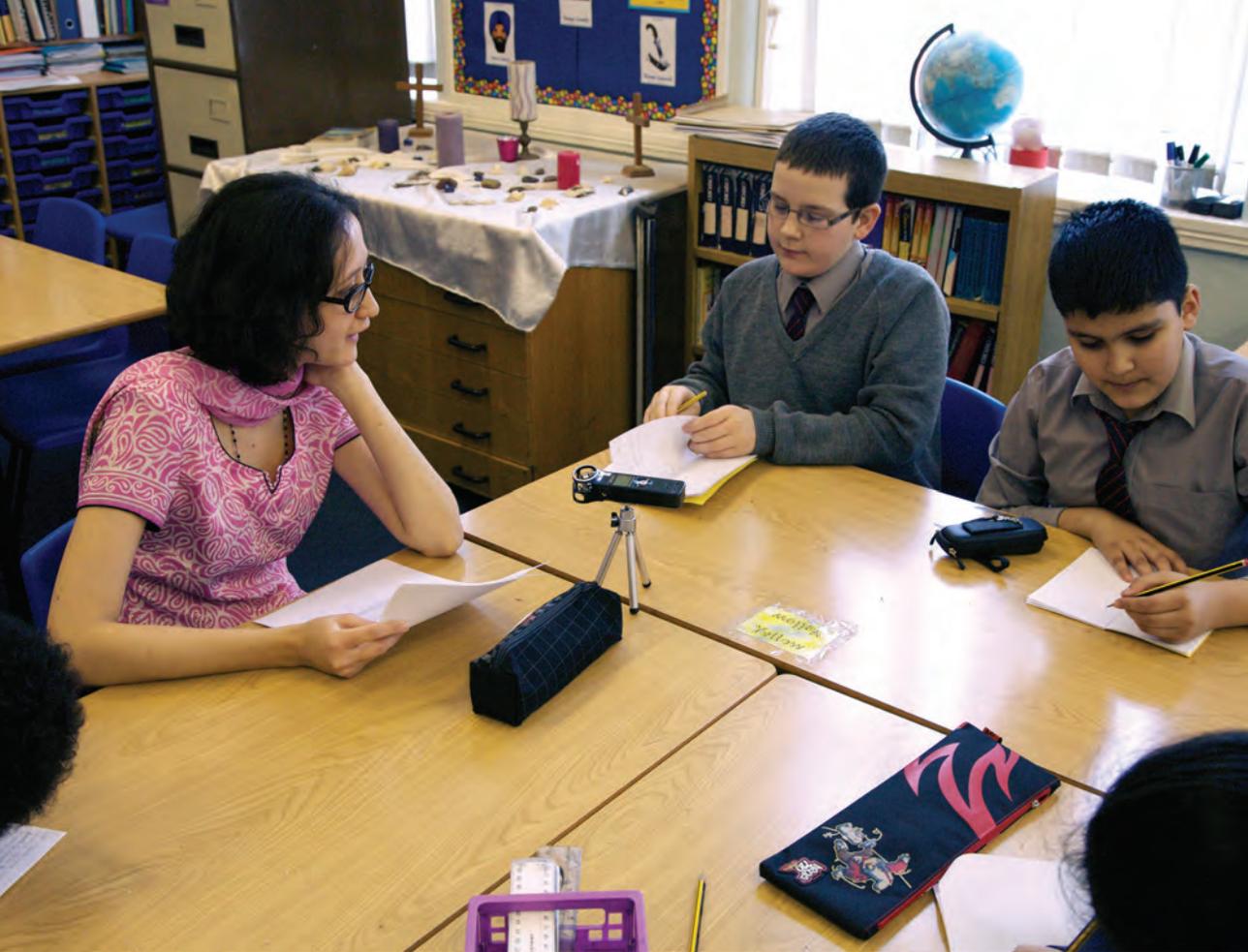
“ **I came over here with my mother and older sister, who was six.** We came to join our dad. He came over here to work with a work permit and five years later he applied for our mum and us to come over. We were just uprooted, bags packed and on a plane and away we go. I knew of families where the children were left behind if they were older than ten. They couldn't come with their parents, so some families had to leave the older children behind and just bring the young ones. That was the law and you had to prove that these children were yours. We had to practise the questions that they were going to ask us, so for example: *'Who is your dad? What is his name? Where did you live? What is your name? What is your sister's name?'* and my grandparents spent a lot of time teaching us the answers. At six and four all you can do is sit there like this, as we didn't speak English. We came for a better life. We had an education here that we didn't have in Pakistan and better living conditions. We came from a village, with

village life where it's farms and living as farmers do. We didn't have TV or satellite or mobile phones. The village was called Nigyal and it's in the area of Kashmir. I can still remember the village. I've been back since then. We are lucky that we can go back on holiday so we don't forget our roots. It's changed a lot but it was a happy life.

I remember going to the airport. We finally realised we were going somewhere different, because otherwise it was just a bus excursion. We had no idea where it was all leading to and understanding that we were going to join dad. We didn't know where England was. *'Can we catch the bus to England? Can I go by horse and cart to England? Why can't dad come back to us?'* It was only when we got onto the aeroplane and it took ten hours of asking *'Are we there yet?'* that it finally sunk in that England is not two steps down the road. It was very, very far away. We had packed very little. We had no idea what to bring with us. No idea. You've seen Asian clothes and we came here and there was deep snow. It was very cold. That was the first time I saw snow. I had heard of snow but I'd never seen it. I remember our uncle came to pick us up and then after that, a lot of the things are a blur. It's a shock. At four years old, you're leaving everything you've grown up with, so you close your mind to it, because there's nothing you can do about it. You either remember it and cry over it, or you just accept it. It's a decision that's been made to bring you over here and it's for the good.

We first lived in London. It is a very big city. We had to get used to the different ways of living here. We had a lot of friends who lived in Walsall, so we moved. The community helped each other then and it still does now – where to go shopping, what food to buy, what these various shops were. We never had phones in the house then, you had to go out to the telephone boxes.

We went to school. I didn't know a word of English. I can still picture my teacher, a beautiful woman. All I did was stare at her. I couldn't understand a word she'd say. I thought *'What on earth is she going on about?'* I went to King Charles Primary School, totally over the other side of Walsall. I had to go by coach in the mornings to get there and then I'd have no one to speak to. No friends. My sister went to a different school. I can remember coming home from school and telling my mum that I didn't want to go again. I can't remember how long it took to learn English. When you find you want to speak to somebody and you can't speak English you learn faster, because you want to make friends and you don't know how to make friends because of the communication. The only thing I could do is sign language at first but you pick up the words. I had some very good teachers and it's thanks to the teachers that I am where I am. ””



Verity Vyas was born in Mombasa, Kenya and came to live in Walsall in 2011. She works part-time as a dinner lady and is studying to become a teacher.

“ I was not forced to leave, I chose to leave because I had a dream.

I wanted to become a nursery teacher, so I got the nursery qualification. I came here because I am a British passport holder of Indian background. In Kenya, if you are a Kenyan citizen you can work but if you are a British passport holder, you need to pay for work permit, which is £3,000 a year. I could not afford that. Mombasa, where I spent the first 20 years of my life, is on the coastline and it's very hot. Every day the temperature is 25 to 30 degrees, even in the night. The rain is appreciated a lot because it only falls in March and April, which is a short rain. Then July and August is the heavy rain. We really appreciated that rain. We would run outside of the class, dance until we were soaking wet. There were no dinner ladies to stop us! Because here if the rain falls, it's like *'Wet play, children!'* In England, teachers lecture you for fifteen minutes if you get drenched wet from head to toe.

I had mixed feelings when I boarded the plane. I was sad to leave my grandparents, especially my granddad, and my friends. I was happy as it was my time to be independent, make my own choices and begin a new life. I was nervous because I didn't know what my life would be like in the UK. I promised myself I would be strong, I would be curious to learn and mix in well with the ways of UK life. I had just turned 20 years old and I came to this country all alone. I do have my auntie and I'm staying with my dad's best friend and his wife.

I am learning the different ways of handling different people. As you know, this world is full of different people. Apart from all the good qualities some people do have, for which the world is blessed, we also have mean people. Some were good to me, some would make fun of me – especially when I would go to book my train tickets. I learnt how to travel on my own. I kept on asking questions. I learnt the different rules. I picked up the maps you get in the bus station and became independent. I went to different parts of West Midlands, explored without being scared, just went around and came back to the bus stop. I enjoyed myself. I wasn't scared to travel alone. I wasn't scared to get lost. If I didn't know my way, I would just ask someone, but before I left I made sure to go on Google maps. I did my research.

Nobody taught me how to learn English, because in Mombasa everybody speaks English. We have different tribes like Kikuyu, Kamba, Masai. We have Indians, Muslims, different cultures. They are all Africans, but they come from different communities. Many older people there are poor, still they smile and work hard every single day of their life.

I still miss my birthplace. The people are much more kind. They're very warm hearted and open minded and accepting. They are very happy when a guest comes. Just because I've come here and it's all new to me, and my dreams have been smashed away from me doesn't mean that I'm going to be upset or I'm going to give up. I'm going to make sure I get what I want. I'm going to make sure I become successful in Walsall. My ambition is to become a nursery teacher. In the UK, they can't accept my existing qualification from Kenya. I'm glad I'm a dinner lady and at least I'm in a school and I will have done a Montessori diploma by next year. Your dreams can stop for a while, but it doesn't mean it's the end, it doesn't mean that it's not meant to be. My second dream, after becoming a teacher I just want to get married and be a good mother. ””



Naveeda Naeem was sixteen years old when she came to England from Pakistan in 1992.

“ **I moved to be with my husband, that is the reason I came, as he was already here.** He is four years older than me. I travelled on my own. I didn't know what aeroplanes were like inside. I was scared when I was sitting in the plane and very uncomfortable because I didn't know what was going to happen next. I was crying and upset. One or two seats away there was a girl, and it was her second visit. She told me the last time she came to this country she got married – and the same day her flight was to England, her brother passed away and she said she couldn't go back. That was in my mind. I didn't know what was going to happen next. What if anything happened to anybody? I couldn't go back straight away. So, touch wood, everything was going to be fine.

I was very nervous because it was quite unusual for me to move out of the family and that far, and I didn't know when I would come back. It was hard for a few months.

It was to be five years before I went back to Pakistan to visit family. I first lived in East Ham, in London. I was nervous about meeting my in-laws. Would they be nice to me? My husband was very supportive. I couldn't cook, I couldn't do anything. So now I teach my daughter to do things in the house. I teach her how to clean the house with me, Hoover around, do a bit of cooking with me. You've got to learn from your parents. When you stay with your parents it's much easier, but once they are not there with you, it's harder and life is tough. When I was at my father's house, I didn't do anything. Once I moved here, I had to do the cooking, cleaning, work – and everything was hard for me.

Before I came, I learnt how to sew, because I didn't have enough education. So I thought, *'If I have to work here, I should learn to sew.'* It was very hard for me because my dad was quite well off back home and he didn't like me to work. We never used to work in the house. My in-laws were not very well off. I thought to myself, I will need to help out so when my dad was at home I used to sneak out to sew. That's how I used to learn. He didn't want me to do too much hard work. My mum knew I was learning. My dad would say *'You don't have to go to England, you can stay here at my house, I can feed you and look after you.'* But I didn't want to burden my dad. Once I was here he knew I was struggling and I couldn't go back like my cousins. He knew we weren't well off and were struggling for things.

It was completely new to me here. It was very clean compared to Pakistan. And there were very kind people on those days that you would meet anybody outside the house. It was comfortable, but it was very cold. Completely different weather! I couldn't understand anything to be honest. I was thinking, *'God, how am I going to learn this...to speak? How long is it going to take to learn all this?'* Now I'm very comfortable with understanding and speaking, so I'm quite proud of that – but I still need to work on it. I couldn't understand a single word and now I can understand. I can speak English. I feel much more comfortable here. ””



John King migrated to India at the age of forty, to work there on children's educational projects.

“ **I was born and lived in County Monaghan, Ireland.** I come from a village that is less than a hundred people and then in 1997 I moved with my wife to Delhi in India, a city that has 15 million people. That was a big shock for me. There's only 5 million in the whole of Ireland. Everywhere you go in India, you have to push your way through the crowds. I searched for three weeks to find a house that was near a little park so that I could see a green tree and that helped me not to feel homesick any more for the green fields and trees in Ireland.

One thing in Ireland people like to do is talk about the weather, so when you get up in the morning people talk about *'It's a nice day'* or *'It's a cold day'* but in India when you get up in the morning, every single morning the sun is shining – so it makes no sense to say *'It's a nice day!'* It was cold in Ireland but in India the temperature goes up to 40 degrees, so it's very, very hot. It didn't rain much in Delhi, the hot air rising from the

city, driving the clouds away. There was a real problem with lack of rain. But when it rained the roads were still flooded.

When you are settled and at an older age, it's more difficult to move somewhere else. The older you are, the more difficult it is to change. So like I say, it was a big change to go there – because of the weather, because of the crowds, food, culture. The food I wasn't used to – hot food with lots of chilli. So for the first five weeks in India I was living with a family and their men liked to eat very spicy food with lots of chilli but I didn't like spicy food. I'd never eaten it before and after the first spoonful, I couldn't eat any more! I lived on bananas for the first five weeks! Everything was different there. It was difficult for me. But Indian people are very friendly and I think you probably know that because you've got Indian students here. Indian people are very hospitable - that's something they have in common with the Irish. Indian people are always inviting you to come and have some food and they keep putting more food on your plate, so you have to leave a little bit of food on your plate to show that you have eaten as much as you want and then they know you're finished! And the mangoes, oh eating mangoes! Mangoes are very nice.

We lived in an area on the south side of Delhi that was first settled by people during the Partition of India. People came from the Pakistan side and the government gave them this land to build their houses. They all came and built little one room houses and there are very few of those left today. As they accumulated money, the people built two or three floors as their family expanded. The majority were Hindu, but there were some Sikhs.

We went to India to work with an NGO. I was helping with a programme for kids who were having difficulty getting education. I was teaching English. We came back every two years to visit my home country. One thing that happened was my accent changed, so I've got a mixture of an Irish accent and an Indian accent now. I can speak a little bit of Hindi. I had to learn and in the beginning I found that a very difficult language. I learnt to write a little as well. We were there for thirteen years then we came to Walsall in 2010. I knew some friends in Walsall, people I had met many years before and they were doing charity work here and invited me to come and help them. It was a big change, a big step into the unknown, but not quite as big a step as going from Ireland to India. ””

DID YOU KNOW?

- The 1947 Partition of India caused the largest mass migration in history of some 10 million people.



Lydia Grace King is a pupil at Bluecoat Academy. She was born in Ireland but has spent most of her life in India.

“ **When I was six months old my family brought me to India.** I’m fourteen now. My mum and dad lived there for two years before me and I lived there eleven and a half years. I went to an American school. Some other people were from Korea, Guatemala, Tanzania, all over the place. On the streets, I would play with the children and I learnt to speak Hindi. In India cows walk on the road and it’s very hot. We ate dhal and rice, sometimes chicken curry. We’d eat foreign food as well, as my mum cooked that. We didn’t eat beef because the cow is a sacred animal in India.

I rode on a camel and an elephant and you travel round by auto-rickshaw for short journeys. An auto-rickshaw is like a car except with three wheels and no doors. One thing I loved about India was the huge water fights in the summer. It’s an Indian Festival called Holi – you’re invited to join in even if you aren’t a Hindu. On the streets people throw coloured powder and water balloons and they squirt coloured water as

well. You can squirt anyone. The next day everyone's hair is a different colour, so it's really fun. Diwali another festival, with fireworks. You buy loads of fireworks and set them off. And you see all these colours in the sky. On Independence Day there was a kite festival. We bought about five kites for that day. You'd fly your kite on the roof and there would be competitions to cut the string of the other person's kite. People would shout 'eyebo' –



I think that was just an expression to say you cut someone's kite. If they saw one falling, everyone would be running to get that kite, so they could have it. I was too young and I didn't know how to do it. My brother had a huge kite that looked more like a hang glider and they all tried to cut that down so we brought it back in quickly.

When I was told we were going to move from India I was very upset. I would miss all my friends and I didn't know what England was going to be like. India had always been my home. I was leaving the place where I belonged. I was worried I wouldn't make friends, but it turned out all right. I made loads of friends here. It was freezing when I arrived here. I only got to see snow for the first time when I came to England. It was raining a lot here and that was a big shock to me. I was so cold. I'd never heard of singers like Rihanna or Adele. In India people mostly play Indian Bollywood music inside the auto-rickshaws and on the buses. I didn't really watch television there. I played outside all the time. It was a big change to come here, very different. Here, at school, in the playground people stand around and talk. In India everybody is playing games, no-one stands around and talks in the playground. Kids at school found me different when I first came because of my American accent, but they got used to me and I have settled in England now because I have lived here for two years. Sometime I would like to go back and visit India. It is still counted as my home and always will be a part of me. ”

DID YOU KNOW?

- Holi is the Hindu festival of colours, celebrating Spring.
- Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights, celebrating the victory of light over darkness.

In Retrospect



“It widened our view. We spent so much time together as a group of girls at Pipewood, we were one big family. We don’t regret going to that school because we did a lot more things there than we would have elsewhere. I must say I don’t feel it affected my education. After the war three of us went back to my school – me, my friend Elizabeth and Barbara. They had to sit us alone and give us separate lessons because we were in advance of the others.” – *June Lum (nee Coop), evacuee*

“The best bit of the war was the food. Mrs Juggins was such a good cook. They’d got the orchard and an enormous garden. The fruit was a pain in the neck when it was picked, we were always bottling stuff. It just seemed to be work all the time. In Birmingham I’d sat for the grammar school. I’d got the place. I’d got high up enough to get the books for nothing, but no-one told them so I ended up going to this tiny little junior school with rows of seven, eight, ten year olds and some of us like me – with my birthday in October – were eleven. The teacher never really taught us. When I got to the seniors I went to a marvellous school in Gloucester, but I only had two years there. On the whole I do think that being an evacuee was a good thing as I never experienced bombing or food shortages, but I never liked it and the thought of ever going to live in the country horrifies me. I am a true Brummie, I am sure of it.” – *Pat Law (nee Heaton), evacuee*

“War started and we went into school and they sent us home because they hadn’t got any air raid shelters. They weren’t built for a long time, then it was a terrible winter, snow six feet deep, so no school. I didn’t really get back to school properly till May, then the bombing started and we were in the shelters most nights. So you could say my education isn’t what it should have been. I have been self-educated. I don’t understand English grammar and consonants and all that. If I’m writing something today I still get someone to check it for me.” – *Jack Haddock*

“It does make you stand on your own two feet more. We mixed better. Our headmistress was a Quaker and she was very much for people being with each other and caring about each other. You were never alone – and never bored. There was always something to do at Pipewood. My regret was that I didn’t finish my schooling. Once the war finished, Birmingham council closed it. I wasn’t academic anyway, and I’d moved round eight schools. It would have been better if I was at one school and gone through the system. I’d go somewhere and they’d be behind me, then I’d go somewhere else and they’d be in front of me and that did affect my education. In Wales, I went to Welsh school. I found the Welsh very clannish and their granny at the place I stayed wouldn’t speak to me. She would only speak Welsh. I had to learn the Welsh national anthem, parrot fashion. I just had to pick it up because every morning at school you started with the anthem.” – *Jean Davis (nee Pearce), evacuee*

“I was nothing like the seven-and-a-half year olds today. We were innocent of everything. The thing that does stick out in my memory was the little house where we lived. They had a small orchard and you could just go pick an apple off the tree whenever you wanted to. That was a luxury for me as a child, because we were a poor family – we only had fruit at the weekend. The lady baked and I can taste the apple turnovers now and the fresh bread. I can only remember being happy there. I would have liked to have stayed there but my mother took us back. I never got homesick. It was exciting to me. Well, perhaps I’m a person who likes to do things. You know, I use my bus pass frequently. I go out and about and I people-watch and I love social history. One of the children said to me ‘*Did you miss your mother?*’ and honestly I didn’t because everything was new and good. To me it was lovely. Yes, it certainly made me more independent. It also made me appreciate our parents and family more, because we had been apart from them.” – *Olive Baker (nee Jones), evacuee*

Project Outcomes

Year 6 children and their teachers worked with writer Brendan Jackson, filmmaker Geoff Broadway and artist Nicky Dupays. Their joint work has contributed to this book. They created an exhibition based on themed suitcases, assisted by John Beck, which was first shown at Wolverhampton Art Gallery in July 2013. The pupils produced a DVD featuring ten short films that creatively reinterpret some of the evacuee and migrant stories. Physical theatre practitioner Jane Sutcliffe also worked with the children on a performance interpreting their poetry for the exhibition opening. There is also an accompanying educational pack and a DVD of oral history interviews.





Further Reading

The People's War - Britain 1939-45: Angus Calder, (Jonathan Cape, 1969/2008); *Evacuees of the Second World War*: Mike Brown, (Shire Publications, 2009); *Children of War - The Second World War Through the Eyes of a Generation*: Susan Goodman, (John Murray, 2005); *Carrie's War*: Nina Bawden, (Victor Gollanz, 1973/Puffin 2011); *Goodnight Mr Tom*, Michelle Magorian, (Puffin 2003); *Boy in the Blitz, The 1940 Diary of Colin Perry*, Colin Perry (Sutton Publishing/IWM, 2000); *The Book Thief*, Markus Zusak, (Picador, 2005); *Reminiscences of Jack Haddock, various subjects including life in the 1920's and 1930's and Second World War memories*: Jack Haddock, Walsall Local History Centre.

www.walsallbluecoattjifederation.com

www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwtwo/evacuees_01.shtml

www.historylearningsite.co.uk/children_and_world_war_two.htm

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from Walsall Museum

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p 60: German Bombing map, Walsall Local History Centre; Rimsha Masood

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p 111: Family of Mahjabin Nuha

p 112/113: Family tree courtesy of Bushra Begum

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p 131: Kareen Maritza

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