



Evacuation of Children and Women during World War 2

By EmmaW

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What is evacuation?

During the Second World War, many children living in big cities and towns were moved temporarily from their homes to places considered safer, usually out in the countryside.

When did evacuations take place in Britain?



The British evacuation began on Friday 1 September 1939. It was called 'Operation Pied Piper'. Between 1939 - 1945 there were three major evacuations in preparation of the German Luftwaffe bombing Britain. The first official evacuations began on September 1 1939, two days before the declaration of war. By January 1940 almost 60% had returned to their homes. A second evacuation effort was started after the Germans had taken over most of France. From June 13 to June 18, 1940, around 100,000 children were evacuated (in many cases re-evacuated). When the Blitz began on 7 September 1940, children who had returned home or had not been evacuated were evacuated. By the end of 1941, city centres, especially London, became safer. From June 1944, the Germans attacked again by firing V1 rockets on Britain, followed later by also V2 rockets. 1,000,000 women, children, elderly and disabled people were evacuated from London. This new way of attacking Britain carried on until the end of the war in Europe in May 1945.

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How many people were evacuated during the war?

By the end of the Second World War around 3.5 million people, mainly children had experienced evacuation. No one was forced to go but parents were encouraged by posters and told that their children would be safer from German bombs if they moved to the country.



When did Evacuation end?

World War Two ended in September 1945, however evacuation did not officially end until March 1946 when it was felt that Britain was no longer under threat from invasion. Surprisingly, even 6 months after the war had ended, there were still 5,200 evacuees living in rural areas with their host families. Many evacuees' had returned home long before March 1946. In April 1945, the Government began to make travel arrangements to return the evacuees to their homes when the war was over. By 12th July 1945, more than 100 trains had brought 54,317 evacuees home to London.

What was it like for a child to be evacuated?

Being an evacuee must have been scary and exciting at the same time. The children had to leave their families and homes behind and try to fit in with host families in the country. Children had labels attached to them, as though they were parcels.