

## Home Front

Activities in this section look at what life was like for men, women and children on the Home Front.

## Evacuees

Key Stage 2

History:

Chronological understanding

Historical interpretation

Historical enquiry

British History

Key Stage 2

English:

Speaking and listening

Group discussion

Writing

Composition

Planning and drafting

Reading

Understanding texts

Reading for information

Non fiction and non-literary texts

### Overview of the activities

Using original sources of information to find out about the past.

Examining what life was like during the Second World War.

### Aim of the activities

To examine what life was like on the Home Front for evacuees and their families.

### Resources

Newspaper article

Photographs

Government documents

### Venues

The activities are suitable for use at venues with an interest in the Home Front: (RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, Metheringham Airfield Visitor Centre, Thorpe Camp Visitor Centre.)

### Roles

Evacuees or child in Lincoln

## Activity 1: Evacuation

The purpose of the activity is to help children look at different sources of information and see what these tell us about the past.

### Introduction

Explain that at the start of the War the decision was made to evacuate children and women with very young children out of cities to places of safety in the countryside. This meant moving large numbers of children away from their homes. Many travelled by train. Often they had no idea where they were going or where they were going to stay. Millions were evacuated. Often, when they arrived in country villages the evacuees met local people who had offered to take them in. Adults would look at the children and choose which ones they wanted. Imagine what it was like for the children waiting to be chosen. Some loved their new homes but many hated them.

Use the transcripts of the government documents in the PowerPoint presentation to show how parents were informed about evacuation.

Children who remained in the cities lived with the threat of dropping bombs.

This section explores the evacuation operation from different perspectives. There are many stories in the venues of the experiences of evacuees:

- newspaper account
- documents from the time.

There is a transcript of an article taken from the Lincolnshire Echo on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939. It describes the arrival of evacuees from Leeds at Lincoln Station. The article is quite long and the language, in places, quite difficult so we recommend choosing an extract to examine. Perhaps summarise the introductory paragraphs and then use the paragraph entitled Rations issued as this highlights many wartime issues.

### Activity

When you have introduced the topic, divide the class into small groups and give them part of the article to consider. Ask children to team read different sections of the article and make a note of difficult words or phrases. Alternatively you could read the sections of the article with the children.

### Comprehension

What do they think this piece of text is from?

What sort of writing is it? Is it fiction, non-fiction?

When do they think it was written: today, a few years ago, a long time ago?

What is it about?

### **Activity**

Next ask the children to think about the children who have just arrived from Leeds. Ask them to write a letter home, letting their parents know they are safe and well.

### **Extension activities**

Can they put themselves in the evacuees shoes and write a short story or a poem about what life might have been like for these children. How might they have felt?

Ask children to imagine what it might be like to have a child from a different part of the country come to live with them. How might they feel? Would they make the child feel welcome? Would they want to know about the child, where they came from etc. Again ask them to write a short story about having an evacuee come to stay with their family.

Children may find that their grandparents, or great grandparents were evacuated. They could ask them about their experiences. It might be sensible to start by asking their parents about their grandparents' or great grandparents experiences during the war so they can handle the subject sensitively.

Ask children to write a letter to the evacuees telling them what life is like today for children. Children may choose to write about technology, toys, school, holidays, travel all of which will be very different.

## Background information

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 two days before Neville Chamberlain declared that Britain was at war with Germany, an evacuation programme was put in place. Children and women with very young children were moved out of cities to places of safety in the countryside. This meant large numbers of children were taken away from their homes. Many travelled by train. Often they had no idea where they were going or where they were going to stay. Millions were evacuated.

Often, when they arrived in country villages, the evacuees would go to village halls to meet the local people who had offered to take them in. Adults would look at the children and choose which ones they wanted. Imagine what it was like for the children waiting to be chosen. Some loved their new homes but many hated them.

Children still went to school during the War. As soon as they heard the air raid sirens they would go to public shelters or to classrooms that had been strengthened with sandbags.

Some children were evacuated for the whole six years of the war and didn't see their parents during that time. Others were luckier and their parents were able to visit regularly.

After the War, many children who were evacuated were told that they were the lucky ones and that they had been taken out of the danger of the war. Many adults who were evacuated suffered long-term effects of the experience. Even though they may have been placed with caring people, the sudden separation from their parents proved to be traumatic for many. Many felt they were not able to talk about the experience. Evacuation had many long-term consequences for the families involved. Children may have grandparents or great grandparents who were evacuated in the War.

*An LCC Government Evacuation Scheme poster, advising parents about the start of the evacuation process.*

#### GOVERNMENT EVACUATION SCHEME

The Government have ordered evacuation of school children.

If your children are registered for evacuation send them to their assembly point at once.

If your children are registered and you wish them to be evacuated, the teachers or the school keeper will help you.

If you do not wish your children to be evacuated you must not send them to school until further notice.

Posters notifying the arrival or parties in the country will be displayed at the schools at which the children assembled for evacuation.

*Government issued a leaflet War Emergency Information and Instructions:*

If you live in one of these areas and have a child or children of school age who you wish to be evacuated you should send them to school on the day which will be notified to you. Each child should have a handbag or case containing the child's gas mask, a change of underclothing, night clothes, house shoes or plimsolls, spare stockings or socks, a toothbrush, a comb, a towel, soap and face cloth, handkerchiefs and, if possible, a warm coat or mackintosh.

Each child should bring a packet of food for the day. School children will be taken by their teachers to homes in safer districts where they will be housed by people who have already offered to receive them and look after them. Parents of school children living in these areas are strongly urged to let their children go. Parents will be told where the children are as soon as they reach their new homes. The cost of the journey will be paid by the Government. Posters will be exhibited at the schools showing the times when mothers with children below school age should assemble at the schools, unless they have been notified in some other way. Mothers and other persons in charge of children below school age should take hand-luggage with the same equipment for themselves and their children as for school children. The names of the children should be written on a label or strong paper and sewn onto their clothes.

Children were allowed to take just one toy.

[http://asafelacetogo.org.uk/?location\\_id=215](http://asafelacetogo.org.uk/?location_id=215)**Children at war**

Lincolnshire Echo, Friday September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939

## **LINCOLN RECEIVES FIRST CHILD EVACUEES**

### **Scene of Calm Efficiency at Railway Station**

#### **SOME PASSED ON TO VILLAGES: OTHERS REMAIN IN CITY**

Lincoln commenced its share in the great evacuation scheme shortly after 10 o'clock this morning.

From the first, the arrangements worked with perfect precision and an entire absence of confusion.

The first train-load of Leeds children arrived at the Lincoln L.N.E.R station. The numbers of children received were much smaller than those for which provision had been made. It was estimated that only about one-third of the maximum number which had been expected came on the first trains.

There was adequate staff to deal with the full numbers had they arrived and the whole work was efficiently handled in every particular.

The first train was due in at 10.28 a.m. It arrived to the minute. As it drew in to No. 5 platform a voice announced through the loudspeakers: "When the train stops the children will get out and wait on the platform." This and every subsequent instruction was immediately and implicitly obeyed. The children all wearing identification labels, carrying their gas masks in cartons and bags containing clothing, quickly assembled with their teachers. The next instruction came: St Anthony's School will move out of the station to the yard outside where they will assemble at the places marked for them." In the station yard were cards placed on wooden stands bearing the names of the Leeds schools, and each party moved to its appointed place. In less than five minutes the platform was cleared.

#### **QUICK WORK**

The loudspeaker again took up the direction to affairs and ordered the various schools to one or other of the double-decker buses drawn up in the station yard.

In less than half an hour from the train entering the station the last bus had moved off.

The first contingent were booked for villages in the North Kesteven Rural District. Shortly after they had gone there arrived the first lot of evacuees for Lincoln city.

The same system worked again with exact smoothness and steadiness. The buses in this case took the children to two of the five distribution centres which have been opened at the following schools: St Giles, Mount street, Bracebridge, Skellingthorpe road and Rosemary.

### **RATIONS ISSUED**

At these schools the children received their rations for 48 hours. They were each handed a paper carrier in which were a tin of meat, a tin of sweetened milk, a tin of unsweetened milk, a pound of biscuits, a quarter pound block of chocolate.

The issue of rations was completed in a few minutes, a large staff of packers having done a lot of preliminary work.

Members of the Women's Voluntary Service assisted the teachers to issue the rations.

Children then went to classrooms for splitting up into small parties for drafting to their billets.

The behaviour of the children was excellent. There were no tear-stained faces.

A teacher from Leeds told an Echo reporter that it had been the same throughout the journey.

"Some of them look upon it as a glorified camp." he said. "One of the first questions I got was, 'Please sir, shall we be able to play Rugby?'"  
"Some of the children have been promised big parties when they return home."

One child, evidently thinking Lincolnshire meant somewhere near the seaside, had brought as seaside bucket, which formed an incongruous addition to gas mask and other luggage.

Mr C.W. Hooton, Chief Billeting Officer for Lincoln and Mr Robert Epton, for the Welton and North Kesteven Rural Districts, were at the station.

Both expressed themselves as well satisfied with the progress of the dispersal of the children.

Mr. L. E. Allbones chairman of North Kesteven Rural Council, stated that he had inspected arrangements made in the villages in his area and was assured that everything possible would be done for the evacuees.

## **CARS LOANED**

All the Lincoln school teachers were on duty today assisting in the work at the station or the schools.

A number of cars were available for taking children to the more distant billets in the city and the number will be increased to-night. These vehicles have been offered voluntarily.

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## **DEAN'S OFFER**

In a message to the Echo, the Dean of Lincoln, Very Rev. R.A. Mitchell says: "It has occurred to me that some of those who have the care of evacuated children may be at a loss, especially during the first few days before the children know their way about, to find ways and means of occupying the spare time of the children.

"The Cathedral is an easy place to find and if any children are sent there we will do our best to look after them and if need be to direct them and to see them on their way to the houses where they are staying.

"They will also be very welcome to play, so far as space permits, in the Deanery garden, to which there is direct access from the Cathedral itself.