



EVACUEES IN WALES

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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INTRODUCTION

The Second World War was the first major war where bombing planes were used to target civilians. It could be dangerous to live in some urban areas as they were targets for enemy planes.



EVACUEES

The increasing threat of war during the 1930s forced the government to start planning to move people from the areas most likely to be bombed including big cities like London and Liverpool, to areas that were considered safer, like the Welsh countryside. As well as children and their teachers, the government decided to move pregnant women, mothers with young children and the sick and elderly. The people that were moved were called evacuees.

GALLERY



GALLERY



How do you think the children in these photographs would feel?

FACTS

THE SECOND WORLD WAR BEGAN ON THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER 1939.

IN THE FIRST FOUR DAYS OF SEPTEMBER 1939 MORE THAN A MILLION CHILDREN AND A HUNDRED THOUSAND TEACHERS WERE MOVED FROM THE CITIES

BETWEEN 1939 AND 1945 ALMOST FOUR MILLION PEOPLE WERE MOVED FROM BRITISH CITIES, AND TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND CAME TO DIFFERENT CORNERS OF WALES.

QUIZ

How many children were moved in the first four days of September 1939?

- A. Over 1,000
- B. Over 10,000
- C. Over 1,000,000
- D. Over 100,000

Check Answer

How many evacuees moved to Wales between 1939 and 1945?

- A. 100,00
- B. 50,000
- C. 200,000
- D. 150,000

Check Answer

TRAVELLING TO WALES

Trains, buses, cars and boats were used to move children, and during the first weekend of September 1939 evacuees arrived in Wales in their thousands. The children were escorted on their journey by their teachers, who had to ensure that they went on the correct vehicles, had enough food and drink, and left the train at the correct station.



ESSENTIAL ITEMS FOR EVACUEES



DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

The evacuees had mixed experiences. This was the first time that many of them had left home and it was an exciting adventure for some, but a much more difficult experience for others.

They had no idea where they were going, and had to travel for long hours on buses and trains that were often overcrowded.

Children from the same schools were usually sent to the same areas, but children were placed in groups of two or three, or sometimes on their own in their new homes.

Leaving home and family could be difficult, with many of the evacuees feeling lonely and longing for their parents.

A DIFFERENT WORLD

It was inevitable that some problems would occur as children from England's cities moved to the Welsh countryside. In some places, children from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds moved to live with middle class families, and this could be a shock for everyone.

There are reports from mid Wales of evacuees using their fingers to eat instead of a knife and fork, and having to be trained to use the toilet and have a bath.



LIVING IN THE WELSH COUNTRYSIDE

Those who received them were often shocked by the children's poverty, with many evacuees suffering from malnutrition, being half starved, and carrying lice in their clothes and diseases on their skin.

This was the first time that many of the evacuees had the opportunity to learn anything about the countryside. Some of the children who moved from England's cities went to live on farms in the Welsh countryside and saw farm animals for the first time in their lives, and for many of them, having fresh nutritious food and fresh air was very beneficial.

SCHOOL LIFE

Possibly the biggest change for some of the children that moved to the Welsh countryside was the language. Some moved to communities where Welsh was the main language and was spoken by everyone in the area. Many of the evacuees managed to learn the language fluently and some spoke Welsh for the rest of their lives. There are examples of children from Liverpool learning Welsh and winning in eisteddfodau after living in Wales for only a year.



QUIZ

What did the children wear around their necks while they travelled?

- A. Sandwiches
- B. Gas mask
- C. Clothes
- D. Ration book

Check Answer



There is no doubt that the scheme to move children from the cities saved very many lives, particularly during the heavy air raids in 1940 and 1941.



The photographs included in this pack are part of The Geoff Charles Photographic Collection held at The National Library of Wales:

<https://www.llgc.org.uk/geoffcharles>