

6



Dunlop & Co. Ltd.

**LEAVE THIS TO US
SONNY — YOU OUGHT
TO BE OUT OF LONDON**

MINISTRY OF HEALTH EVACUATION SCHEME

Evacuation involved moving all of Britain's children from cities likely to be bombed to safer areas in the country. Plans already existed to evacuate Britain's children and they were quickly put into action in September 1939. 800,000 school-children and 520,000 children under five (with their mothers) were soon sent from London to the country areas of Britain.

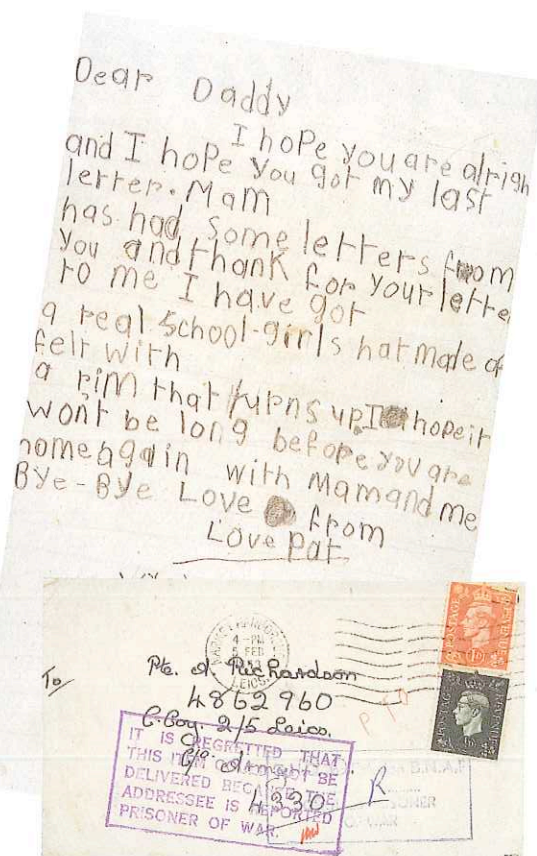


Nearly three million children were evacuated from the major city centres to the country to avoid the bombing.

Evacuation was not compulsory and not all parents could bear to let their children go to stay with people they didn't know. This reluctance was understandable. But parents also knew that big cities were likely targets for German bombing.

The problems

People with a spare room in country areas had to take in one or more children. The only choice they had was over which child they took. Teachers went with their pupils too. They would all be crammed into the nearest available school and shared classrooms. When the evacuated children, or *evacuees* as they were called, arrived they were lined up for the host



Little Pat Richardson, who was evacuated away from home, sent this letter to her father. But he didn't get it because he was a prisoner of war overseas.

families to inspect. Clean looking girls were the most popular – they could help with domestic chores. Boys, though, were valued if they were big enough to help on the farm.

Sometimes brothers and sisters were split up, and dirty or unattractive children were left to last. All this proved to be a frightening experience for children a long way from their parents. Hosts were given an allowance of ten shillings (50p) a week – not much when a pair of stockings cost five shillings (25p). Some, nonetheless, tried to make money by providing very

little
Some
toilet
lackin
tice t
their
horri
often
and l
bath
bad l
quen

Twe
For c
slum
work
anim
to hi
Mur
year.
End
wear
spen



For children like these from inner city slums, life in the country was another world. Green fields, orchards and farm animals were all new to them.

little for the children staying with them. Some children didn't know how to use a toilet properly. In some inner city slums lacking proper toilets it was common practice to urinate on newspaper. Of course, their new, often middle-class hosts were horrified by such behaviour. The children often arrived with skin diseases and lice, and had never worn underwear, taken a bath or brushed their teeth. Bed-wetting, bad language and theft were other frequent complaints.

'I wear underpants, do you?'

For children like these from inner city slums, life in the country was another world. Green fields, orchards and farm animals were all new to them. One wrote to his mother, "They call this spring, Mum, and they have one down here every year." One delighted boy from the East End of London boasted to his friends, "I wear underpants, do you?"

Many children loved the years they spent as evacuees as they enjoyed the be-

nefits of country life: a healthy diet, fresh air and endless adventure. These children sometimes found it very difficult to get used to their old way of life when they returned to their homes after their evacuation.

Not all children, though, were sent to comfortable homes in delightful countryside. Some found themselves in much the same conditions they had left behind and others were worse off. Children's experiences of evacuation, therefore, were very different. But for all of them there was homesickness and the worry that their parents might be killed in an air raid. The government did provide cheap train tickets for parents to visit their children but only once a month.

Consequences of evacuation

The evacuation of so many children had very important social and political effects. Country families were often shocked by the health of the children they took in and the poverty they lived in when at

home. It helped to convince people that a basic minimum standard of health and housing was a right for everyone. This was accepted during the war and the 1942 Beveridge Report promised changes. This set up what became known as the Welfare State in the years after the war.

In this sense, therefore, evacuation helped to bring about an important change in social attitudes. This in turn helped to bring about a new political belief that the state had a duty to provide much more in the way of basic standards of health and housing.

C 50

D 50 Listen to an interview with Roy, who was evacuated as a child.



Description of poster

Write a description of the poster in Reader page 87.

- Who is the artist?
- Describe what you see in the poster:
 1. The characters – what are they doing?
 2. The characters – what are they wearing?
 3. What do you see in the foreground/background?
 4. What does the text say?
 5. Do you think the colours are appropriate for the subject?
- Who issued the poster?
- Why do you think the poster has been made?
- What do you think of the poster? Why?

Th

A

People
evacua

We all
full-sc
When
evacu:
Hill St
our ey
bags f
to get
before
They
over r
they b
didn't
thing,
and o
we we
out. Y

We w
and s
rounc
you."
"This
child.
moth
son w
house