



CHILTERN
OPEN AIR
MUSEUM

*Where buildings come
alive through history*

Evacuee!



Location:

- Thame Vicarage Room

Practical Notes:

- During the Evacuee workshop the children will be split into smaller groups to undertake different tasks. We therefore ask that all adult helpers are actively involved in this workshop.
- There are photo opportunities throughout these activities.

Purpose and content of the activity session:

- During this session the children will be able to explore the idea of leaving home to live somewhere else, life for children during World War 2 and the role of some adults, including teachers, during the war.
- The Museum teacher will help the children to explore the theme of evacuation through a schoolroom role play, making their evacuation labels, gas mask boxes and packing their suitcase.

The explanation will vary in emphasis having regard to the age, ability and current or recent schoolwork (e.g. what was it like for children in the Second World War?) or interest if known beforehand.

Access Statement:

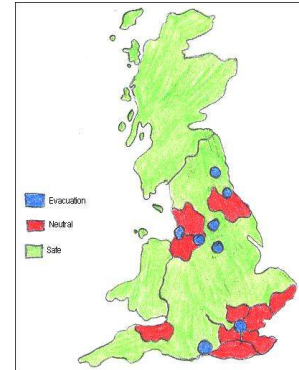
Thame Vicarage: Fully Accessible to all users.

Evacuee: Accessible to all users, however when using scissors some children may need additional help.

Historical Background

In 1938 the British government started to make plans to evacuate a wide variety of civilians who were deemed at high risk from large cities to safer areas in Britain. Sir John Anderson was in charge of the scheme and he divided Great Britain into 3 areas:

1. Evacuation – people living in urban districts where heavy bombing raids could be expected.
2. Neutral – areas that would neither send nor accept evacuees.
3. Safe/Reception – rural areas where evacuees would be sent.



On Friday 1st September 1939, at the beginning of the war, Operation Pied Piper began. This operation saw children, teachers, mothers with children under the age of 5, expectant mothers, disabled people, the infirm and the elderly move from the major cities to safety, with 1,589 assembly points for children to gather in London alone. The evacuation was voluntary and some people were reluctant to go and only 47% of the school children and 1/3 of mothers evacuated from these areas, including:

- 827,000 school children
- 524,000 mothers and children under the age of 5 years old
- 13,000 expectant mothers
- 103,000 teachers
- 7,000 disabled people

However in the following months the expected bombing did not happen (this period being called “The Phoney War”) and so approximately 60% of evacuees returned home.

Evacuation was re-introduced in July 1940 when the Blitz began and between September 1940 and December 1941 over 1,250,000 people were helped by the government to move to safer areas, however many more made their own arrangements to stay with family and friends.

Evacuees left London on trains and arrived at an unknown location tired and hungry. All evacuees wore a name label and carried their gas masks and one small suitcase/bag with their few belongings. The government gave guidance on what a child would need to take with them although not all children would have had all of these items.

The list of items required for evacuees as provided by the government.		
For Boys	For Girls	
2 vests	2 liberty bodices	
2 pairs of underpants	2 vests	
2 shirts	2 pairs of knickers	
2 nightshirts or pairs of pyjamas	2 nightdresses or pairs of pyjamas	
2 pairs of socks	2 pairs of socks or stockings	
2 pairs of boots or shoes	2 pairs of shoes	
1 pair of Wellingtons	1 pair of Wellingtons	
1 warm coat and/or mackintosh	1 warm coat and/or mackintosh	
1 pair of trousers	1 warm dress or tunic/jersey	
1 pullover	1 cardigan	
	2 cotton frocks	
For both boys and girls		
6 handkerchiefs	1 toothbrush	1 face flannel
1 comb	2 towels	Teddy bear/rag doll
Gas mask	Identity card	Ration book
Clothing & personal coupons	Pocket money (6d [2½p])	Food for 1 day

Once the evacuees had arrived a “pick your own evacuee” session began where people chose which child or children they would take home, for example farmers would choose the strongest, healthiest looking boys and housewives would choose the cleanest children.

Anyone who had a spare room had to take an evacuee and they were called billetors. The government paid these billetors 10s 6d (52½p) for taking a child

and another 8s 6d (42½p) per child if they took in more than one child.

Many of the children came from the inner cities, with homes that lacked basic amenities like indoor plumbing and other items that we take for granted now. Research suggests that approximately 50% of evacuated children had fleas and head lice and around 5% lacked proper toilet training. There were also reports of foul language and thieving. All of these factors caused difficult transitions for all involved with many evacuees returning home. However many people do have fond memories of being evacuated.