

Evacuation of Children and Women during World War 2



*How do you think the children are feeling in the photo above?
What do you think they have packed in their bags?*

What is evacuation?

Evacuation means leaving a place. 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.

1. 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.



2. 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.

3. 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 evacuate from London. This new way of attacking Britain carried on until the end of the war in Europe in **May 1945**.

Message from a visitor to this page:

" I found your notes on evacuation very helpful as I am writing my memoirs of my own wartime schooling and evacuation. Many people don't realise that most London children like myself spent much of the war sheltering in bomb shelters, and were only evacuated the year before the war ended (because of the new threat from the V2 rockets). Well done for your thorough research!"
Alec

Sir John Anderson (a member of the House of Commons and placed in charged of Air Raid Precautions or ARP) divided the UK into three areas:

1. **Evacuation** – areas where heavy bombing was expected.
2. **Neutral** – areas that would not need to send or receive evacuees.
3. **Reception** – rural areas where evacuees would be sent.

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.