

Evacuees arrive in Mid-Sussex- children

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Making the evacuees in Mid-Sussex feel at home

Arrangements for Welfare and Education of Children

The huge new population of evacuees which Mid-Sussex has absorbed is beginning to settle down. Reports from the various districts state that billeting has been completed, though in some cases re-distribution became necessary.

Community canteens and hospitals are working satisfactorily, welfare committees are now active, and the authorities have in hand arrangements for educating the children.

From all sides come human and often humorous stories of the experiences of evacuees and householders accommodating them, and equally numerous are the expressions of appreciation from teachers and mothers of the warm-hearted receptions they and the children have had.

"We can't speak too highly of the kindness we have experienced," is what many evacuees approached have said, using more or less the same words. They are delighted that it has fallen to their lot to be billeted in such a beautiful district.

One of the beneficial effects of the scheme will be an improvement in the health of the evacuees. Already, after a week in the Sunny South, the pale faces of the town children have a more healthy appearance.

"Generally speaking, the reception has been wonderful," say the teachers. Mr A. Grove (Head Master of St Matthew's School) pointed out that one patent difficulty is the different conditions in which some of the children are living. A number in "posh" houses feel that they are in "gilded cages" and are getting homesick.

Four children of a London painter are billeted in Haywards Heath - two boys in one home and two girls separately in other homes. The three householders have arranged for the children to have periodical tea parties at each house.

Mr T. Brennan of St Joseph's School, Croydon, is living in the Village with a number of his children, and says "Everybody is most kind, and the children are wonderfully well treated."

Mr. Brennan points out that one of the greatest difficulties the teachers have to contend with is the scattered billets. Some of the children are a mile or two away and some are at Fulking and Poynings.

How this difficulty can be surmounted for educational purposes was the subject of conferences between London and local Head Teachers at the Haywards Heath Senior Council School last week.....

In the meantime, the teachers of the evacuated schools are doing everything possible to exercise control over their scattered children. Take the scholars of the Senrab Junior Mixed School, for instance. Each morning Miss Howls, the Head Teacher, and her assistants meet the children in Victoria Park at half-past ten for games and other recreation.

They know where each child is billeted, and every evening the billets are visited to ensure that the children are off the streets at seven o'clock.

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945

EVACUEES

The Henry Fawcett School adjoins the famous Kennington Oval, and the boy scholars are keen cricketers. They are in love with Lindfield Common, and are good mixers with the local lads. Already they are calling each other by their Christian names.

From a talk with some of the boys, we gather they are proving most helpful. They have been weeding gardens and cutting grass, as well as making their beds, running errands for their hostesses, helping to wash up, and gathering blackberries for tarts.

"It is lovely down here, and much better and safer than London" was the observation of one lad, who seemed to have voiced the feelings of all his pals.

Miss Webb, Head Mistress of the Girls' Department of the Henry Fawcett School, described the reception as marvellous. "People have been unbelievably kind, and for goodness' sake put in our expression of deep gratitude to Lindfield people for their hospitality."

Miss Webb spent the weekend of her arrival making sure of the whereabouts of her girls, and ascertained that some of them were in Haywards Heath. These have been meeting each day on the Haywards Heath Recreation Ground, in the care of a teacher.

"We have been having open-air arithmetic lessons, as well as speech work, physical training work and nature walks," proceeded Miss Webb, who also mentioned that country dancing and community singing were being included in the activities.

The girls are emulating the boys, and are giving assistance wherever they can.

Miss Watts, Head Mistress of the Lewisham Bridge Infants' School.....said the children were being treated excellently. There were one or two complaints of children being rough, but these were only to be expected. She spoke highly of the way the teachers had worked to get the children down there and to ensure that they were adequately equipped with clothing.....

Here is what nine-year-old Mary Morris of Lewisham says: "I like Burgess Hill because of the fields. We haven't any fields at home and no blackberry bushes".

Evacuated children at Burgess Hill are fortunate in the outdoor facilities they have at their disposal.....St John's Park has been looking more like Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday than the beautiful recreation ground which is Burgess Hill's chief pride. And the litter ! - well, perhaps we had better not say any more about that !

One of the most popular of Mid-Sussex rendezvous is the Adastra Ground, Hassocks, which now teems daily with East End mothers and children. To the children in particular the ground is a seventh heaven, and their delight at having a wide expanse of grass to play on is plainly evident,

The youth of Hassocks are doing their share of making the young evacuees happy. Football and cricket matches between the local and London boys have been arranged, and keen, good-natured rivalry has sprung up.

The Londoners have brought to the district a game rarely if ever played by the local children - rounders. For the uninitiated, this is a modified form of American baseball, played with a tennis ball and anything that serves for the purpose of a bat. In playgrounds where this game is the rage among children the bases are marked by coats. At Hassocks the bases are marked by clusters of gas masks !

.....A "double shift" system has been inaugurated in the Council School.....During the current week the evacuated children are being taught at the school in the morning, and the "native" children in the afternoon. Next week, Hassocks children will be taught in the morning and the London children in the afternoon, and so on.

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Among the evacuation juveniles in Mid-Sussex are 170 boys in blue-and-white blazers and caps from St Joseph's College, a Roman Catholic Secondary School in West Norwood. The majority are in Haywards Heath, with small parties at Bolney, Ansty and Cuckfield. Their twelve masters who have come with them are known as Christian Brothers.

In view of the number of Jewish children who are billeted in homes where the preparation of food in the Jewish fashion is impossible, the announcement made on the radio on behalf of the Chief Rabbi is of great importance. Referring to Jewish refugees, Dr Hertz said: "In a national emergency such as the present, all that is required of them is to refrain from forbidden meat and shellfish."

Every Saturday morning the Hassocks Council School is turned into a Synagogue, services being conducted for the Jewish children from London. Special Jewish festival services are being held next Thursday and Friday, when the school will be closed to London children of other faiths.

The service for the eve of the Jewish New Year tomorrow (Wednesday) must end half-an-hour before the official black-out time. On the Day of Atonement, the Shofar will not be sounded to mark the end of the fast, as the service will end in the synagogues at 6.30 and the fast ends at 7.87pm. In case of an air raid warning during the services the minister will ask those who live nearby to go home, and will indicate to those who remain the place of the nearest public shelter. Old men, women and children are asked to pray at home.

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