

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945

EVACUEES

Organising evacuees in West Wittering ¹

From the *West Wittering Women's Institute Village Scrapbook*.

By L. F. Ramsey.

1939

On the last day of August, my doorbell rang from morning till night. Vanloads of food arrived at the Memorial Hall where, on the first of September, sixty-five school children arrived during the morning. We had a fleet of cars waiting in the lane to take the children to their foster parents and they were all accommodated by two o'clock.

That night we blacked out our windows, little dreaming that five-and-a-half years would pass before we should see lights in the village again.

Next day, 'bus loads of mothers and babies arrived. Some of them had started at 5 a.m. and though the infants had slept, the toddlers were worn out. We had much more difficulty in billeting that day and even had to send the policeman with some of the mothers. But we had our heroines. One householder took a mother and five children under five and this was one of our outstanding successes.

The G.P.S. camp was opened as a temporary hospital, for some of the children were suffering from scabies and other troubles. For a week, the billeting officer and I were at the hall each day, re-billeting, dealing with all sorts of difficulties. Several of the mothers went home.

Most of the school children settled down with their foster parents. The work entailed was considerable. There was no day without its problem...dirty heads, impetigo, bed-wetting, mothers and babies who gave trouble in their billets.

The first eight months of the war were occupied chiefly with evacuation problems. The billeting officer, Mr. George Kewell, co-operated with me in every possible way and was the greatest help but he had a difficult task.

1942

In November, the last of our evacuee mothers of 1939 went back to London.

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¹ A full account of *WVS war work in West Wittering* can be found in course section 'Women at war - volunteer work'.