World War Two evacuees tales

A Peak District-based author has released a series of Derbyshire stories from World War Two evacuees.

Gillian Mawson, of Whaley Bridge, has collected stories from 100 people who spent the war years as evacuees in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

In her research, Gillian came across some stories that relate to Derbyshire.

June Somerski was evacuated to Winstead and recalls: “Miss Smith was somewhat older than my grandmother, but she was very kind and I grew to love her.

However, the problem was a much larger lady who used to shout, “You feller now, you give ‘em widers.”

With hindsight I think she had Tourette’s Syndrome.

but we were terrified and thought we were staying with witches.”

“We got on the train with a gas mask and lunch”

Dorothy Reynolds, aged 16, was evacuated to High Peak, in June 1940. She told Gillian: “We were on the train to Chapel-en-le-Frith station, with one piece of luggage, lunch and a gas mask.

We were in women’s uniform and it was a very hot day.

On arrival we were welcomed with tea and sandwiches in the Constitution Hall, then our heads and throats were inspected by nurses.

Some girls were found hidden in Chapel, whilst others went to Cheviot.

Here we saw the notice “Please all you come to the Women’s Institute at 2 p.m. to coffee these poor children homes.”

Doreen Mom, aged nine, was evacuated with Westleigh Junior School in Eves to Kinworth, near Ashbourne, and was then moved to Chapel-on-le-Frith.

She told Gillian: “Twelve children, mostly brothers and sisters, were gathered in the school hall where property lists were assembled.

I had a label around my neck saying ‘brother to follow’, have chickens per.”

This meant I was left till last and went home with Marjorie and her mother.

Unfortunately, next morning Marjorie was found to have German measles.

I was immediately taken to a child’s home in Hartington.

Imagine the shock, horror of a child, the first time away from home.”
les from across the county

'The war did us a favour as they were marvellous'

Mary and VI Draper were sent from Lowritt to Chesterfield and Mary recalls: "We lost our Mum, and our Dad was in the Home Guard. Mr and Mrs Bacon took us into their home. They had no children and practically became our Mum and Dad until the day they died. "The war really did us a favour because they were marvellous to us."

Family flea Belgium in 1940

The Nicholls family (ignore parents, parents and children) fled Belgium to England in May 1940.

Most of the family settled in Hereford, but the grandparents, Ernest and Mary Louise Nicholls, stayed with relatives in Derbyshire because Ernest had been born there. Marie Louise died in 1941 and was buried in Spital Cemetery. Gillian recently visited her great-grandmother there. The rest of the family, except for Ernest, returned to Belgium after the war.

her to follow, has chicken pox!'

On the third day our headmaster found us and somehow my mother and brother appeared. Gillian said that Derek was asked to stay in the village to keep an eye on the evacuees and this she did... "I passed my scholarship and moved to Westcott High School which had been evacuated to Chapel for six weeks. I lived happily with two sisters, the Moxes Wright.

My last meal was memorable for all the wrong reasons - tripes and onions, in a thick white sauce. I had never had tripes before and was quite unable to eat it."

'I was given dolls and jelly and custard'

Doreen Hoxton was evacuated from Manchester to Macclesfield. She told Gillian: "A nice couple took me in because my name was Doreen, the same as their little girl. "They treated me very well, bought me dolls and made me jelly and custard because I hated rice pudding."

"I was given dolls and jelly and custard"