



Churchill's Children: The Evacuee Experience in Wartime Britain

John Welshman

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'We were dumped at a roundabout with our labels on. People pulled and tugged at the children they wanted. It was a bit like a cattle market... people just waded in. I went with a lady and her daughter - she was like a second Mum.'

Alexander King, evacuated aged eleven

Based on the stories of thirteen children and adults, Churchill's Children tells the often moving story of the evacuation of schoolchildren in Britain during the Second World War, from the first mass evacuations of 1939 through to the lesser-known but equally important evacuations of 1940 and 1944.

John Welshman skilfully captures the experience of evacuation - the happiness or sadness, excitement or boredom, resentment or acceptance, love or abuse that the children experienced during their time away from home. Along the way, the book addresses some of the fundamental questions raised by evacuation. How were relationships between children and parents affected by the long periods apart? What happened when brothers and sisters were separated? And how did the children feel when they went home?

But the book looks at the adults too - at how the officials in charge of billeting and teachers got caught up in events, and at how civil servants and researchers became involved in the ensuing debates. As Welshman shows, the evacuation was to have a significant impact on shaping attitudes in the post-war world to everything from reconstruction and state intervention to poverty, social class, and the welfare state. However, the analysis aside, what this book perhaps offers above all is a highly evocative portrait of a very different Britain, reminding us just how much has changed in the seventy years since the Second World War.

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