



# EVACUATION *When did evacuation start in Britain?*

## Source 1

### Evacuation of Children from Great Britain.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (40) 189th Conclusions, Minute 7.)

1. *The Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security* said that the sinking of the *Arandora Star* had raised the question whether ships carrying children to North America under the Government scheme should be escorted. When the scheme had first been started, it had been thought that the children could go in unescorted ships, but it had been emphasised that parents, before deciding to send their children to the States, must choose between the risks involved in the sea voyage and the risks of remaining in this country.

In discussion it was generally agreed that in present circumstances it was impossible to allow children to be sent overseas under the Government scheme in unescorted ships. A number of children, sent overseas under private arrangements, would no doubt be sailing in unescorted ships, and there was no reason to interfere with this.

*The First Lord of the Admiralty* said that in present circumstances it was impossible to provide more than a token escort for these ships without seriously interfering with our anti-invasion arrangements.

### Overseas Evacuation.

(Previous Reference:

W.M. (40) 224th

6. *The Prime Minister* referred to the sinking of the *City of Benares* with the loss of a number of women and children. He was anxious that the scheme for evacuating children overseas should now be discontinued.

### Evacuation of Children from Great Britain Overseas.

11. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Minister of Home Security covering the Report of an Interdepartmental Committee under the Chairmanship of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dominions Office, on the arrangements for enabling children to be sent to places of greater safety overseas (W.P. (G.) (40) 152).

*The Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security* explained that the Report of the Committee, for which he and his colleagues were greatly indebted to Mr. Shakespeare, set out a plan for organising the evacuation of school children to the Dominions and to the United States of America. Many offers to take children for the duration of the war had been received from the overseas Dominions with the approval of the Governments concerned, and similar offers had been received from private organisations in the United States of America. The action to be taken was set out on pages 10 and 11 of the Report, which, if the War Cabinet approved, should be brought into operation forthwith.



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## Source 2

Copy of letter the eldest daughter of Mrs. E.P. Knight,  
16 Thorntree Street, Edinburgh, whose three daughters have  
been evacuated to Canada.

Mrs. Dalgarno,

380 Brook Street,  
Kingstone,  
Ontario.

Dear Mum and Dad,

I am very happy in Kingstone. The people are so kind, and I like the school. I am at the Collegiate and I am taking a Commercial Course. I am changing once again. I am going to the house of the school teacher [sic] who took us to Ottawa, she's grand and Edna is going some where else [sic]. As the lady we are staying with at the present moment cannot afford to keep two children. You see they are getting no money from the government and its all voluntary. Netta is very happy she is being taught dancing lessons and music lessons, I am going to be taught whatever I want too [sic], and Edna is going to take tap dancing lessons. I was working in a big store on Saturday and I made 1 dollar 75 cents that is about 8/- and I have that all to myself, for pocket money. Not bad eh! But that was because the people were not able to give me spending money. Most likely the house I'm going to will not let me work as they will give me no money but if I ask they will let me and I would like too [sic] because I could do whatever I wanted with that a week.



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I did not make any mistakes with the money it was easy. I love shorthand and typing. The school typewriters have no letters on them but that is the best way to learn. I mean when working in the store I just work the one day 8 a.m. till 8 p.m. on Saturday only so that's class for getting 8/- to \$1-75. I get on fine with the Arithmetic at School, its easy! Miss Cummings the School Teacher is going to buy me my newwinter [sic] coat this afternoon. She has already bought me shoes and Mrs. Dalgarno bought me a gorgeous hat. She has also bought me and Edna Socks [sic] and Miss Cumming I mean has bought us socks and me panties and vests and sweater and frock, so I'm doing well. Just now Edna and I are staying with Mrs Meeachern but write our address to Mrs Dalgarno as that is who Netta is staying with and she is nearer Miss Cummings. I forget Miss Cumming's address. Give my love to everybody Netta and Edna send theirs too. Be brave remember we are safe and happy and leading the kind of life you would like us to lead. Remember these are three little Scots lassies praying for their Mommy and Daddy every night and that Good God is watching over them and you.

Cheerio for the present and keep your chin up. There always bo a Britain.

from the Eldest of your three Daughters

Love from Nancy.

P.S. I am going to a party on Friday.

*Letters and escorts' reports about overseas evacuation 1940*



# EVACUATION *When did evacuation start in Britain?*

Source 2

COPY OF LETTER FROM MISS FLEMING, ESCORT.

COPY

S.S. Bayano,  
August, 1940.

Dear Jean,

Here we are, all aboard at last - poor children, rich children; tall children, small children; shy children, gay children; quiet children, noisy children - diverse by nature but united by circumstance into one large happy family. For some it is the land of dreams come true - they are really sailing in a fine big ship - for all it is a great adventure into the unknown. Boys are already wondering if they can climb up the mast or down the well decks but unfortunately for them - though fortunately for our peace of mind! - that is not allowed. Girls explore to find some corners for their various ploys. They find a piano and soon have it opened. One girl plays while the others gather round to sing. Here and there are groups of boys, one lot finding out the secrets of the ship's inside, another arguing about the different types of ships in the convoy.

Some children amuse themselves with games, others prefer to walk round the decks seeing all there is to see. There always seems to be something interesting happening on a ship. During the evening quieter amusement is sought. Perhaps the chief escort shows us some films - or did someone mention a concert? No lack of talent here! Shy at first but, shyness overcome, many volunteers soon come forward. Our favourite song is a round "We are sailing in a big ship," composed by one of our escorts, which causes the ship's timbers to shake.

Has it been said that modern children cannot amuse themselves? Our charges not only amuse themselves but also the ship's company. I expect you are wondering what the escorts are doing meantime. Well, they are always somewhere about - one joining in the games, one "on guard" to see that no venturesome child climbs on the rails, etc., one telling stories to the 'babes', and perhaps another doing physical jerks. During meals we are on duty to help the little ones and also to explain the mysteries of the array of cutlery! Bedtime comes and the babes have to be washed or bathed and tucked into their bunks, the older children following later - then peace, perfect peace.

Talking of baths, which are usually disliked, especially by boys - these prove very popular because the children have a 'real sailor's' bath in salt water.

*Letters and escorts' reports about overseas evacuation 1940*



# EVACUATION

*When did evacuation start in Britain?*

Source 2

S.S. "VOLLENDAM"

COPY OF REPORT FROM MISS CROWE, ESCORT.

C. O. R. B.

Friday, Aug. 30th, 1940.

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At 11 p.m. on 30 Aug., 1940, I was writing in my cabin - fully dressed luckily - when I heard the torpedo strike the ship. There was no mistaking what it was. (About 15 minutes earlier I heard a torpedo strike another ship but did not realize what it was at the time. I wish I had - because, if so, I could have warned "authority" and probably saved a few minutes.) Fortunately "my" children were practically next door to me so I seized my life belt, coat and thick shoes, and ran to waken them and put on their coats. By this time the stewards were all helping and within a very few minutes we were at our boat stations. The lights had gone out so we were dependent on torches. The life boats were rapidly lowered and I think the getting away safely in them was the most miraculous thing. The manning of the boats was the weakest part - nobody was in command and there was much confusion - everybody shouting contradictory orders in foreign tongues. Mercifully the sea was comparatively calm and after rowing for about 1½ hours we were safely put aboard a small oil tanker of 2000 tons. Being such a small boat it was fairly easy to get the children over its rails to safety. The crew of the Basset Hound were simply splendid. They gave us hot coffee, blankets and their very cabins. I cannot speak too highly of all they did for us in very trying circumstances.

*Letters and escorts' reports about overseas evacuation 1940*



# EVACUATION *When did evacuation start in Britain?*

Source 3

COPY

## Chaplain's Report

on the evacuation of children to New Zealand.

I reported for duty at Liverpool on August 23rd. That evening we (the Escorts) met in conference, and discussed the various problems and details of the voyage. Our party consisted of Chief Escort and Assistant, two Chaplain-Escorts (R.C. and C.E.), Doctor and 2 Nurses, 7 Escorts and an entertainer.

We embarked on the R.M.S. Rangitata on Wednesday 28th August, and left Liverpool early the following morning. We were in convoy, and next to the Dutch ship Volundam which was conveying a large number of children to Canada.

On the night of Friday (30th) the convoy was attacked by U boats. A torpedo narrowly missed us and struck the Volundam. We were ordered to take all our children to their boat stations, where we remained all that night. Our ship was manouvered out of the convoy. Next morning there was not a ship to be seen and we crossed the Atlantic alone. For several nights the children slept on the floor of their boat station, (the 1st class lounge). The children behaved splendidly during this critical time. There was no sign of alarm or panic. I took prayers with them each evening.

The following day I took a party of 50 children to Auckland. We were accompanied by several local officials. About 30 of the children were going to relatives in various parts of the island. Most of the children were collected in Auckland, but I took several to places further North. The remaining 20 were allocated to homes in Auckland. There were 1,000 applications for them, so the local committee had some difficulty in deciding to whom they should go. Great care was taken to place children in homes with a congenial environment, e.g the son of a policeman was, if possible, placed in a policeman's home, and so on. I saw some of the homes, and have returned to England quite convinced that the children are well and happily placed.

*Chaplain's Report 1940*



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Source 4

I.O.R.B. Z.2. PARTY.

R.M.S. Rangitata

19.  
312

## CHIEF ESCORT'S REPORT.

The lesson period for each day lasts for two hours daily, nine thirty to eleven thirty each morning. The period is divided into four sections of twenty five minutes each, five minutes being allowed between classes for the journey between 'classrooms'. The children were divided into four groups.

Class 1.	Children	5,6, and 7 years.	also	8 years.
"	2.	"	9,10	" 11 "
"	3.	Girls	12 years	and over.
"	4.	Boys	12	" " "

This grouping worked very satisfactorily, and the children were happy in their work.

Classes were formed for the study of sewing, drawing, dancing, diction, history and geography, which last included some New Zealand history and information about Panama and Pitcairn Island.

It was not possible to form the classes until the seventh day of the voyage, but by the time classes were commenced the children were ready to fall into their regular routine and settled down immediately to work. Their pleasure in their work was enhanced by the fact that a part of their lesson time was devoted to rehearsals for a Concert which they gave to the passengers during the last week of the . The passengers have been greatly interested in the progress of the children, and after the Concert we were the recipients of numerous congratulations on the work which they displayed.

*Chief Escort's Report 1940*