

Department of Humanities, Northumbria University

Honours Dissertation

**“They call this spring, Mum, and they have one here every
year.”¹**

**An Examination of the Evacuation Experience of Tyneside
Schoolchildren 1939-1945**

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¹An evacuated child explaining his shock revelation after his move to the countryside in Richard Titmuss, *History of the Second World War: Problems of Social Policy* (London: H.M.S.O, 1950), p.182.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARP – Air Raid Precautions

BEA- British Evacuee Association

BOE- Board of Education

BRO- Berwick Record Office

CID – Committee of Imperial Defence

HO- Home Office

LEA- Local Education Authorities

MH- Ministry of Health

MOWD- Mass Observation War Diaries

NPAC- Newcastle Public Assistance Committee

NRO- Northumberland Record Office

TWAS- Tyne and Wear Archive

INTRODUCTION

At 11:00 a.m. on 31 August 1939, the Ministry of Health gave the single order to ‘evacuate forthwith’.¹ The following day, school children from Britain’s major industrial areas boarded the trains to be evacuated to the comparative safety of the countryside. Tyneside specialised in shipbuilding and armament productions and, therefore, was one of the major industrial areas. An estimated 206,500 children were evacuated from Newcastle, Gateshead, Tynemouth, Wallsend and North and South Shields.² Reported as the ‘greatest moment of Tyneside history’, the evacuation scheme has remained for many Geordies a part of Tyneside wartime history.³ Fictional literature which features the evacuation such as *Goodnight Mister Tom* and *Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* presents the evacuation in an idealistic view.⁴ The literature promotes the evacuation as saving the evacuated children from their unfortunate home lives, or, as a fun family adventure. Due to the popularity of this literature, many of the generations after the evacuees associate the evacuation within popular memory.

However, a movement of such proportions surely had a direct social impact. This dissertation will examine the experiences of evacuated schoolchildren from Tyneside. Women and children under two years old were also part of the evacuation. However, the focus of this dissertation is on the evacuation of school children, allowing for a more focused examination of the experiences of evacuation. The evacuation of school children was on such a large scale, therefore, to also include women in the examination would complicate

¹ Martin. L Parsons, *“I’ll Take That One” Dispelling the Myths of Civilian Evacuation 1939-1945* (Peterborough: Beckett Karlson, 1998), preface.

² Berwick Record Office (BRO): 794/62/5 ‘Government Evacuation Scheme’, Ministry of Health Circular 37/5 “Linking of Evacuation and Reception Areas for an Organised Evacuation”, June 1939.

³ ‘And so Begins the Great Evacuation’, *Newcastle Courant*, 1st September 1939.

⁴ Michelle Magorian, *Goodnight Mister Tom* (New York: Viking Press, 1981); C.S Lewis, *Narnia: Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950).

the examination of the experiences of the child and adult. The dissertation will challenge the idealistic views of the literature and examine the complex interactions between the evacuees and their rural hosts. By doing this, the dissertation will aim to answer several questions: Why was the evacuation experience different for Tyneside evacuees? How did the welfare of the evacuees impact on their evacuation experience? And how did the impact of evacuation on the educational system impact their evacuation experience? What this dissertation will offer is an examination of the experience of evacuation. It is important to remember that evacuation was a huge part of someone's life and shaped many people's childhoods. Furthermore, the evacuation also had three phases. The most well-known evacuation was in September 1939. Further waves of evacuation occurred in the Blitz of September 1940 and again in the June 1944. This dissertation will focus on the evacuation of 1939 because of the wide range of material available for that evacuation.

Despite its importance to popular memory, surprisingly little is written on the evacuation. One of the first materials written on the evacuation was Richard Titmuss's, *Problems of Social Policy*.⁵ Published in 1950, it provides the most comprehensive work on the social consequences of the evacuation. However, Titmuss's work focuses on the contribution of evacuation to the creation of the welfare state and, therefore, does not allow for an examination of the evacuation experience. Interest for the evacuation was stimulated again in 1969, with the publication of Angus Calder's, *The People's War*.⁶ Calder's work, although providing a considerable amount of attention to the planning of the evacuation scheme, does not give attention to the experience of evacuation. Calder's work also pays more attention to the reactions of the evacuation planners when the children arrived in the reception area and not the reaction of the evacuees. Thus, the work does not

⁵ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*.

⁶ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Trinity Press, 1969).

explore the experiences of the evacuation. However, Calder's contribution to the evacuation historiography is necessary, yet it is provided in small sections of the wider period 1939-1945. Earlier works such as B.S Johnson's *The Evacuees* tend to focus on the private evacuation of middle-class children.⁷ As such, a class bias can be seen within the historiography, as there is no mention of the evacuated working-class children and, therefore, no acknowledgement of the government evacuation scheme. Revisionist historian Travis Crosby's, *The Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, challenged the idealistic view of evacuation and explored the tensions between evacuees and their hosts.⁸ However, Crosby's work focused mostly on negatives and disregarded the variation of experiences. The most recent historiography, which focuses exclusively on the evacuation, is more narrative than academic. For instance, John Welshman's *Churchill's Children* attempted to 'combine the narrative of the child with the proactive voice of the historian.'⁹ By doing so, the work is often impressionistic and lacks an examination into why the experiences varied. Furthermore, apart from Welshman, who examines the evacuation experience of Manchester and Birmingham, most of the existing academic studies tend to focus on the London area. Extensive research for the London area is not surprising since it sent the largest amount of evacuees. As a result of this, a geographical imbalance can be seen within the existing historiography, meaning that provincial cities like those in Tyneside to be neglected from previous works.

It would be fair to say that there is relatively little written on the evacuation experience of Tyneside children. One instance which discusses the evacuation scheme in Tyneside is Craig Armstrong's, *Tyneside in the Second World War*.¹⁰ So far, this is the only place found to have done this. Armstrong identifies the popularity of the evacuation scheme

⁷ B.S Johnson, *The Evacuees* (London: Gollancz, 1968).

⁸ Travis Crosby, *The Impact of Civilian Evacuation in the Second World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

⁹ John Welshman, *Churchill's Children: The Evacuee experience in Wartime Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.11.

¹⁰ Craig Armstrong, *Tyneside in the Second World War* (West Sussex: Phillimore & Co Ltd, 2007).

in Tyneside but stresses the fact that his work is only a case study.¹¹ Thus, this dissertation aims to develop on the current academia by adopting a focused examination on the evacuation of Tyneside children. Additionally, because the impact of war varied a great deal from place to place, historian P.H.J.H Gosden has stressed the need for local studies.¹² Gosden, however, does not adopt a localised study and leaves a gap in the existing historiography for a localised study of the evacuation.

One of the main historiographical debates on the evacuation is its impact on post-war social reform; the view that the evacuation promoted a movement between societies leading to the completion of social reforms of post-war Britain. The intrusion of urban children in rural communities would emphasise the gap between rural and urban lifestyles, spurring many to advocate social legislation. This view can be seen to have influenced many historians who have studied the evacuation. The earlier works of Titmuss stressed that the evacuation was a 'revolution' in the social structure of Britain.¹³ Furthermore, historian Arthur Marwick has also stressed that the evacuation was one of the most important experiences of the war. For the first time, rural hosts became conscious of the unacceptable conditions common in the urban cities and, so, stimulating new social reform.¹⁴ According to Titmuss and Marwick's interpretations, the evacuation had an important role in breaking down historic class distinctions during the war. Crosby, although challenging the idealistic view of the evacuation also cultivates the same argument. Moreover, as much of the previous academic studies have concentrated on how far the experiences influenced wartime social policy, this means that relatively little focus on the personal experiences of

¹¹ Ibid. p.xiii.

¹² P.H.J.H Gosden, *Education in the Second World War: A Study Policy and Administration* (Cambridge: Methuen & Co LTD, 1976), p.3.

¹³ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p. 3.

¹⁴ Arthur Marwick, *The Home Front* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p.75.

the evacuation. It will become evident in this dissertation why many historians have dedicated their work on evacuation to the social reform in post-war Britain.

Because little secondary materials are available for the evacuation, this dissertation uses a substantial source of primary documents. A great deal of the evidence for this dissertation can be owed to Richard Padley and Margaret Cole's *Evacuation Survey*.¹⁵ The study by Padley and Cole discusses the history of evacuation and also addresses the problems that arose under the evacuation scheme, particularly on the matters of education. However, the study was prepared during the winter and spring of 1939-1940, thus, only explores the problems visible at present. Additionally, another key primary source for this dissertation is *The Snoring of a Thousand Men*, edited by Ruth Lesser.¹⁶ The book, which contains memoirs of people who were children during the war, presents us with material that is subjective making it a central primary source.

Chapter one will focus on the preliminary stage of the evacuation, the planning and the implementation from a national and local perspective. The chapter has two sections. The first section considers the planning of the government evacuation scheme, which is necessary for one to understand the planning in Tyneside. The section, predominantly written through the primary source, The Report of the Committee on Evacuation, is an attempt to provide a unique insight into the mechanics of the evacuation. The second section will consider the planning and implementation of the evacuation scheme in Tyneside. This section is mainly written through primary sources, and most evidence comes from the

¹⁵ Richard Padley and Margaret Cole (eds), *Evacuation Survey: A Report to the Fabian Society* (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, 1940).

¹⁶ Ruth Lesser, (ed), *The Snoring of a Thousand Men and Other tales of Wartime Childhoods* (Newcastle: Newcastle University of the Third Age, 2009).

folder, Evacuation in the Event of a War, located at Tyne and Wear Archives.¹⁷ This chapter will essentially provide the backdrop to the dissertation.

Chapters Two and Three both concern the issues neglected in the planning of the evacuation. Chapter Two focuses on the welfare of the evacuated children in the reception areas. This chapter will address the issues that affected the well-being of the evacuees and how this impacted on their evacuation experience. Unlike the first chapter, the topic of chapter two has a strong secondary source base. However, what makes this dissertation chapter unique is because it is, so far, the first to examine the welfare of the evacuees from Tyneside. Thus, the chapter also has a rich primary source base. The primary sources used in this chapter are: letters, diaries, newspapers, council reports, and memoirs as this chapter will predominantly analyse the complexity of the interactions between the urban children and rural hosts. But how accurate are the descriptions of evacuation? How well did the urban evacuees interact with their rural hosts? Did all urban evacuees have the same relationship with their hosts? The division between the evacuees and their hosts will be the overarching theme in this chapter.

Chapter Three will analyse the educational system in the reception and evacuation areas; how did evacuation affect the education of children and vice versa? This chapter, similar to chapter one, has little secondary material. Therefore, this dissertation chapter is written solely on the primary source available, with the slight exception of certain secondary material to emphasise certain points. Most information in this chapter is owed to Padley and Cole's *Evacuation Survey*, and their impressive study on how the evacuation had affected the

¹⁷ TWAS: DX385/5, Evacuation in the Event of a War Emergency, 1939.

education of the evacuees.¹⁸ Ultimately this chapter will assess the education under the evacuation scheme and how this impacted on the child's experience of the evacuation.

¹⁸ Padley and Cole (eds), *Evacuation Survey*.

CHAPTER ONE

The Planning and Implementation of the Evacuation Scheme from a National and Local Perspective

When exploring the planning and implementation of the evacuation policy, it is imperative to remember that no one, in or out of the government 1918-1939, knew that another world war was possible.¹ This chapter will explore the planning and implementation of the evacuation policy in Tyneside and will aim to fill a gap in the existing historiography. Before an examination of the planning and implementation of the evacuation scheme in Tyneside, consideration must first be given to the planning of the nationwide evacuation scheme developed by the government. We will then explore the planning and implementation of the evacuation scheme in Tyneside. The planning of the government evacuation scheme would provide the basic principles, for which the local governments of Tyneside would base their evacuation scheme on. The examination will use the primary sources that are available. However, a selective group of secondary material will be used to emphasise certain points. Fundamentally, what we will find is that the attention of evacuation planners both nationally and locally predominantly focused on the evacuation being a military expedient. As a result of this, problems such as the welfare and the education of the evacuees were neglected in the planning. Thus, what will become clear is that evacuation was more than just a military expedient and from the first day of September 1939 it was a problem of administrative planning.²

A pivotal secondary work for this chapter is Richard Titmuss's, *Problems of Social Policy*, which gives a detailed account of the planning of the government evacuation scheme.

¹ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p.87.

² Ibid.

³ However, it would be fair to say that little, if nothing, has been written on the planning and implementation of the evacuation scheme in Tyneside. Craig Armstrong's, *Tyneside in the Second World War*, focuses mostly on the reactions to the evacuation and, therefore, does not examine the planning and implementation of the evacuation scheme in the county.⁴ Nevertheless, through the secondary material that concerns the planning and implementation of the government evacuation scheme and the contemporary sources which are available: newspapers, memoirs, diaries, council reports and leaflets, it *is* possible to examine the planning and implementation of the evacuation policy in Tyneside.

The Planning of the Governmental Evacuation Policy

The planning for evacuation was rooted in the experiences of the First World War. German raids resulted in the death of fourteen hundred civilians.⁵ It took little time to acknowledge how deadly aerial attack could be and it would be a prominent feature of a future war. But how would the British government protect its civilians from an aerial attack? Protection could be achieved simply by shooting the bombers down. However, British air defence was not strong enough to protect against *all* aerial attack.⁶ Winston Churchill stated that with 9 million people concentrated in the London metropolitan area, the consequences of an air bombardment would be catastrophic.⁷ Furthermore, the government also feared that the public's response to bombing would be to move quickly from the dangerous areas into the safer zones. If so, the mass movement of people would send panic across the nation and the morale of the British populace would be hindered. A systematic movement of civilians was a

³ Ibid.

⁴ Armstrong, *Tyneside in the Second World War*.

⁵ Calder, *The Peoples War*, p.21.

⁶ Winston Churchill, Commons Sitting, 28th November 1934, Vol.295, Col.823-984.

⁷ Ibid.

better solution; by breaking up the population, death could be considerably reduced and panic minimised.⁸

The fear of bombing in densely populated areas and the fear of mass panic led to civil defence planning, with an emphasis on evacuation taken up by the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID). The CID was an authoritative body who had the power to set up sub-committees to research a particular issue.⁹ In 1924, the CID established the Air Raid Precautions Sub-Committee (ARP). The ARP was created to review Britain's civil defence policy, with emphasis on the difficulties that would be presented by air raids. The Chairman of the ARP was Sir John Anderson, Permanent under Secretary of State for the Home Department. The ARP's role, as Anderson believed, was to coordinate an organised civil defence plan.¹⁰ In the early stages of its investigation, the ARP's attention was given to the estimations of the damage a future war would have on British society. The ARP estimated that there would be fifty casualties per one tonne of bombs; a calculation based on the air raids of 1917-1918.¹¹ Conclusively, the ARP estimated that an enemy attack would exert maximum strength at the beginning of war, and London would be the first to be hit.¹² In the wake of these estimations, it is hardly surprising that the ARP stressed the military concern for the effects of extensive bombing on civilian morale. Thus, evacuation in the primary stages of planning can be seen to be 'simply and solely as a military expedient'.¹³ Evacuation can be seen as a military expedient because evacuating civilians would be a counter-move to the enemy's objective of destroying the morale of the civilian population. Nevertheless,

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Franky Arthur Johnson, "Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence 1885-1959", *International Affairs*, Vol. 27, Issue. 228, April 1961, pp. 749-752, p.749.

¹⁰ John Wheeler-Bennett, *John Anderson: Viscount Waverly* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1962), p.198.

¹¹ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p.13.

¹² T.H O'Brien, *History of the Second World War: Civil Defence* (London: H.M.S.O, 1955), p.12.

¹³ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p.23.

based on this belief an emphasis was put on the role that evacuation would play in the bigger picture of civil defence.

The CID placed the evacuation scheme under the Home Office (HO): the ministerial department responsible for security, law and order. Under the HO, the ARP continued to develop the evacuation policy. The ARP worked in secrecy to avoid panic among civilians who would think that the government knew more about a future war than they did. It separated the population into two sections; those that would contribute to the war effort and those who would not. Described as *les bouches inutiles*, (useless mouths), those who did not contribute to the war effort would be moved out of densely populated areas in the event of war.¹⁴

In the leisurely planning stages of the 1920s and early 1930s, all attention was given to evacuation being a counter-move to enemy attack. However, due to the use of aerial bombing in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939 and the political deterioration of Europe, by the summer of 1938, there was a sense of urgency for the completion of the evacuation policy. The ARP published its final report on the evacuation on the 26 July 1938. In this report, the ARP had divided the country up into three areas: evacuation – heavily populated where most bombs were expected to hit; reception- less densely populated which would be safer from enemy bombing; neutral- areas where no bombs and no evacuees were to go. What the ARP concluded was that firstly, school children were to be evacuated on a voluntary basis within their school parties. Secondly, evacuated children would be accommodated in private houses, through the powers of compulsory billeting, where they would be fed and

¹⁴ Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (London: Review, 2005), p.17.

looked after by their rural hosts.¹⁵ In the report, the ARP had stressed that an evacuation of children would present welfare issues such as cleanliness and overall health and wellbeing of the evacuees. The health of the evacuees was of concern to the reception areas because most evacuees were predominantly from the poor urban parts of industrial cities. Many in the reception areas were apprehensive that evacuated city children carried infectious diseases with them.¹⁶ Additionally, educational issues for the evacuees were also presented. As the evacuation was carried out in school parties, it thus meant that the schools would need to be provided with an education facility. However, the government failed to address the issue. As a result, the issues of welfare and education would only be attended to when the evacuees arrived in the reception areas.¹⁷ In the light of this, the government removed evacuation from the CID and was now put under the control of the Ministry of Health (MH) and Board of Education (BOE).

Conclusively, the evacuation in September 1939 had taken considerable steps from its planning in the 1920s. In the first stages of planning, the evacuation scheme was seen as a military tactic to the enemy bomber. An evacuation of children from the densely inhabited areas in an orderly exodus would prevent panic, and thus hinder the enemy's objective of weakening the morale of British civilians. However, the reality of removing children from their home environments presented evacuation planners with social problems such as welfare and education. Thus, evacuation needed to be observed as more than just a military tactic. However, grounded on the belief that an evacuation would prevent panic among civilians, much focus was given to this rather than to the social implications that would

¹⁵John Anderson, Report of Committee on Evacuation: with a covering memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 1937-1938, p.4.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.8.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 16.

appear in the reception areas. These implications would only be attended to when evacuation become a reality.¹⁸

Billeting

In the Anderson Report of 1938 it was settled that under the official evacuation scheme, children would be billeted onto country householders.¹⁹ One rural MP wrote to Anderson stating that “compulsory billeting would be far worse than war itself”.²⁰ Arguably, the statement seems to be an exaggeration; but this exaggeration emphasises the unpopularity of compulsory billeting in the rural areas. Billeting officers in the rural villages, who were largely volunteers, were responsible for finding suitable billets. Billeting allowances helped with the cost of housing the evacuees. Billeted householders received 10s. 6d. a week and the allowances proposed by the government were reported to have been the right amount in many of the billeted households.²¹ Some householders, however, began to see evacuees as merely a source of income.²² In Tyneside, local authorities stressed that parents who could afford to do so would be expected to make a payment towards the cost of their children.²³ Furthermore, the concept of compulsory billeting had a certain degrading element. Through compulsory billeting, rural and urban individuals did not have their feelings taken into account by the government. In some cases, children were billeted in households that did not want them. Thus, the experience of evacuation for some evacuees

¹⁸ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p.40.

¹⁹ Anderson, Report of Committee on Evacuation, p. 6.

²⁰ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p.42.

²¹ F.Le Gros Clark and Richard W. Toms, *Evacuation: Failure or Reform?* (London: Fabian Society, 1940), p. 7.

²² Jrene Taylor, ‘Two Waves of Evacuation’, in Ruth Lesser (ed), *The Snoring of a Thousand Men*, p.23.

²³ TWAS: DX385/5/1, Information leaflet produced by the City Of Newcastle detailing how the evacuation would be carried out.

was not a pleasant experience.²⁴ Billeting, therefore, can be observed as demeaning on those involved because it subjected individuals to the evacuation policy through no power of their free will.²⁵

Conclusively, compulsory billeting in the evacuation scheme was the only reasonable solution to finding suitable accommodation in the short space of time that authorities had to plan in. Alternatives such as specially built camps for the evacuees were impossible to arrange in the time available, and, the cost was too expensive.²⁶ Billeting, therefore, for the government, at least, was a cheap way to accommodate their military expedient. What is visible from the policy of billeting is the government's lack of regard towards the reception areas and again emphasises its attention towards a counter move and not towards the feelings of British civilians.

The Planning of the Evacuation Policy in Tyneside

Evacuation areas in Tyneside included: Newcastle, Gateshead, Wallsend, Tynemouth and North Shields (South Shields did not become an evacuation area until 18 May 1939).²⁷ The ARP had categorised these towns as evacuation areas because their naval ports made them a 'military objective'.²⁸ In the summer of 1938 when war was imminent, the local authorities of the evacuation areas were quick to assure their civilians that emergency measures would be taken for the safety of the children.²⁹ The prospect of war passed, yet, by January 1939, there was a tremendous sense of urgency for evacuation areas to provide a detailed plan for

²⁴ Northumberland Record Office (NRO): 7866/03, 'Kenneth's Story'.

²⁵ Parsons, *"I'll Take That One"*, p.60.

²⁶ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p.12.

²⁷ Armstrong, *Tyneside in the Second World War*, p.47.

²⁸ Anderson, *Report of the Committee on Evacuation*, p. 2.

²⁹ TWAS: DX385/5/2, Letter dated 28th September 1938, From the Education Committee of Newcastle to 'Sir/Madam' regarding the ARP-Emergency Measures in case of war.

evacuation in the event of war. Evacuation application forms were sent out to families so that councils could plan the amount of evacuees that would be evacuated from the dangerous areas.³⁰ Local authorities also emphasised that evacuation was the removal of children from densely populated areas such as Newcastle and Gateshead to less crowded areas such as Durham and Northumberland, where they would be safer from future air raids.³¹ The planning for evacuation, however, did not mean that the government, both local and central, had more information than the public regarding the international situation.³² This statement evidently shows the steps taken by local authorities to stop people gossiping about war and predominantly to avoid panic within its civilians. Additionally, the creation of the evacuation scheme in the Tyneside laid emphasis on the importance of the county to the mechanics of the national evacuation scheme. By organising the evacuation early, the local populace would make a significant contribution to the success of the scheme as better preparations for evacuation would be made in peace than in the apprehension of war.³³ For evacuation to be successful, it needed to be an organised movement. By local authorities in Tyneside organising the evacuation scheme, it would help to achieve a nationally organised movement.

An emphasis was also put on all reception areas to survey all available accommodation for the arrival of evacuees. In the reception area of Morpeth, Northumberland, the ARP had estimated that the area would be able to house two and a half thousand evacuees.³⁴ However, in the survey carried out by Morpeth Council, this

³⁰ Ibid, Evacuation forms to be filled out by the 6th May 1939.

³¹ Ibid, an information leaflet produced by the City of Newcastle which details the evacuation procedure.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ 'Alnwick R.D Defence Speed-Up', *Morpeth Herald*, 28 April 1939.

number was to be corrected to one and a half thousand.³⁵ By conducting their survey, Morpeth Council actively worked to make sure evacuation would be implemented with no problems. If the council had remained with the estimation the ARP had provided, when evacuees did arrive into the reception areas, there would be lots of disorganisation. Disorganisation would lead to panic which would damage the morale of the evacuees. If the morale of the evacuees were damaged, evacuation would not have been a successful military expedient. Nevertheless, by April 1938, Newcastle's ARP Committee had developed concrete plans for the evacuation of all school children from the city to the rural areas.³⁶ Fundamentally, the creation of the evacuation policy in Tyneside can be observed as following the national evacuation scheme of an organised movement of people. The Tyneside evacuation planners gave most of their attention to the planning of the movement and ensuring it was carried out in an organised and calm manner. This meant that little attention was put on the reception areas.

Implementation of the Evacuation Policy in Tyneside

On the 31 August 1939, the Ministry of Health announced that the evacuation of school children from all densely populated areas would begin the following day as a defensive measure to the prolonged tension in Europe.³⁷ Active preparation for the evacuation had been underway since the beginning of August 1939, with Tyneside schools conducting gas mask checks and evacuation rehearsals.³⁸ In the first four days of September, 57% of children were evacuated from Newcastle, and 29% from North Shields, Wallsend and

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Armstrong, *Tyneside in the Second World War*, p.47.

³⁷ 'Plans for Evacuation', *Alnwick Mercury*, 1st September 1939.

³⁸ TWAS: DX212/28, Evacuation cards, Second Day Evacuation, Craigside Council School issued to Mrs M Blechynden for her children by the Newcastle Education Committee in 1939.

Tynemouth. Although a relatively small amount of children arrived for evacuation in Tyneside, the implementation of the evacuation policy was recorded as being a success.³⁹ The distribution of evacuees roughly followed the main railway lines. Those schools that arrived at Durham were deposited to its surrounding villages: Heighinton, Holmside, Barnard Castle, Castleside and Langley Park; those schools that arrived in Northumberland distributed to Berwick, Alnwick, Hexham, Beillingham, Morpeth and Ashington.⁴⁰ The variation of towns and villages which the evacuees were sent to highlights the size of the evacuation scheme. Ultimately, because the evacuees were distributed among many villages, it becomes clear as to why a common evacuation experience cannot be found. With railway stations having up to eight different reception areas attached to them, it is not surprising that the experience of the evacuation varied in Tyneside evacuees.

Local authorities stressed the importance of parents and children remaining calm for evacuation to be successful.⁴¹ The first train left Heaton, Newcastle at 9.40am with six hundred evacuated children on board: its destination was the reception area of Morpeth. Following on from this, six more trains filled with evacuees would leave within the next four hours.⁴² The success of the evacuation, however, varied considerably. The evacuation of school children from Newcastle was recorded to have run like clockwork.⁴³ Gateshead was also reported as being one of the most successful areas for evacuation.⁴⁴ Conversely, the atmosphere that was reported in Newcastle and Gateshead cannot be seen within other parts of the county. In Tynemouth and Wallsend the evacuation of children was not

³⁹ 'Evacuation from Tyneside Begins', *Sunday Sun Newspaper*, 1st September 1939.

⁴⁰ TWAS: DX824/1, Northern Traffic Area: Evacuation scheme, 1938-1950.

⁴¹ TWAS: DX212/28, Evacuation Cards.

⁴² BRO: 794/65/3: Schedule A: Particulars of entraining stations and departure times of trains, local authorities responsible in the reception areas, allocations of schools in trains, 3rd May 1939.

⁴³ 'Tyneside Children Evacuate', *Sunday Sun Newspaper*, 1st September 1939.

⁴⁴ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p.103.

completed until several days after the war had begun, thus showing that evacuation was not as well planned as its neighbouring evacuation areas.⁴⁵ Conclusive of these findings, the variation of evacuation success in Tyneside highlights of the ambiguous nature of evacuation. The conflicting success within the county emphasises that the course of the war and indeed human behaviour was unpredictable. Even on the 1 September, many people regarded war as a 'potentially awaiting event'.⁴⁶ Therefore, the unpredictable behaviour of humans could account for why only 29% of evacuees from Tynemouth, North Shields and Wallsend arrived for evacuation. It is, therefore, imperative to remember this when examining the evacuation experience in the local as you cannot predict human behaviour.

Conclusion

The attention of evacuation planners both locally and nationally was focused on the evacuation being a counter-move to aerial attack. Because of this, issues of welfare and education would be left out of the planning. What cannot be disputed is the amount of planning that went into the evacuation scheme over the 1920s and 1930s. Emphasis was put on the British population keeping calm and that the importance of the evacuation scheme in Tyneside was imperative for a successful national movement. The evidence shows us that in Tyneside, as well as nationally, the planning for evacuation did not necessarily include the reception areas. Thus, this would lead to problems that would only be dealt with once the evacuation was complete. Moreover, the implementation of the policy in Tyneside highlighted the range of areas in which children were sent. Not only does this show the scope of the evacuation scheme in Tyneside, but it also allows for one to understand *why* the experience of evacuation varied so different within evacuees from

⁴⁵ Mike Brown, *Evacuees: Evacuation in Wartime Britain* (London: The History Press, 2005), p.20.

⁴⁶Mass Observation War Diaries (MOWD): *Diarist 5058*. [Diary]. [Accessed April 02, 2016].

Tyneside. This chapter has demonstrated the mass planning that went into the evacuation scheme in Tyneside. By doing so, it also becomes clear as to why there were many problems in the evacuation scheme. The next two chapters will give direct attention to the issues that arose during the planning and the consequences that were not addressed in the planning stages had on the evacuation experience.

CHAPTER TWO

The Welfare of the Evacuated Children in the Reception Areas

On 8 May 1943, the Commissioner for Civil Defence Lord Geddes addressed the House of Lords. The issue was the welfare of the evacuated children in the reception areas. Geddes stated that 'the children, those funny little things of the city', had no knowledge of manners, decent clothing or how to keep clean.¹ Referring to the evacuees as 'funny little things' emphasises the attitude held by rural communities to their guests from the cities. The urban children were perceived as alien, out of place in the rural world. But was Geddes speaking for all rural hosts? Did all those in the reception areas see the evacuees as strange incomers from the urban world?

This chapter - split into four sections - will address the welfare of the evacuated children in the reception areas. The first section will explore the relationship between the evacuee and rural their host. Here, it will discuss the attitudes and social prejudices held against the evacuees. The second section will focus on the consequences of compulsory billeting. In this section, attention will be paid to the treatment of the evacuees by rural hosts and how this affected their experience of evacuation. The third section combines the medical and physical condition of the evacuated children. This section will examine the consequences of the evacuation planners to address the welfare of the urban children. The last section explores the returning home of the evacuees. The growing tensions between rural and urban communities which we will see in the above three sections is one of the reasons as to why children returned home in December 1939. Although the government

¹ Lord Geddes, Lords Sitting, 5th May, 1943, Vol, 127, Col 365- 395.

attempted to keep the evacuees in the reception areas, conditions were so bad in some reception areas that evacuees were essentially pushed out by the rural communities. By addressing these issues of welfare, the chapter will examine the class divide that evacuation emphasised. What shall be made evident by the end of this chapter is that all sections are linked. However, to fully understand the welfare of the evacuees, each section must be examined separately. It will show that it is difficult to generalise the evacuation experience and we indeed cannot talk about an evacuation 'experience' at all.

Existing academic studies on the evacuation have paid a considerable amount of attention to the welfare of the evacuees. This is true of Juliet Gardiner's, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945* and Arthur Marwick's, *The Home Front*.² Gardiner and Marwick's study of the welfare of evacuees are short but essential contributions to texts that cover the period 1939-1945. However, because the work by Gardiner and Marwick considers British wartime history, information is often repetitive as they provide an overview and not a focused examination. Information is also repetitive because Gardiner and Marwick's attention is focused on the London and South West area. Furthermore, there are little secondary materials that write explicitly about the welfare of the evacuees. Materials that do, often lack an in-depth examination of why the welfare issues appeared and how this affected each child's experience. For instance, Ruth Inglis's, *The Children's War*, illustrates the problems of welfare in narrative accounts.³ With regards to the evacuees from Tyneside, it would be fair to say that there is relatively little written on the welfare issues they were presented with. Thus, this chapter hopes to develop current academia by providing a unique, focused analysis of the welfare of Tyneside evacuees. Primary material that will be used

² Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945*, pp.17-26; Arthur Marwick, *The Home Front*, pp.45-59.

³ Ruth Inglis, *The Children's War: Evacuation 1939-1945* (London: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd, 1989).

includes letters, memoirs, school log books, newspapers and council documents. Despite the limited availability of relevant secondary material, it is still possible to examine the welfare of the evacuees from Tyneside.

The Relationship between the Evacuees and their Rural Hosts

Social mismatching was a common characteristic of the evacuation scheme.⁴ Wealthier families made their own arrangements and so evacuees predominantly came from the poorest sections of urban society. Consequently, the evacuation of urban children emphasised the difference in lifestyles of the urban and rural populations. Swapping the loud, crowded and polluted cities for the peaceful, unpolluted and spacious countryside, it takes little to imagine the impact that urban children had on the rural communities. The change of scenery for many evacuees made evacuation seem more of an adventure.⁵ However, when the evacuees arrived, they shocked their rural hosts. The hosts could not comprehend the 'low-class behaviour' of the evacuated children.⁶ Complaints that reached the cities were the reports of children that could not hold a knife and fork properly and bed wetting.⁷ The rural populace also complained of the loud and boisterous nature of the evacuees as it disturbed the calm atmosphere of the countryside.⁸ As tensions between the rural and urban communities grew, the evacuees were depicted as 'burdens' who did not appreciate the goodness that their hosts gave them.⁹ In 1943, the *Daily Mail* branded all

⁴ Calder, *The People's War*, p.40

⁵ Terry Quinn, *Our Memories of Evacuation from Newcastle*, (BBC WW2 Peoples War Archive), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/35/a2872235.shtml> . [Date Accessed: 09/02/16].

⁶ A.M Preston, "The Evacuation of School Children from Newcastle upon Tyne 1939-1942: An Assessment of the factors which influenced the nature of educational provision in Newcastle and Its Reception Areas", *History of Education*, May 1939, Vol. 18 Issue 3, pp.231-241, p. 237.

⁷ 'Evacuee Children', *Newcastle Chronicle*, 30th September 1939.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 'Kindly Morpeth Hosts Win Hearts of the Evacuee Guests', *Blyth News and Ashington Post*, 25th September 1939.

evacuees as ‘foul-mouthed and dishonest’ who lacked any form of discipline.¹⁰ Evidently, the social mismatching the evacuation scheme presented was a national matter, not just local. From the depiction of urban children as undesirable, we can see that there was indeed a natural rural bias against people from urban areas and vice versa.¹¹

Nevertheless, the negative relationship between the evacuees and their hosts can only be connected with certain evacuee experiences. In the reception area of Alnwick, Northumberland, it was reported that many of the hosts had spoken acceptingly of their guests. For instance, one rural host referred to their evacuee using the pronoun ‘ours’ when mentioning their new homes.¹² The use of the pronoun indicates a more friendly and accepting relationship between the evacuees and their hosts. In Alnwick, a host also referred to two evacuees as ‘charming young girls’.¹³ The optimistic description of the evacuees shows that some rural hosts viewed the evacuees in a positive way. Were they not simply burdens with low-class behaviour? The attitudes of the Alnwick hosts, therefore, discount the notion that the difference in lifestyles of the urban and rural communities had an impact on the evacuation experience of all evacuees.

The Billeting Procedure

The evacuation experience can be understood most clearly through the experiences of billeting in the reception areas.¹⁴ The billeting policy, which we have discussed previously, billeted children onto families that in some cases did not want them. We have previously

¹⁰ ‘The Parents Did Not Care’, *Daily Mail*, 2 April 1943.

¹¹ Carlton Jackson, “Who Will Take our Children?” *The British Evacuation Programme of World War Two* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2008), p.22.

¹² TWAS: E.NC17/1/12/3, Letter from Miss Yates, Headmistress at Duchess School that was evacuated to Alnwick, to the Ministry of Information Newcastle addressed to ‘Mr Usher’, 27th December 1939.

¹³ Ibid, Letter from Miss Yates to Ethel Appleyard, 7 April 1941.

¹⁴ Crosby, *Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, p.30.

discussed how the evacuation planning 1920-1930 failed to plan the evacuation in the reception areas. Thus, in some experiences of evacuation, billeting played an imperative role. Historian Richard Titmuss recorded children evacuated from Newcastle and Gateshead were billeted successfully.¹⁵ Similarly, the success of billeting of Tyneside evacuees was recorded in the *Berwick Advertiser* in 1939 where all children who had arrived in Berwick from North Shields had gone through the billeting procedure smoothly.¹⁶ The organisation of billeting in the reception area of Berwick shows the co-operation between the evacuation and reception areas through the planning. However, not all local authorities had the same co-operation.

Some Tyneside evacuees would arrive in the reception area to no billets. No preassigned billets subjected some evacuees to billeting that resembled the scene of a 'roman slave market'.¹⁷ The evacuees would stand in congregated groups as the hosts picked out the children based on their physical appearance.¹⁸ The method of picking and inspecting evacuees by the least description was degrading for the children. Evacuees would wait while the children around them would be picked out. This would ultimately have a devastating emotional consequence on the children.¹⁹ Evidently, the rural hosts considered the evacuees as property rather than human beings, which corresponds to the previous statement by Lord Geddes that the evacuated children were almost alien like. Furthermore, in some reception areas, children were forced to walk around entire villages and call to houses which had confirmed that they had a room available for an evacuee. Fundamentally,

¹⁵ Ibid, p.103.

¹⁶ 'Evacuation to Berwick', *The Berwick Advertiser*, 9th November 1939.

¹⁷ NRO: 7866/03, 'Kenneth's Story'.

¹⁸ Quinn, *Our Memories*, (BBC People WW2 Archive).

¹⁹ NRO: CC/CM/CC/50, Report of Northumberland County Council Education Committee regarding the organisation of the evacuation in September 1939, pp. 266-267.

these findings show us that some evacuees were from the outset faced with humiliating situations in the reception areas. The treatment of evacuees draws attention to the fact that the rural communities viewed the urban children as different.

The Medical and Physical Condition of the Evacuees

Historians have paid a considerable amount of attention to the medical condition that the evacuated children arrived.²⁰ Largely during the first wave of the evacuation in September 1939, many of the children had not received medical checks over the summer holiday break. Thus, the most common complaint from the reception areas was the verminous condition of the evacuees.²¹ Some children would arrive with diseases such as scabies and impetigo.²² Diseases such as these were mostly aggravated by the lack of medical inspection during the school holidays.²³ Most rural hosts associated urban children with the infectious diseases and questioned whether or not there was even a health system for the urban school children.²⁴ As complaints reached the local governments in the evacuation areas, it was apparent that medical care arrangements needed to be made. If the evacuees did get sick, they automatically fell under the care of the billeted household's doctor.²⁵ However, the cost of medical care would be covered by the local medical emergency committee.²⁶ In the absence of general measures to prevent infectious diseases from breaking out, there had to

²⁰ Crosby, *Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, pp.30-40; Jackson, "Who Will Take Our Children?" pp.40-52; Brown, *Evacuees: Evacuation in Wartime Britain*, pp. 20-28.

²¹ Crosby, *Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, p.31.

²² TWAS: DX995/4/1, Correspondence During Evacuation, 24 October 1939- 5 February 1940, Letter from Ada Mullen to Misses Cunningham, 24 October 1939.

²³ E.G Baxter, 'Public Health' in Cole and Padley (eds), *Evacuation Survey*, p.99.

²⁴ TWAS: DX995/4/1, Correspondence during the Evacuation.

²⁵ TWAS: E.NC17/1/12/3, 'Evacuation to Alnwick', Joint Committee on the Four Secondary Associations, report by Headmistresses at Duchess School Alnwick 7th December 1939.

²⁶ Baxter, 'Public Health', p.91.

be at least proper facilities for treatment at isolation hospitals.²⁷ Special rooms were set up at Alnwick Castle to accommodate the sick evacuees.²⁸ However, it is not easy to determine a general idea of the medical condition of the evacuees. Conditions varied from place to place, according to the circumstances and capabilities of local government authorities.²⁹ For instance, when the children from Cornsay School, Heaton arrived in Alnwick, all children had passed the medical examination given to them upon their arrival.³⁰ The passed medical examination by the children from Cornsay School corresponds with the *Daily Mail* report that evacuated children were stronger and taller than those who had stayed in the evacuation areas.³¹

Billeting cards, issued to families that had registered for evacuation in the summer of 1939, stated the importance of *all* evacuees arriving for the evacuation in clean and acceptable footwear and clothing.³² However, the instant complaint from the reception hosts was that evacuees arrived in dirty and inadequate clothing.³³ The problem of evacuees arriving in unsuitable clothing was a national issue and, as such, local authorities of the evacuating areas of Tyneside were given special funds by the government to help meet the need of children.³⁴ In May 1941, Newcastle Public Assistance Committee (NPAC) reported that it had provided 382 evacuated children with new clothing and footwear.³⁵ The large number reported by the NPAC highlights the scale of how many children were in need of

²⁷ Crosby, *The Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, p.33.

²⁸ TWAS: DX5995/4/1, 'Evacuation to Alnwick', Joint Committee on the Four Secondary Associations.

²⁹ Baxter, 'Public Health', p.93.

³⁰ TWAS: E.NC81/7/4, Correspondence regarding evacuation to Alnwick, Council Report, April 3rd 1940.

³¹ 'Child Evacuees are Taller, Stronger, Heavier', *Daily Mail*, November 17 1939.

³² TWAS: DX212/28, Evacuation Cards.

³³ Norman Longmate, *How We Lived Then: A History of everyday life during the Second World War* (London: Arrow Book, 1973), p.53.

³⁴ BRO: 794/65/3, 'Government Evacuation Scheme' Ministry of Health Circular No.1871, To the Evacuating and reception area authorities, 12th September 1939.

³⁵ TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, 15-29 October 1939.

adequate clothing. The report also emphasises the difference between the two classes. Evacuation stressed the economic difficulty of maintaining a higher standard of clothing than the parents could provide. It is very likely that parents sent their children the best that they could provide. Therefore, much depends on *who* judges the standard of child's clothing.³⁶ What is interesting is that many of the evacuees came from the poor parts of industrial towns. Therefore, the standard which the clothing was judged on emphasises the distance separating the rural and urban poor.

The Evacuees Returning Home

A central subject for the government on both a local and national perspective was the problem of the evacuees' returning home. This problem is clearest with the issue of evacuees returning home for Christmas in 1939. Parents had evacuated their children to avoid danger and when this danger did not appear many parents wanted to reunite with their children over the festive season. The government stressed the importance of keeping evacuated children where they were over the festive period as the danger of bombing had not yet passed.³⁷ The government documented that the festive season would be a weak moment for parents and, therefore, created a special fund which provided activities for the evacuees over the Christmas period. To occupy them evacuees were treated to cinema trips and indoor sporting activities. However the scheme did not work and many of the evacuees returned home.³⁸ It is confusing when trying to understand *why* the evacuees returned home. The complexity of individual situations makes it hard to establish a general reason as

³⁶ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p.115.

³⁷ Neville Chamberlin, Mansion House London Speech 1939, quoted in Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945*, p.51.

³⁸ TWAS: 'Correspondence regarding evacuation to Alnwick', Letter to Mr Redhead from L.Enwistle, 15th January 1940.

to why they returned home. For many children, being evacuated was the first time apart from their parents. The emotional stress therefore on a child is unimaginable. One of the reasons children could have returned home was because of homesickness which resulted in the government scheme not working. Additionally, it is also imperative to explore the response of the hosts over the festive period. These were householders who had families of their own. The burden of having to accommodate a child intensified during the Christmas season, with many householders in Durham shutting their homes; moving away temporarily and discarding their evacuees.³⁹ As a result of this, many evacuees had no choice but to return home. Thus, the government's ambition to keep evacuees in the reception areas failed. The evacuee's return home also highlights the welfare issues that have been addressed in this chapter. For some evacuees, they would rather have their return home forced - and face bombing - than face billeted life.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The culture clash that the evacuation experience accentuated ultimately had a damaging effect on the welfare of the evacuees. The distance separating the two lifestyles of the rural and urban communities ultimately impacted the judgement of the evacuees, as well as, the general experience in the reception areas. With the powers of compulsory billeting, evacuees were often perceived as burdens or something the rural householders was subjected to, as opposed to a welcome visitor. The medical and physical condition that some children arrived in also helped rural communities to strengthen their belief that the evacuees were a lower class. Thus, the distance between the two communities was accentuated further. The evacuation scheme tore a child from his or hers family life,

³⁹ MOWD: War Diaries (M5376), 7 January 1940, p.49.

⁴⁰ Dorothy Jawthrop, 'Shared Beds and Schools', in Lesser (ed), *Snoring of a thousand men*, p.13.

meaning the emotional needs of that child ought to be considered of vital importance. However, this was not taken into consideration by the evacuation planning in the 1930s. The return of many evacuees after the 'phoney war' period shows that the well-being of some evacuees cannot be recorded as a success. From the findings broad patterns within the experiences of Tyneside evacuees are apparent. Evidently, the well-being of the evacuee all depended on the willingness and judgement of the reception community. Ultimately, the failure to address the matters of welfare during the planning stages of the 1930s almost certainly can account for the lack of welfare for medical and physical needs. Just as this failure can account for billeting issues at the time of the evacuees' arrival in the reception areas. The next chapter will focus on the Education System in the evacuation scheme and will examine how the issues of education would impact on the evacuation experience of the children

CHAPTER THREE

The Educational Experience in the Reception and Evacuation Areas

The aim of evacuation had never been to develop the education of children. The aim was to save lives; 'beds before desks' was the motto of the evacuation planners.¹ The British educational system falls under a partnership between the BOE and the Local Education Authorities (LEA). When examining the education of children in the reception and evacuation areas, it is imperative to remember that the BOE, throughout the planning of evacuation, had been treated as the poor relation by its superior the MH.² The effects of this were visible in the refusal to give either the BOE or the LEA any major share of control in the evacuation scheme. The lack of involvement of the two agencies thus hindered any chance of an organised educational system under the evacuation scheme.³

The focus of this chapter is on the education of children in the reception and evacuation areas. This chapter will examine the impact that the evacuation scheme had on the education of children in both of these areas. The chapter has two sections. The first will examine the education of evacuated children in the reception areas. It will explore how evacuated children were provided with an education and the repercussions of the evacuation on their education. The main emphasis in this section is on the evacuated and resident school remaining an individual unit. The second section will examine the education of children who returned to the evacuation areas when bombs failed to materialise. Additionally, this chapter will further our examination into the division between the urban

¹ Crosby, *Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, p.69.

² Richard Padley, 'Education' in Padley and Cole (eds), *Evacuation Survey*, p.111.

³ Ibid.

and rural communities. The evacuation scheme put emphasis on the difference in the education of the two communities. Hence, the argument of educational reformists working in this area, that the evacuation highlighted the need for educational reform.⁴ What we will find by the end of this chapter is that the education of children in the reception and evacuation areas was delayed as a result of the evacuation. Although again, the importance of understanding evacuation as a set of individual experiences is important, what cannot be ignored is the impact of the evacuation on the education and vice versa.

This chapter is by no means the first to undertake an examination of this kind. P.H.J.H Gosden's, *Education during the Second World War* and Travis Crosby's, *The Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, have both addressed the educational issues present under the evacuation scheme.⁵ Both Crosby and Gosden's work provide comprehensive studies in the context of this chapter. Gosden's work delivers a significant study into the educational system. Yet, his work provides more of an administrative history of the BOE and, therefore, does not provide an examination of the implications of the evacuation scheme on the education of children. On the other hand, Crosby's work presents us with valuable case studies of the educational experiences of some evacuees. These studies, however, are concentrated in London and its surrounding districts, meaning that there is little or no consideration towards the evacuees from Tyneside. Significantly, Crosby does stress the lack of secondary material that examines the educational issues of evacuation.⁶ He stresses that his work on the education of evacuees was one of the first he had found to have been done so that most works he had found paid little attention to the role of the evacuation scheme.⁷

⁴ Parson, "I'll Take That One", p.81.

⁵ Gosden, *Education during the Second World War*; Crosby, *Impact of Civilian Evacuation*.

⁶ Crosby, *Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, preface.

⁷ Ibid.

Thus, this present chapter aims to develop on the current academia by examining the education of Tyneside children in the evacuation scheme. Through the primary sources available such as memoirs, government publications, school log books, committee minutes and newspapers, it is possible to provide an examination in the context of this chapter. What this chapter will conclude is that the effect of the evacuation on education and vice versa, undoubtedly altered a child's experience of evacuation.

Education in the Reception Areas

An official publication by the ARP in May 1939 stated that the education of the evacuees would come 'second best' to the health and general care of the children.⁸ Yet, an MH circular published the following September emphasised that the continuation of an education would be the best action for restoring normality in an evacuee's life.⁹ The government intended to maintain the educational system by keeping evacuated schools intact in the reception areas. However, as the children arrived at the reception areas to unorganised billets, some evacuees were billeted to separate villages away from the rest of their school parties.¹⁰ Even on the occasions where evacuated schools were billeted to the same village, there was often a shortage of class room space.¹¹ Many evacuated schools were thus imposed on existing classes in the reception areas. The issue of the evacuated schools imposing on existing reception classes was because of the lack of communication between the evacuation and reception LEA's. Due to this lack of communication, information on the expected number of pupils and teachers failed to be addressed in the

⁸ BRO: 794/65/3, Air Raid Precautions: Official Publication of the Air Raid Defence League, No.3, May 1939.

⁹ Ibid, Ministry of Health Circular no.1871:To the evacuating and reception area authorities., 12th September 1939.

¹⁰ Padley, 'Education', p.56.

¹¹ Ibid, p.57.

planning of the evacuation. Consequently, this led evacuated schools to be essentially forced out to other facilities in the village. Evacuation forced teachers of the evacuation schools to teach pupils in village halls, empty houses and churches.¹² However, these facilities were often poor and insufficient. As a result of this, many schools like West Jesmond Primary School simply disintegrated under the inadequate conditions that they were forced to teach under.¹³

Another reason why the education of evacuated schools disintegrated in the reception areas was the conflicting personalities of the visiting and resident schools. The main conflict of the two schools was the subjects that each school provided for its pupils. Evacuated schools educated pupils in subjects that would benefit the urban lifestyle. These subjects included Silversmithing and Rubber Manufacturing. Teaching urban children these subjects would benefit the urban lifestyle because it would help educate children on how to facilitate the working class trade. The resident schools educated pupils predominantly on agriculture with a particular focus on farm studies. Thus, children in the countryside would be educated in the rural trade.¹⁴ Therefore, with the conflicting educational system of each school, it is not surprising that many evacuated schools were perceived by the resident schools as a burden on their education. Also, with many schools imposing on existing classroom structures, if the resident and visiting school were forced to educate their pupils together, it would have forced many children into an education suited for the other. Thus, it came into question, how would the educational machinery of the evacuated areas be geared with that of the reception areas? As a responsive measure to the disintegration of evacuated schools in the reception areas, the LEA stated that every possible measure would

¹² BRO: 794/65/3, Letter addressed to Newcastle City Council from Miss Lovell, 14th March, 1940.

¹³ Ibid, Newcastle City Council Report, 13th January 1940.

¹⁴ Helen Bentwich, 'Higher Education', in Padley and Cole (eds), *Evacuation Survey*, p.174.

be taken to restore the education of the evacuees.¹⁵ The subjects that the evacuation schools taught required the specialised equipment that the evacuation schools possessed. Therefore, for a normal resumption of the education of evacuees in the reception areas, the equipment needed for the specialist subjects was needed. However, the equipment was simply unattainable and to transfer it from the cities was too expensive for the local governments.¹⁶

With the lack of the adequate facilities for evacuated schools to teach in and the consequences that would happen if the two schools were combined, the BOE established a 'double shift' system to manage the educational issues present in the reception areas. The double shift system meant that the local school would use the school building 9: 00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. and the visiting school 13: 00 pm until 17:00 pm.¹⁷ The establishment of the shift system meant that pupils would have an education which would benefit the lifestyle of which they belonged too. Therefore, the pupils of each school would be taught in familiar circumstances. By doing so, for as far as possible, the two schools would keep their individuality as a separate unit.¹⁸ Furthermore, the use of the shift system would mean that children were not imposed on the existing classrooms which had made many reception residents resent their presence. The double shift system was perceived to have worked as long-lasting friendships were made.¹⁹

The impact of urban children on the rural communities and vice versa was itself an 'educational revolution'.²⁰ The impact of the evacuees can be seen to be an educational

¹⁵ BRO: 794/65/3, Evacuation of school children and the ARP issues, C3230: Vol. 44, May 1939.

¹⁶ TWAS: CB.SU/17/17, Education Committee Minutes, September 1938- January 1940.

¹⁷ BRO: 794/65/3, Evacuation of school children and the ARP issues, May 1939.

¹⁸ Gosden, *Education during the Second World War*, p.15.

¹⁹ Dorothy M. Jawthrop, 'Shared Beds and Shared Schools', in Lesser (ed) *Snoring of a thousand men*, p. 13.

²⁰ Ritchie Calder, 'The School Child', in Padley and Cole (eds), *Evacuation Survey*, p.152.

revolution because of the children's ignorance to the common things of the countryside. For instance, the sight of a cow would scare the evacuees as they had only seen cows in pictures.²¹ They perceived sheep to be the size of cats and the fact apples grew on trees shocked many of the urban children.²² Also, many children made comments on how the countryside 'had a lot more sky' than the cities.²³ The revelations of some evacuees make it hard to believe that the evacuation did not facilitate their education. The urban children learned new and interesting facts about the countryside. By doing so, they expanded their knowledge of the country they lived in. Additionally, the BOE had urged the visiting schools to develop new interests. Great emphasis was put on the study of nature and evacuated schools took part in long country walks, fishing and farm studies.²⁴ There was also a development in physical education for evacuees. Sporting games such as rounders, netball, and other various sports could be played in the spacious countryside.²⁵ Ultimately, amendments had been distinctly made to the education of children who were used to sitting behind desks and taught 'black board stuff'.²⁶

The Role of the Teachers

To understand the evacuation experience of children, it is imperative to give attention to the role of the teachers in a child's evacuation experience. Although the MH and the local authorities planned the evacuation scheme, it was largely the teachers who organised the evacuation of the children in September 1939 on ground level. The role of the teachers was first to organise the children for the evacuation and by doing so, making sure the scheme

²¹ Jean Wilkinson, "I had never seen a lemon before" in Lesser, *Snoring of a thousand men*, p.28.

²² Calder, 'The School Child', p. 152.

²³ Wilkinson, "I had never seen a lemon before", p.28.

²⁴ TWAS: E.SU47/5 Boy's School Log Book, 1877-1943.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Calder, 'The School Child', p.153.

was implemented smoothly. Secondly, the teachers would accompany the pupils to the reception areas and stay with them until the period of evacuation was over.²⁷ Evidently, the role of the teacher in the reception areas was needed to teach the pupils. Yet, the role of teachers played a significant role beyond the classroom in the evacuation scheme. For many evacuees, the teachers were the only familiarity they had to home in the reception areas. As such, teachers assumed an increasingly parental role with their students. They provided pastoral care for the evacuees, alleviated homesickness and comforted the children when they needed.²⁸ It, therefore, cannot be stressed enough the importance of teachers to understanding the whole evacuee experience. Evacuated teachers, in a sense, became the ‘foot soldiers’ of the evacuation.

Education in the Evacuation Areas

If the war had planned out like the evacuation planners had predicted, far more of the evacuees would have remained in the less vulnerable areas. Thus, the disruption of the educational system would have attracted less criticism.²⁹ As part of the general precautions against bombing, schools in the evacuation areas were not kept open because attendance would have exposed the children to danger.³⁰ Arrangements would instead be made to open the city schools in the reception areas as soon as the evacuation was complete.³¹ Additionally, the BOE and LEA had hoped that *all* school children would have been

²⁷ BRO: 794/65/3, Evacuation of school children and the ARP Issues, C3230: Vol. 44, May 1939.

²⁸ TWAS: DX4659/5/8: Letter addressed to ‘Mrs Ingles’ from the Head teacher of Cornsay School, dated 17th February 1940.

²⁹ Gosden, *Education in the Second World War*, p.19.

³⁰ TWAS: DX4659/5/8 Northumberland County Council education committee, the schools and invasion instructions of the committee, copy no.499, April 1942.

³¹ Ibid.

evacuated from the cities and, therefore, school buildings would not be required. School buildings would be requisitioned for ARP posts and soldiers billets instead.³²

By 1940, bombs had failed to materialise and it was estimated that around 40% of the evacuated Tyneside children had returned home.³³ The main public concern was the disruptive behaviour of the returned children. There were reports of children that would run the streets like 'wild animals'.³⁴ Children would stand on the street corners hurling abuse at people on their way to and from work; they became known as the 'street youths'.³⁵ The reports on the uncontrollable behaviour of the city children were due to the lack of an education system in the evacuation areas. Initially, the government supported its policy of keeping the city schools closed. However, the need for some provision outside the schools for the children who remained was promoted by the LEA.³⁶

The problem of the returning children presented the BOE with a dilemma. The LEA feared that if schools did reopen, many parents would perceive it as an invitation for their children to return home.³⁷ Therefore, the basis of the evacuation scheme would be shattered as children would return to the dangerous areas. However, the impact of no education for city children could no longer be ignored by the LEA. In an attempt to restore the education of the children from the city a home-schooling system was introduced. The teachers that did not go with the evacuation parties would teach in small groups in available spaces. The available spaces were often the teacher's kitchens or living rooms.³⁸ In one

³² BRO: 794/65/3, Evacuation of school children and the ARP issues May 1939.

³³ Armstrong, *Tyneside in the Second World War*, p.100.

³⁴ 'Boys' Thefts from Footballers' Pockets', *Newcastle Chronicle*, 2nd December 1939.

³⁵ TWAS: CB.SN/17/17, Education Committee Minutes.

³⁶ Crosby, *Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, p. 69.

³⁷ Padley, 'Education', p.124.

³⁸ June Brown, 'Thirteen Schools and a Sweet Tooth', in Lesser, (ed), *Snoring of a Thousand Men*, p. 17.

instance, children were taught in the parlour of the teachers' house.³⁹ The home-schooling system evidently was not an appropriate manner to teach the children. The closure of schools and the lack of facilities to teach in further delayed the education of children. Many children in 1940 were due to take their +11 exam in order for them to progress to secondary school. However, with the requisitioning of school buildings and the reduced teaching, many never sat the exam and thus could not progress onto grammar school.⁴⁰

With the home-schooling system not being a successful resolution to the education problem, the LEA and the city schools were forced to make a compromise. The compromise was that city schools could re-open, yet schooling hours were limited. The education was also only available to children over the age of eleven between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 14:00 p.m.⁴¹ By limiting the schooling hours; education would only be provided in daylight hours and thus restricted the times that would expose children to danger. Also, by only providing an education for children above eleven years old restricted the amount of children that would be present in the cities. The education only being provided eleven years and over also highlights an attempt by the LEA to curb the presence of the 'street youths' in the cities. However, one of the main issues when trying to bring back the education system in the cities was the limited availability of teachers. For instance, All Saints School in Newcastle did not re-open until February 1944 due to the lack of teachers in the area.⁴² Nationwide only eight areas had no schools reopen. Two of these areas were in Tyneside: Gateshead and Wallsend.⁴³ Gateshead Education Committee discussed the re-opening of Sunderland

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ TWAS: DX4659/5/8 Northumberland County Council education committee, the schools and invasion instructions of the committee, April 1942.

⁴² TWAS: E.WA9/1, Junior School Log Books, 1918-1969.

⁴³ Calder, 'The School Child', p.154.

Road School, Shipcote School, and Red Hugh School, yet, the schools failed to open because there were no available teachers as all had been evacuated.⁴⁴ With many schools failing to re-open, the impact of the evacuation scheme on the education of children is evident.

Conclusion

Evacuation planners did not take into consideration the educational needs of a child. Thus, educational issues that presented themselves in the reception areas would only be dealt with once the exodus was complete. The lack of the BOE and LEA influence in the evacuation planning also has to be considered when exploring education an aspect of the evacuation scheme. The impact of urban children on rural communities and vice versa presented an educational revolution itself. Here, the evacuation can be seen progress the evacuee's education as the majority of Tyneside evacuees facilitated their education by learning new information about life outside of the industrial cities. However, an aspect that is given much attention, regarding education and evacuation, was the implementation of the double shift system. Here again, we see the importance of the division between the two communities. Evacuated children often imposed on existing classes and classrooms. This began to cause resentment of the evacuees from the rural communities. A strong emphasis was put on each retaining their identity, thus highlighting again the split between the two communities. Most importantly, exploring the role of teachers is crucial to understanding the evacuee's experience. Teachers were, essentially, the foot soldiers of evacuation, providing home comfort for the evacuees. Furthermore, the breaking down of the educational system in the evacuation areas highlighted the need for a permanent education

⁴⁴TWAS: CB.SU/17/17, Gateshead Education Committee Minutes, September 1938-January 1940.

system. With children returning home, attention was drawn to the lack of schooling in the cities, thus highlighting the need for a reform of the education system. What is evident from the findings of this chapter is that evacuation had a profound effect on the British Educational System.

CONCLUSION

In 1996, the British Evacuee Association (BEA) was established to ensure that the true story of the evacuation would become better known for future generations. The BEA has proposed the creation of a memorial in an attempt to remember evacuation. The memorial would display figures of eleven confused school children as they would have appeared on evacuation day. The memorial was proposed to remember the greatest social and family disruption experience in British history, 'a unique and never to be repeated part of our history'.¹ Thus, the work that the BEA is doing in keeping the memory of evacuation alive highlights why the evacuation remains a contemporary interest.

Understanding the evacuation experience remains a task in the social history of wartime Britain. Having examined the evacuation experience of children from Tyneside, this dissertation has challenged the idealistic views that many people associate with the evacuation. However, that is not to say that all evacuation experiences were the same or all good or bad. This dissertation has examined the differing experiences of Tyneside evacuees and has established that the evacuation can only be understood as a set of individual circumstances rather than a common evacuation experience. To say that one experience categorises all evacuees underplays the positive role that evacuation had on many children's lives. Yet, to say that the evacuation experience was a positive experience for everyone also ignores the role of evacuation on a child's life. The mass planning of the evacuation scheme is evident throughout chapter one both nationally and locally. However, the failure to address the matters of welfare and education had devastating consequences for the evacuees in the reception areas.

¹ The British Evacuee Association, 'The National Memorial to Evacuation' <http://www.evacuees.org.uk/memorial.html> [Date Accessed: 23/04/2016].

Some themes have emerged during the research for this dissertation. The most dominant one is the distance separating the lifestyles of the urban and rural communities. Evacuation brought together two separate communities under extreme circumstances. Through the evidence that this dissertation has provided, it is clear why many evacuation historians have focused their argument around evacuation being a characteristic of the social reform in post-war Britain. Another theme which emerges throughout this dissertation is the failure to address the issues of welfare and education in the planning. These errors throughout the 1920s and 1930s ultimately paved the way for the issues which characterised the evacuation experience.

This dissertation focuses solely on the evacuation of Tyneside children to the neighbouring counties of Northumberland and Durham. However, there are cases where Tyneside children were sent to Cumbria, Lancashire, or even America and Australia. Therefore, an examination of children's experiences of evacuation to other parts of the country or other countries could also be examined. This dissertation has focused solely on the children evacuated from Tyneside. However, the neighbouring county of Teesside could also benefit from similar research. With further time and a with a larger research project, in the future the evacuees from Hartlepool, Sunderland and Middlesbrough could also be examined.

This dissertation relies heavily on primary sources. One of the primary sources this dissertation uses is memoirs. Although providing rich emotional material the source may not be thoroughly objective. The memoirs taken from *Snoring of a Thousand Men* are written 40 years after the evacuation occurred.² Therefore, it might be hard to trust how accurate the person's memory is after so many years. Moreover, the dissertation also uses a wide range

² Lesser (ed), *Snoring of a Thousand Men*.

of newspaper articles. However with censorship being introduced in 1940, the accuracy of the newspapers can be argued. Furthermore, historian Travis Crosby has also stressed the difficulty of providing qualitative data for the evacuation.³ So, therefore, evidence for understanding the experiences of the evacuation of children, and their reception hosts for many future academics who study the evacuation, might be harder to obtain.

Fundamentally, the evacuation was a unique part of British social history. The impact of urban children on rural communities was the biggest social mismatching this country has ever seen. To tear a child from its family life would have devastating consequences for both the family and the child. It is for this reason that the BEA has worked hard keeping the memory of the evacuation alive for future generations. The sub-plot to this dissertation was the background to the creation of the welfare state. The experiences of children in the evacuation scheme were instrumental in the creation and development of this welfare state. Thus, the welfare and educational issues evacuation presented, indicated the end of an old Britain and the start of a new.

³ Crosby, *Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, preface.

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