



THE MUSEUM
OF ENGLISH
RURAL LIFE



University of
Reading



Evacuee Barbara Wood

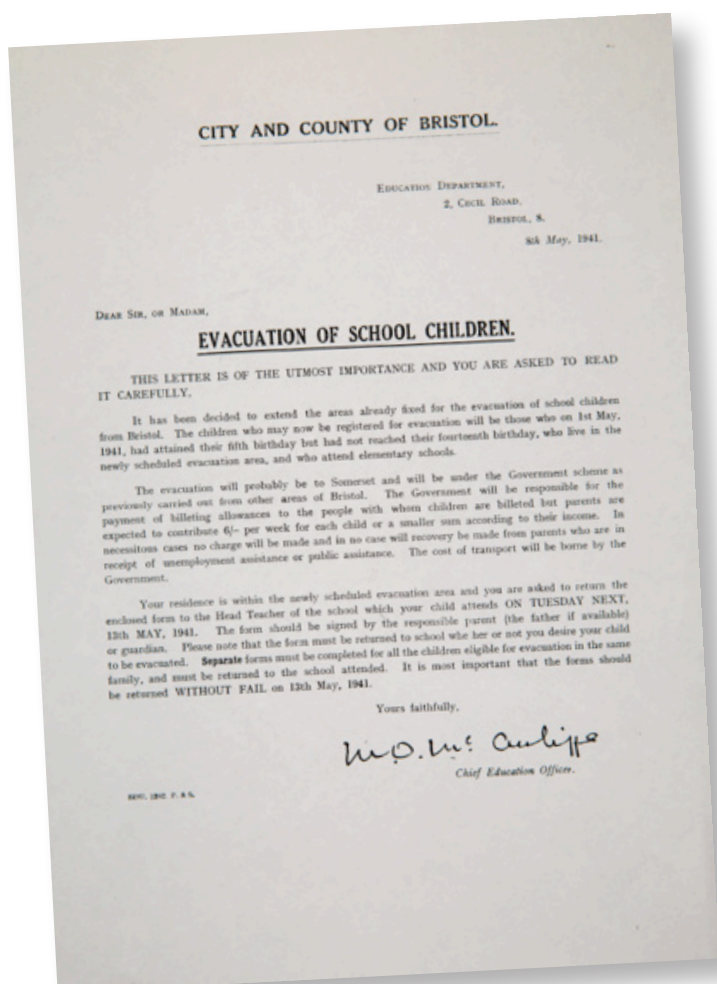
Evacuated from Sea Mills, Bristol
to Rockwell Green, Somerset

Start of war

Parents were worried about their children's safety. Although people tried to be very brave. As a child I remember having bad dreams about air raids, with strange creatures flying and jumping over the roof tops trying to attack me.

Preparing for evacuation

Plans were made to evacuate children to the country. Nobody knew where we were going to. It was a closely guarded secret. We were told what clothes and other possessions we should take and we all had to wear a little identity disc on our wrists. I still have mine. It is a small metal disc engraved with my name and identity number and sewn on to a little bracelet of black elastic.



Travelling from home to billet

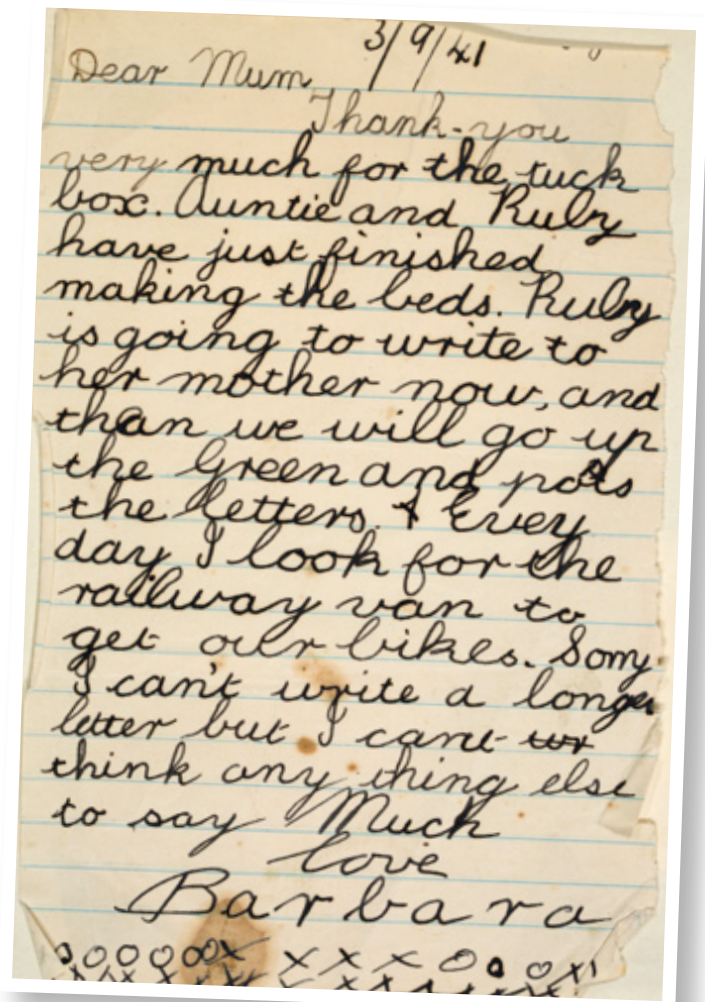
I don't remember much about the train journey except it seemed rather like a dream. We arrived at Rockwell Green, Somerset 1941. We all assembled outside the school I remember being in a large hall with a high roof. There were lots of children with their baggage and at the front there were some grown ups calling out 'two boys', 'one girl', 'two girls'. When they asked for two girls one of the ladies came to get my sister and me. She said that she would take us to the place we would be



staying and we began walking with our cases through a long village street. Eventually we arrived at a row of cottages. Arranged around three sides of an oblong. We went to the door of one of the end cottages and knocked. A plump short elderly lady put her head round the door and asked what we wanted. The lady said that she couldn't take us because 'we were much too young'. I remember feeling very despondent and a little frightened. For a moment the two ladies talked to one another and eventually the lady said she would take us.

The new billet

The lady said she would take us, she brought us into her living room and we met her husband for the first time. He seemed to be a kind old man. He had a big smile which crinkled up his face and eyes that twinkled when he looked at you. Uncle and Auntie were about 60 years old when we went to stay with them. The next thing I remember was being taken to our bedroom. My sister and I were to share a big double bed with a feather mattress. We did not like the idea of this very much. At home we had our own single beds with firm spring mattresses. The big soft mattress billowed up



as we got into bed and we kept rolling into one another. We began to cry and wished we were back at home. It was then that the old man came up to us and suggested we put a pillow between us. He tucked us up and gave us a kiss and said "Don't cry now, call me Uncle". He had a soft voice with a deep Somerset accent. From that moment I began to feel safe. Although there were unhappy times in the eleven months that we stayed there, uncle always seemed to be there to listen when we felt sad. Auntie looked after us well too, but I think we may have been a little more naughty with her from time to time.

Schooling

The school was the very same building from which we had been sent to our evacuation home. The school was very crowded because there were also a number of London evacuees staying in the village. There were 60 children in my class which was held in a wooden hut.



Barbara outside front of 6 Lower Westford

Returning home

Not long after we arrived, our mother came to visit us. She came often and always brought food and other presents with her. Once she bought jelly and we were all very excited. Jelly was difficult to get then. I think she gave Auntie and Uncle extra money to buy things for us. I know they got on very well together. Long after the war was over, Auntie and uncle used to come and stay with us for holidays.


We returned to Bristol after 11 months because it seemed that the worst of the bombing was over and I was due to start secondary school.




Evacuation
(Card issued to evacuees (CnB) before)

MY CHURCH CARD.

Name Barbara Wood

Baptized 

Confirmed 

My Church at home St. Elyth's, Sea Mills.

My Diocese Bristol

My Church away all saints' Wellington. Som.

(This card is the personal property of the boy or girl to whom it is given and is not transferable. It should be shown to one of the Clergy when the owner is going to a new home.)

