



The Colyton Evacuees

Going to School in Colyton



Although they were away from home, the Colyton evacuees still had to go to school – it wasn't a holiday!

The main problem was that there were suddenly an extra 200 children in Colyton and not enough spaces in the local schools to accommodate them! The Colyton Chamber of Feoffees, which was created in 1539 – nearly 500 years ago! – to provide public services for the people of Colyton, stepped in and allowed a temporary school to be set up in the Town Hall.

This memory is taken from the Feoffees wartime book:

"School was in the Town Hall. We were still St. Jude's with the same teachers, and with the same headmaster, Mr George Lancaster, but in a very different place. Classes for older children were in each corner of the hall with the infants on the stage.'

It must have been quite difficult to have all the pupils in one hall at the same time!

About a year after they had arrived in Colyton, some of the evacuees returned to their homes in London because it was considered safe to do so. The pupils of St. Jude's school were then able to join the local school, although they were not taught in the same classes as the local children. Instead, they went to school in the mornings and the local children went to school in the afternoon, then they swapped round the next week.

Talking point:

Do you think it would have been better to go to school in the town hall or the local school? Why?

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So what was it like to go to school in Colyton during the war?
Here are some interesting facts:

Wire netting should have been put across the windows of the Town Hall and school to protect the children from flying glass if the town was bombed. However, it was too expensive so they pasted muslin (used for making butter) to the windows instead!



The evacuees would walk to the school allotment on two afternoons each week to join in with the 'Dig for Victory' campaign.



At the start of the school day the head teacher would blow a whistle and the children had to march inside to music.

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The pupils had to clear out a ditch beneath a hedge in the school grounds in which they would shelter if there was an air raid. A teacher called Mr Jenkins made the children practise hiding in the hedge but luckily they never had to do this for real!



Pupils enjoying a swimming lesson at Colyton outdoor pool.

Lessons were more or less the same as they had been in London, with the exception of swimming lessons in the outdoor pool in Colyton. Pupils also did woodwork and PT (Physical Training). Older boys worked on local farms 2 days a week to 'Dig for Victory'.