

Stowupland's Strangers

Our research is still ongoing but here is some of the story so far. Our search was triggered by 4 things:

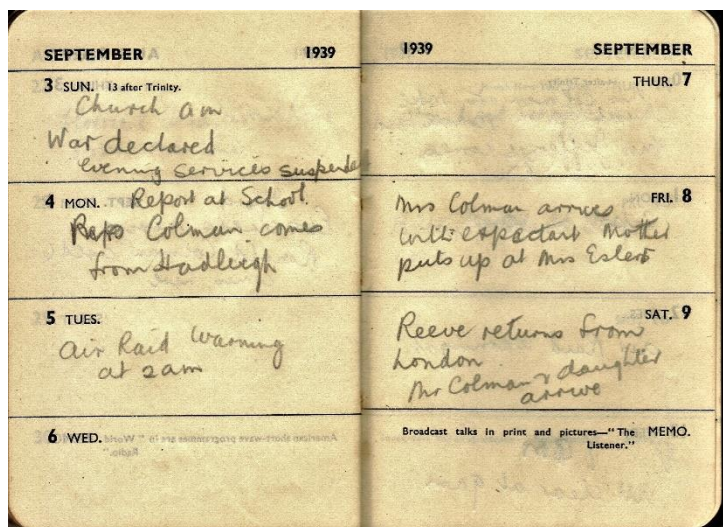
- This certificate from our Archives.
- An entry in a 1939 diary that told us the **'Ilford evacuees'** had arrived.
- The 1939 Register (or War Survey)
- Local knowledge

And now Neil has been able to recommence searching through the documents at The Hold he has added to our knowledge.

Our interest started with this colourful and ornate certificate. It had been sent to a local resident, Mrs. C. Catchpole, whose family donated it to our archives. It was post marked Buckingham

Palace, GR and signed with a royal flourish, though not by our reigning monarch. It refers to **'Strangers'** so we wondered if these were American air men, POW's or might they have been our evacuees? An internet search confirmed that certificates like this were sent out in 1945 to families who had taken in evacuees during WW2.

Mrs Catchpole's daughter Margaret was 30 at the start of WW2. She was a sporadic diary keeper but knowing we had her 1939 diary I had high hopes. She did not disappoint, though I would have liked more. On Friday September 1st 1939 she had written **'Ilford evacuees arrive, Robert Colman age 6 1/2 comes here'** 2 days later she noted, **'Church a.m. war declared, evening services suspended'**. Then just 9 days later she wrote that Robert's mother had arrived to collect him.



Neil found from entries in the Stowupland School Log Book that the numbers of evacuees staying in Stowupland did fluctuate. In September 1939 the first and largest group arrived, 92 children with some teachers. Others arrived later and some left to go home but then returned. The 1939 Register (or War Survey was similar in format to earlier census documents) has helped in locating where some of these children stayed but many names are redacted (i.e., the only names we can read are those who can no longer tell their story). More research is needed to separate the Ilford evacuees from any nieces, nephews or grandchildren who were living with relatives.

From the war survey we know that the Catchpole's did have a Patricia Ellis (age 6 1/2,) staying with them at the end of September 1939. Although Margaret does not name Patricia in her diaries she did record visits from a Mrs Ellis and in December she writes of a Mrs Ellis who travelled by train to visit and on December 27th they **'went to an entertainment given by the evacuees.'**

Knowledge from local residents has proved invaluable in filling in some blanks. Jerry and I have spoken with John Hill. Although not old enough to remember the evacuees arriving, his family welcomed several youngsters into their homes and he has kept in touch with some over the years. Through him we have been in touch with Wanda Lee and Doreen Quelch. I am not sure my recall of my primary school days comes anywhere near their recollections.

Wanda and Doreen remembered arriving by train with their gas masks and just a few possessions in rucksacks. Having arrived in Stowupland S.A.Walker 2021



they were first taken to the primary school to be selected by a local family. Those children going to stay along the Back or Gipping Road walked from the school, down Church Road past Barn Cottages, along Rendall Land and so to their new homes. We can only try to imagine the contrast between the sights, sound and smells these children experienced on that walk compared to what they had left behind.

Wanda told me her father accompanied her to Stowupland. It must have been an emotional journey as he had just lost his wife and mother-in-law and was taking his young daughter to leave her with strangers. She told me how, 80 years later she still remembered being rescued from the rubble of her Nan's bombed out house in Forest Gate. Her Nan was killed, her mother though alive had been blinded and lost both legs. They were taken to a local hospital by bus and she still recalled the sight of flickering red flames against the darkened sky. Then she told me she had spent her 6th birthday holding her dying mother's hand.

Wanda stayed in a cottage opposite 30 The Bungalows with May and Hector Wilden, or Auntie May as she called her. Both Wanda and Doreen loved their time in Stowupland. Wanda did not want to leave her new home, but after her father remarried, he wanted her back with him. Others like Doreen stayed in the village even after the war ended, going to Stowmarket to complete their Secondary education (Stowupland didn't have a Senior School).



The Wilden's garden with some evacuees and Auntie May.

Despite the adjustments the school had to make to accommodate the large influx of children they remembered being made to feel very welcome. Miss Kinch was remembered as strict but very kind. They didn't recall any male teachers, but a Mr Brett who was an elementary school teacher staying at Green Farm, was recalled to Ilford in April 1940 leaving the school board having to rearrange classes.

They remembered some 12 young visitors, but added there were others staying in surrounding villages. Since Neil's research indicated that there were far more than 12, these may have been just those who stayed near the Green. In the first month school was 'to be held in 2 shifts, 9 to 12 and 1 to 3:45, with a canteen being organised'. Over the following year the evacuees were merged with the local children and neither Doreen nor Wanda remembered the children being segregated. The Boys Brigade hut was used to provide additional class room space.



children introduced them to the joy of swimming in the 'tin ponds' on the Green.

Some other children were staying in The Bungalows along Back lane were Pamela Emmings (age 9), who stayed with the Cubitt family whilst her mother Edith was working at Croft Farm, Gipping; Kenneth and his sister were at Mrs (Fanny) Stannard, Freda Quelch was with Doreen at Daisy Hill's.

Other visitors were; Christine Jiggins who went to Cubitt's Farm and 'walked across two meadows' to get to school: Brian Hart (9) and Ian McPherson were at Columbyne Hall, when Ian left to return to



the family home Brian was joined by Maurice King and George Shepherd: at Green Farm, George and Elsie Carter had Jean Ewen (7): Brian Howell (10) was with Arthur and Christina Finbow at Pasture farm: at Gipping Cottage, Sydney and Eva Hammond took in Maurice Perry (8): the Lockwood's had William Stewart (8); Samuel and Alice Bowyer had Leslie W. Wright (12) staying and Edna Baker (10): Mary Mannin had Oliver Dann (7): in Saxham Street, Alan and David Kramer were with Mr and Mrs Rogers in Rainbow Cottage; on the Green, a Brame family took in Leslie Greenblatt.

Much more research needs to be done into our Strangers. We know that American Airmen although not based in Stowupland did travel through Stowupland. They camped on The Green and used Gyford tailor's shop on Saxham Street to get adjustments made to their uniforms. We believe POW's were employed on local farms and we know Army Land girls were trained at Columbyne Hall.



Land Army Girls - Stowupland



Land Army Girls - Stowupland ?