

# The Evacuees Stories

We have the written stories of seven of the evacuees who came to Kings Bromley. They are:

Margaret Edmunds

Peggy Horn

Joan Horn

Joyce Horn

Marjorie Horn

June Edwards

Phyllis Allen

# Margaret Edmund's Story

*Margaret Edmunds was billeted at 5 Church Lane wiith Mr. & Mrs. Rock*

On June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1940, aged 9, I assembled with other classmates in the playground of Drapers Mill school in Margate, Kent. We were being evacuated and at that time had no idea where we were being sent. They had told us at school that we were probably going to Wales and we were told lovely stories about mountains and rivers and streams, it sounded idyllic and though I am not sure my parents had decided to let me be evacuated because of what we had been told, I asked them if I could go.

All we had with us was a change of clothing, our gas mask, a set of cutlery which my dad had engraved with my initials on and still have to this day, a small amount of money and a comic to read. If I remember correctly our mothers had packed us some food for the journey. At some point we were given a luggage type label to pin onto our coats which had a number on it – mine was No.7.



*Margaret leaving home*



*At Drapers Mill School playground  
awaiting transport*

At Margate station we boarded a train with no corridors and spent several hours squashed together in the carriages. We must have had comfort stops but I don't remember any. I do remember stopping for long periods of time in what seemed like the middle of nowhere; this happened several times. At one stop there was a train full of soldiers next to us and they passed us their chocolate through the windows.

It was probably Lichfield where we finally got off the train, but we still had no idea where we were. I have no recollection of the next part of the journey, but there must have been transport waiting for us. We eventually ended up in a bleak bare room full of people. Some seemed very busy and I feel sure they were the people waiting to take an evacuee home. It was a comfortless situation, we stood in a group and no-one asked us if we would like a drink etc. The only positive thing that happened was that we were all 'inspected' and some of the poor children came out with a big mauve D painted on their foreheads, which I presume meant that they had dirty heads.

Gradually my classmates left, presumably to go to their billets. The room was left almost empty apart from the officials. I was the only evacuee left, still standing, as we had been throughout the process. I remember one man in particular, he was probably the billeting officer, and very officious. I can see him clearly to this day – short, plump with a dark suit and a bowler hat ... and very agitated. Eventually I heard someone say "We had better send her Ellen Rock's". On reflection I think that they had probably run out of billets and Mrs. Rock would only have an evacuee if it became necessary.

The man in the bowler hat took me from the building and out into the village. Remembering the direction the walk took I feel sure that we had been in the school. Eventually we stopped by the side of a field. Over on the far side were three cottages next to the church; he pointed these out to me, told me that's where I had to go and left me to go the rest of the way on my own. They were the only words he had spoken to me since we left the school. When I got to the cottage nearest the church there was a lady waiting on the doorstep. Telephones were not very common in those days so someone must have run on ahead to warn Mrs. Rock to expect me. "You're not very big are you?" were her first words to me. So began my life as an evacuee.



*1,3 &5 Church Lane. Margaret was billeted at No. 5*

My first horror was the toilet facility, it was situated at the top of next door's garden – at first I thought it was a shed, but soon found out it wasn't. I had never seen anything like it, and it took me a while to realise there was no flush. In my time in Kings Bromley I got used to Mr. Rock and his father 'digging out' what was in 'the shed' about twice a year. The cottage was cosy and well cared for. I had a tiny slip of a room straight off the top of the stairs. There was a bed and a chest of drawers, very clean and cosy. I remember that first night the church clock kept me awake as it struck every fifteen minutes.

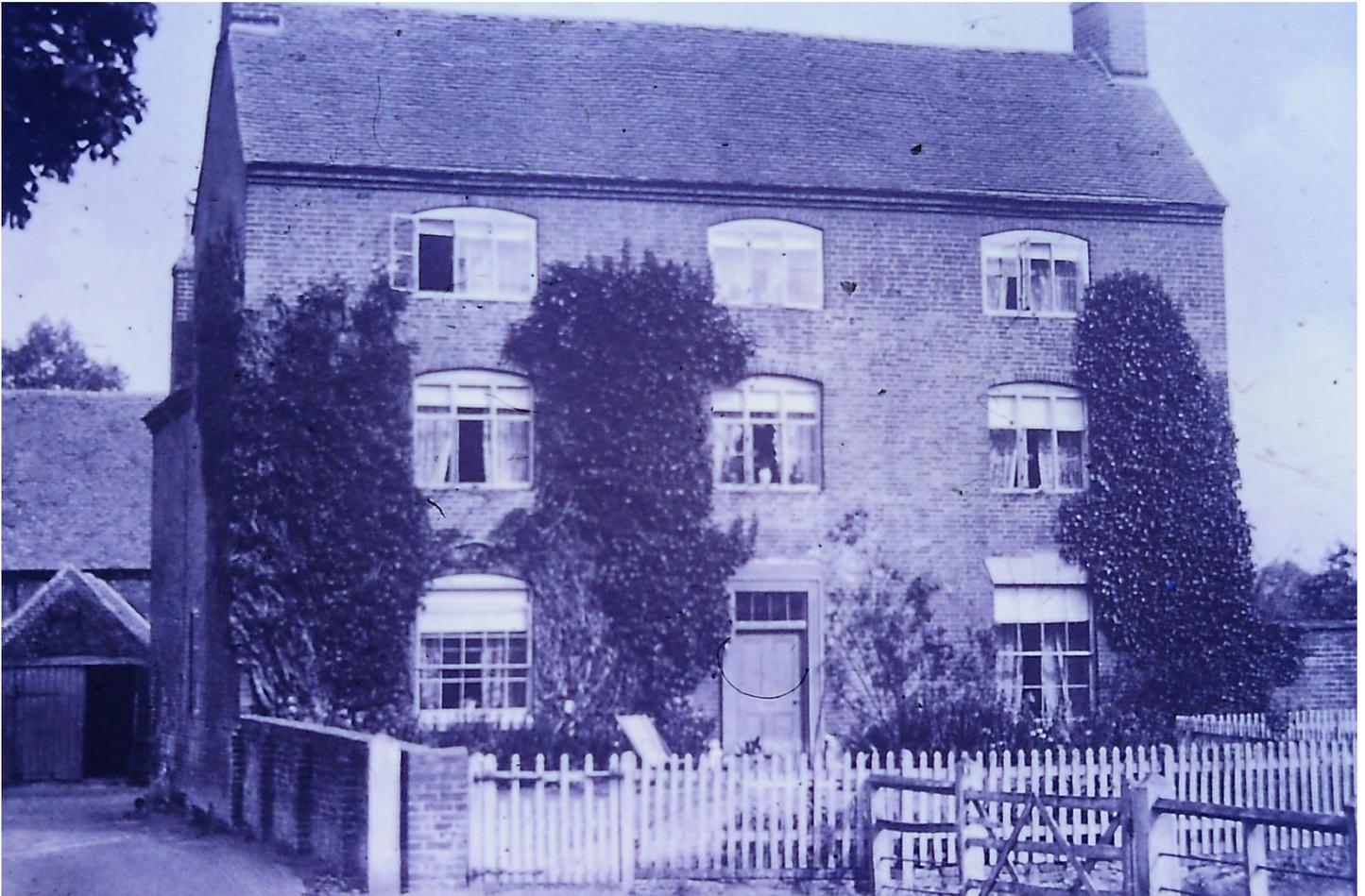
Looking back, I am surprised I didn't feel homesick and want my mum, but it had been a long day and I still really didn't know where I was – just amongst strangers in a completely new environment. It must have been hard for our parents also not knowing where we were until we wrote home. I think Mrs. Rock made me write home the next day.

Mr. Rock was a carpenter and went off to work on a motor bike; he was very kind and called me "his little evacuee". Mr. Rock's parents lived next door and were a very kindly couple.



*Mr. and Mrs. Rock senior,, who lived at No.3 Church Lane*

There were occupants in the end cottage who I believe were a mother and son, but very little was seen of them. At the far end of the lane was what seemed to be a large house - we were never encouraged to go down there. It was known, I believe as 'Scholcher's Farm', but whether that is correct or not I am not sure. There never seemed to be any activity there.



*Church Farm at the end of Church Lane in the '50s. Known as 'Scholchers Farm' to Margaret*

Both Mr. Rocks were bell ringers, so consequently most of Sunday was spent in church, morning service, Sunday school and evening service. Mr. Rock senior was the village blacksmith and worked in a forge in Manor Road. As a town girl I had never seen the likes of it before and found it fascinating to watch Mr. Rock work the big bellows and keep the fire going. Mr. Rock had a sister who lived in Burton on Trent who was a very kind soul like her mother.

As I mentioned, we only had one change of clothes and Mrs. Cooper, being a dress maker, made me two very pretty summer frocks. Other people I remember in the village were Ellen Loverock, who ran the post office - she was a friend of Mrs. Rock, and often visited for tea. There was also a Miss Therwell, who ran a general store along the same road as the Institute - she was rather a formidable lady. Another prominent lady was a Miss Shackleton - she lived along Manor Road and was involved in quite a lot of village activities I believe. There was a family called Oakley who had some of the evacuees - I think they lived in a thatched cottage.

I can't remember when we started school, but think we evacuees all went together. I remember the village children watching us. As I remember it the school was on the Lichfield road and I seem to have Shaw Lane in my mind, but that might not be correct. The school had two classrooms divide by a thin glass and wood partition which at times made learning difficult as you could hear the teacher in the next class. I was in a class of older children and I believe our teacher was a Miss Archer. The only thing I can recall about the other teacher who had the younger children was that she seemed quite little and had white hair.

I think it was probably in conjunction with the school that we all assembled in the Institute one day to have our gas masks checked - which was quite a frightening experience. I remember us all standing in line and when your turn came an official clamped something over your mask and for a few frightening seconds you couldn't breathe. It was probably a necessary item, but it would have helped if someone had explained what was going to happen. I only remember having the experience once in all the time I was in Kings Bromley.

At some point Mrs. Rock senior, next door, took in one of the evacuees (*June Edwards*) who had been previously been billeted at the Vicarage. I don't know what the circumstances were but she was a companion for me and we spent time together and were given a small patch of garden to call our own. I don't remember if we ever grew anything. Both of the gardens owned by the Rocks grew a lot of vegetables. June's mother came to stay for long periods of time and took us out – hence the photo (*see below*) of us sitting on the railings by the river down the Yoxall road.



In the summer we spent a lot of time outdoors, fishing for tiddlers in the streams, playing on one of the farms and sometimes having a ride home on a hay cart. We also played by the river. Just along the Yoxall road there was an opening and a small pebbled area that led us to the river. We only paddled at the edges trying to catch fish and getting our legs covered in leeches.

Another thing we used to do was to collect empty bottles and take them round the back of the Royal Oak where we would be given a large biscuit called a Lincoln Cream. We were doing that one day when one of the girls spotted a removal van across the road which was from Margate. It turned out to be her father and my uncle who worked for the firm and were delivering furniture nearby.



*June with Margaret and her mother and sister on a visit. The dolls and pram were sent up by rail and transport from Margate*

I remember a party being given for us at a house called The Priory [Actually the Friary where Major John Cyril Thompson lived. Major Thompson was a churchwarden until 1943, a trustee of the United Charities throughout the war and a Parish Councillor until 1944]. I think it was on the same road as the Institute – I refer to that as I cannot remember the name of the road. It was a lovely house behind high brick walls, or so it seemed at that time. There was a lovely tea and I am sure we all had a gift.

I don't know where people did their shopping but I know a milk cart used to come round with big churns and we used to go out with a jug for our requirements. I also remember going to the farm with a can to get milk. Sometimes there was a dead bird left at the gate which was probably a rook, as I remember Mrs. Rock making rook pie. Mrs. Rock senior used to hand a bag of milk outside her back door which dripped for several days, and I can only think it resulted in cottage cheese. Consequently we were never short of food.

A bus used to come to the village about once a week, I think, to go to Lichfield. I was taken to Burton on Trent for a visit to Mr. Rock's sister and also to Rugeley where Mrs. Rock had a sister, but that was the extent of my travel – life was in the village. My mother used to send me sweets, mostly a selection of toffees. I suppose I must have had some sweet coupons but I can't remember spending them.



*Margaret and June in their summer frocks outside No. 5. Mrs Ellen Rock is holding her dog Rex. Next to her is a white board which would change colour to indicate a gas raid.*

Winter was pretty grim. I had never seen so much snow as we had and of course the river overflowed and covered the Yoxall road and swamped the fields up to the walls of the cottage. I don't think it got into our gardens, but it was certainly very close and just one lake of water. It was of course at that time that the accident happened with Eileen Hills. I remember the day well, it must have been a Saturday or we would have all been at school. I was at home with Mrs. Rock when we heard people shouting. We went outside and saw a lot of people running down the Yoxall road and one lady I can still see clearly saying "Eileen's in the river" over and over again as she ran down the road. I suppose a group of children were playing in the gap that we used in the summer, but with the water and flooding as it was it was very dangerous. I don't remember a lot about what happened eventually – perhaps Mrs. Rock didn't tell me. I also don't know whether Eileen's sister Violet stayed in the village or went home. [*She didn't, she went home*]

At Christmas I remember Mrs. Rock senior plucking chickens by the fire and my Mrs. Rock boiling puddings in the scullery copper. On Christmas Eve I moved next door and shared a room with June and we both woke up next morning to a lovely selection of presents at the bottom of the bed. I don't know if my parents had sent some, but we were very lucky. Mr. and Mrs. Rock came to dinner and I remember indoor fireworks being lit and Mrs. Rock senior frantically trying to put out one as it floated upwards towards the paper chains. It was a lovely day to remember.

A couple of bombs fell on the village. One was at the end of Manor Road and the whole village must have walked up there to view the crater. I don't know where the other bomb fell. I know we used to hear planes sometimes at night and believe they were German raiders on their way home from bombing the cities and it was well known that they would drop any remaining bombs.

I had been in Kings Bromley for two years when Mrs. Rock said to me one day that I was going home and she had a letter from my mother to that effect. I don't know why the decision was made but think my parents thought the worst of the raids were over and just wanted me home. My dad came to collect me and so began the long journey back. I don't know how we got to Lichfield and the only part of the journey I remember was crossing London in a taxi and going past Buckingham Palace and all the balloons in the sky. Some of my friends were back home from various parts of Staffordshire and don't know if they were like me a returned home with a broad Brummie accent.

I kept in touch with the Rocks for a long time and went back to see them in my early twenties. Mrs Rock by then had a son of her own called Kenneth. The last communication I had was from Mr. Rock telling me his mother had died. An evacuee that returned to the village frequently after the war told me she thought Ellen Rock had died quite young and Mr. Rock eventually remarried, but of course I don't know if that is correct. It is a long time ago now and looking on the internet I see so much has changed in the village, the field where we used to play round the big tree opposite the cottage is now a housing estate. I remember at the far side of the field where the billeting officer had left me all those years ago was a little house in which a Mrs. Jackson lived. She took me there one day to show me her dog Judy's puppies – I wonder if she is still there. I am sure there are still some items I have left out, but to the best of my abilities I have recorded those I remember most. Of the Kings Bromley evacuees, I still see Phyllis Allan who lives quite near me, and also Joan Horn. A lot of us were at school together after the war but gradually with marriage and some moving away we lost touch. I understand that Arthur Verral stayed in Staffordshire and went down the mines.



*Margaret, Mrs. Rock senior, Mrs Rock junior (Ellen), June*

# Peggy Horn's Story

*Peggy Horn was billeted at 3 Alrewas Rd, (Guidepost Cottage) with Mr. & Mrs. Bradbury. Her sisters Joyce and Joan came with the 2<sup>nd</sup> June contingent.*

Prior to going to Staffordshire I lived at 12 Milton Avenue in Margate, with my parents and younger brother (my sisters had already left!). I was five and a half years old when I was evacuated. I didn't go when the schools went on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1940, but followed some time later. I remember being on a train with lots of other children. When we left the train we went on to a couple of charabancs as coaches were then called. My next memory is of arriving at the cottage of Mr. & Mrs. Bradbury, seeing a large open fire with a big black pot of water bubbling away in it – the only way to get hot water there! There were three children in the foster family, but they were much older than me. One daughter was married and a son was in the armed forces, but there was still a girl, Mary at home with her parents.



*Peggy Horn with Mary Bradbury in Kings Bromley in the summer of 1942*



*Mr Bradbury*

The strange thing I remember about the cottage is that it had an outside, bucket type toilet and a pump in the yard, although we did have a cold tap inside the cottage.

Mr and Mrs Bradbury were kind to me and treated me as one of their own children. I was well fed and clothed and was often taken on outings to nearby towns and villages. Buses were few and far between so we didn't travel too far from home.



*Jubilee celebrations at Kings Bromley crossroads in 1937.  
The Bradburys lived in the thatched cottage.*

The school at Kings Bromley was two rooms in a large house, which is where I first started school. One room was for the infants, and the other for the juniors. The older children went to schools in Lichfield or Rugeley. I was introduced to the Peter Rabbit stories and soon learnt to read. I don't recall having any trouble with the local children. I did have a special friend, Lucy, but as I was only eight years old when we returned to Margate, we soon lost touch with each other.

I have been back to Kings Bromley twice since the end of the war. The first time when I was fourteen years old. I went for a week with my sister Joyce, and stayed with her foster parents, Mr and Mrs Jackson. The second time I went back was with my husband and our two children in 1970. We met some of the family that my husband had stayed with, but we didn't meet anyone that I knew. My own foster mother, Mrs. Bradbury, came to see me in Westgate soon after I was married, and it was nice meeting her again.

The only thing I recall that was in any way related to the war, whilst I was evacuated, was when a convoy of army lorries drove through the village. Mostly I remember my time in Kings Bromley as a peaceful time; a happy childhood paddling in the streams, walking through the fields, and picking blackberries and wild flowers.

I returned home to Margate in late August 1943. I went to Salmestone School – and spent most of the time in the shelters, having spelling-bees while the air raids were on. We were not allowed on the beach because it was covered in barbed wire. Apart from that, life went on as normal.



*Margaret Evans (later Oldham), in about 1938, standing on the site of the old almshouses by the crossroads. 3 Alrewas Road, where Peggy Horn stayed, is the thatched cottage behind and on the right.*

## Joan Horn's Story

*Joan Horn (now Mrs Jevons) was first billeted at 77 Alrewas Rd, with Mr. & Mrs. Bailey. She came with her sister Joyce with the 2<sup>nd</sup> June contingent. She subsequently moved in with Mr. and Mrs. Wood at Ivy House.*

I can well recall the day we left Margate, with my gas mask in a small tin, and a small attache case with my meagre belongings in. It was Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1940 and it was the first time I had travelled such a long distance. I can well remember that on the way our train stopped and there opposite was another train crowded with troops, who passed meat pies and oranges over to us. When we arrived at Lichfield we were put on to coaches and sent to the out-lying villages and towns. Our own destination was to be Kings Bromley and in the village hall we were offered a glass of milk from a churn, which to me was the best drink I have ever had, ice-cold and very refreshing!

My sister Joyce and I were collected by Mrs Bailey who lived in the 'new' council houses. It was beautifully clean and bright. Mr. Bailey worked on a local farm. We stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Bailey for two years, then Mr. Bailey secured another job in Alrewas and we were unable to go with them. Next door was a family called Evans, and I became very friendly with Margaret, their daughter [see above], whom I still visit to this day. We spent some lovely times in Kings Bromley taking packed lunches down to the fields, catching minnows in the streams. It was especially exciting at hay-making times, as we used to get a ride back and forth on top of the wagons. We also went mushrooming – nothing tastes quite so nice as when you have picked them yourself.

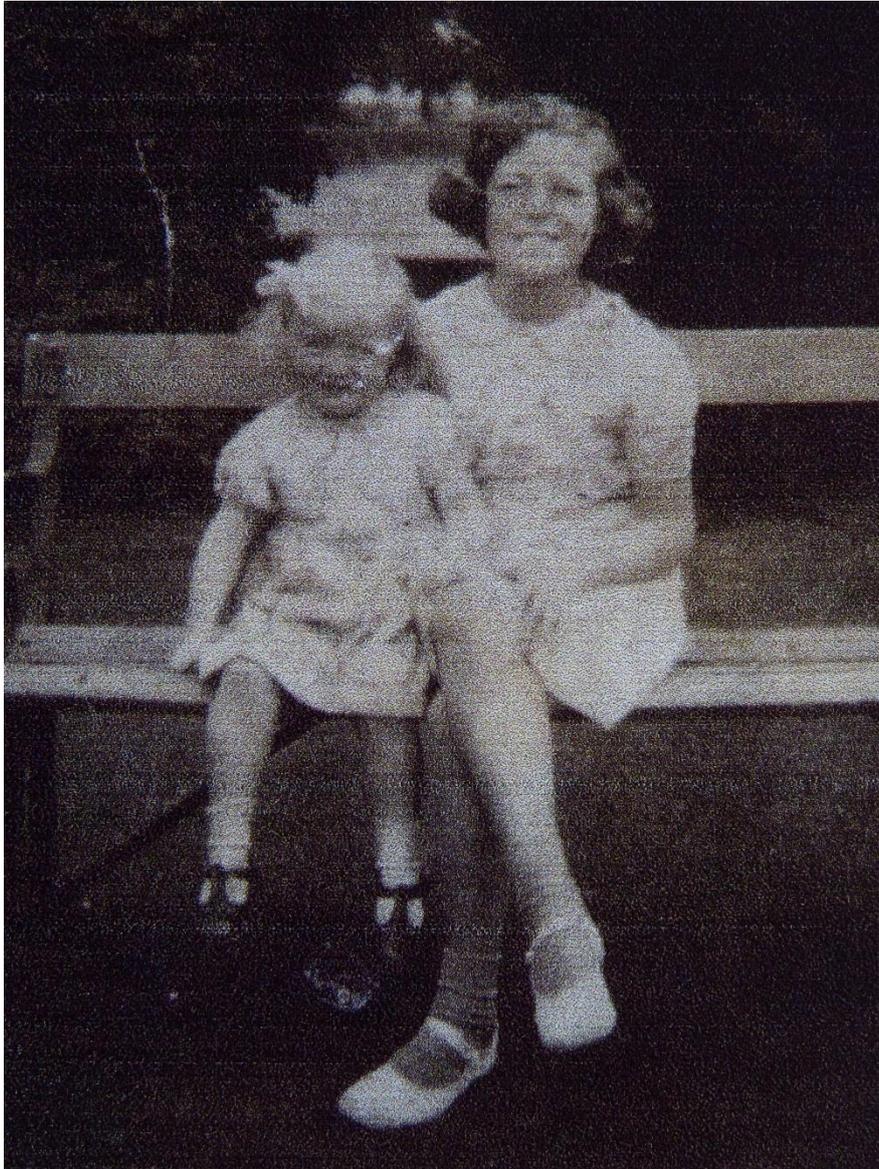
The road we lived in stretched from one end of the village to the other and, in holiday times, we would use the banks and grass verge opposite to lay out our 'houses' with bricks and stones and play 'happy families'. On reflection this was a truly idyllic time.



*The 'new' council houses. These were built in 1937, so when the evacuees arrived, Mr. & Mrs Bailey at 77 and Mr and Mrs Evans at 79 had only just moved in. 75 & 77 are the first semi on the left.*

Margaret, my friend, once wrote in a composition, 'Joan Horn and I played mud pies in the holidays, this was making cakes out of mud, and opening a shop!' This must have amused the teacher, because Margaret had to read the composition to the class!

After leaving the Baileys my sister and I were split up. She went to Mr. And Mrs. Jackson, and I went to Mr. and Mrs. Wood who were retired farmers [and lived in Ivy House]. They had a daughter, Mrs. Harris who helped to look after me. She is now in her late eighties and I go to see her most years. They were all very kind to me. Mr. Wood loved teasing me, and when he found out that I wasn't fond of my second name, Maud, I was forever called 'Maudie'.



*Joan Horn and Betty Wood at Ivy House*

Mr. and Mrs. Wood had a son and daughter with farms; I would go and stay with them in school holidays and when it was potato picking times. All in all I was a very lucky evacuee. I think I found it hard to integrate into my own large family when I first came home, because I had been the only child for some time during my evacuation.

The village of Kings Bromley is now very built up, and the lovely cottages are mostly occupied by people who travel daily to Birmingham and other places. Mrs. Harris was, until 1977, treasurer at the local church, and she is truly a wonderful lady. When my husband and I go to stay, she still does all the cooking. Incidentally, my husband was evacuated to Chase Town, but I didn't know of him at the time.



*Kings Bromley in 1937, Ivy House is the last building on the right by the traffic sign*



*Joan Horn in the 1950s*

# Joyce Horn's Story

*Joyce Horn (now Mrs Morrell) was billeted with her sister Joan at 77 Alrewas Rd, with Mr. & Mrs. Bailey. She subsequently moved in with Mr.ans Mrs.Grundy at 71 Alrewas Road.*

We were evacuated on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1940, when the evacuation of Dunkirk was taking place and the threat of invasion seemed imminent. At school we were given a list of things we were to take with us; a clean change of clothing; toothbrush and toothpaste; flannel; hairbrush etc., plus the issued gas mask! On the day of departure we assembled at school and were given labels to attach to our coats, then we were taken to the buses waiting outside. Many parents were there to see us off and most of them were in tears as we said our goodbyes. When we arrived at Margate station there were lots of troops; some of them wearing funny shaped tin helmets! They were survivors from Dunkirk. Once aboard the train we set off for Lichfield in Staffordshire and the journey took most of the day. When we arrived at our destination we were put onto buses and taken to a hall and given orange squash and biscuits. Then a nurse came to check us over. We were then sorted into groups and put on more buses to go to our final destinations.

My sister Joan and I stayed together – because my mum has told me to look after her! We arrived at the local school in Kings Bromley and were given a large glass of milk straight out of a big milk churn. Then a group of people who were to be our foster parents came forward to take us to their homes. Joan and I were lucky. We were taken in an open top car and when we got to our new home, there was a picnic set out with sandwiches, cakes and strawberries and cream. We settled down really well, made many friends and were invited into many of the houses for parties. Many of the local children laughed at the way we spoke.

Schooling was arranged so that one week the evacuees used the school and the local children used the Institute [Village Hall], and the following week we would change around, alternating between the two locations. We spent a lot of time outdoors. The summer of 1940 was wonderful. We would play in the meadows, paddle in the streams and walk along the country lanes. When our time came to leave the junior school, we went to Rugeley Secondary school. A bus collected us and brought us back each day. During the harvest time we were allowed two weeks off to help the farmers potato picking [at Riley's farm]. We also picked sprouts which was very cold to our hands. I think most of the children in Kings Bromley were happy and had decent foster homes.



*Potato picking at Lupin Farm in the 1950s*

The nearest we ever got to the war in Kings Bromley was one night while I was lying in bed, I heard lots of aircraft flying over. I jumped out of bed and looked out of the window and could see that the searchlights from the air base at Fradley, about a mile away, were lighting up the skies. Suddenly there was a terrific bang. One of the German planes had released a bomb on its way back from bombing Coventry. Luckily it had exploded in the River Trent. Another exciting memory is when a Spitfire crashed in a field just up the lane from our school. We were all curious and went to see the wreckage. We managed to get some perspex from the aircraft and my friend Margaret's brother, who was home on leave from the RAF, made us a pendant each out of it, and a little figurine for his mum.

One very sad incident that happened at Kings Bromley was when one of the young evacuees was drowned. Her name was Eileen Hills. She was with her sister and a friend walking on a little wooden bridge over a weir. The water was very high and Eileen slipped on the wet surface, lost her balance and fell into the water which was flowing very fast. She was wearing wellington boots and a 'teddy bear' coat when she fell. She was pulled under the water and was later found a mile away downstream.

Joan and I were separated when our foster father left his job as head cowman to take up a job with the Forestry Commission near Birmingham, but we were both very lucky once again to go to very nice families.



*Mrs. Frances Grundy, Mr. Tom Grundy and Mrs. Millie Hall*

Joan still visits her foster family once a year. I have been back four or five times since the end of the war and I still keep in touch with one of the girls. I think it was a great experience; my sisters and I often talk over different things that happened in our young lives. After four and a half years away from home I was probably the last evacuee to leave Kings Bromley; I returned home on a train full of troops. My brother Jack and sister Marjorie met me in London.

When I had been home a month, I got my first job. It seemed very strange being back with my own family – and two new brothers! But I eventually settled down. When I was sixteen, I was asked to join the WVS, along with my sister Marjorie and her sister Barbara Stockbridge. We would either work in the canteen in Margate High Street, or the NAAFI along the seafront. We made friends with the services and watched them go off to Arnhem in the gliders and planes.

I was ten and a half years old when I left Margate in June 1940; little did I realise the day we left home, that it would be such a long ‘holiday’!



*Joyce, Peggy and Joan Horn*

# Marjorie Horn's Story

*Marjorie Horn (now Mrs Kelsey) was 13 when she was evacuated with her two sisters (Joyce, Joan) and brother Jack on 2<sup>nd</sup> June.. She was sent to Great Wyrley and only stayed for 2 months. Jack went to Hednesford. Joyce and Joan, as we have seen, went to Kings Bromley and were followed there later by Peggy.*

There were six children in our family and four of us were at various schools in Margate. My sisters Joyce and Joan were at Drapers Mill School. My brother Jack was at Pettman Central School and I was at Lausanne Central School.

On the day of evacuation in June 1940 we all reported to our different schools. Because Joyce and Joan were the youngest, it was only right that my mother should see them off from their school, so Jack and I had to say our goodbyes at home before we left. Because we all went to different schools, we were destined for different areas of Staffordshire! [and went on different trains]

....

I learnt from my mother that my brother Jack had gone to Hednesford and that Joan and Joyce were living in Kings Bromley. I managed to save enough money to go and see Jack, who was the nearest. He lived with a very nice couple at Hill Street. They made me very welcome, but Jack was very homesick. I made other visits to see him.

....

My time there was really short. I was fourteen on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1940, so when we broke up for the summer holidays I was put on the register to start work at Courtaulds in Walsall. In the mean-time my mother came up from Margate with the two younger children, but she couldn't settle and wanted to go back home. My father's job took him all over the country delivering all sorts of things, and he had to come close to where we were living to deliver some mattresses. When he arrived he said he would take us back home. The problem was that only father had a permit to allow him to enter Thanet which by this time was a restricted area.

Anyway we travelled back as far as Canterbury and then mother, the two youngsters and I all hid under the mattresses for the rest of the journey to Margate. We had to stop at a checkpoint at St Nicholas-at Wade, but we all kept quiet and managed to get through without any trouble. There were only four families left in our road when we got home. I spent the rest of the war in Margate. I shall always remember watching the 'dog fights' in the sky over Kent, being machine-gunned on my way home from work and watching from my office window as the bombs were falling. The 'doodlebugs' were scary at first, but like the bombing we soon got used to it – and survived.

I managed to save enough money after about a year to go and see Joan and Joyce who were still at Kings Bromley.

Finally, when we were all back together again as a family towards the end of the war, it was noticeable how each of us had developed, having lived with different people. One sister was very domesticated, another was very spoilt, and my other sister had become a real country person.

# June Edwards' Story

*June Edwards (now Mrs Cawood) was billeted first with the Rev. and Mrs. Allen at the Vicarage and then at Mr. and Mrs. Rock Snr in 2 Church Lane, next to Margaret Edmunds.*

We all met outside Drapers Mills School, Margate, on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1940, with our gas masks and rucksacks. I was just two months shorts of my tenth birthday. Coaches took us to Margate station where we boarded a train which was to take us direct to Lichfield in Staffordshire. The journey took ages and there were many stops on the way to let troop trains pass.

When we got to Lichfield, coaches took us to Kings Bromley village school where we were all given a glass of milk and then we were allocated to our foster parents. My friend Eileen Morley and I had been told to stay together. The two of us and a third girl, Phyllis Allen, were allocated to Mrs. Allen the local vicar's wife. Phyllis was crying as we walked up through the village, dropping evacuees off at different houses. It was a very rural village and we had to tread carefully on the path to avoid 'cow pats'. On reaching the vicarage a flock of geese came hissing and honking at us and the three of us were terrified.

The vicarage was like a mansion with a huge tiled hallway and at the top of the staircase was a balcony with rooms leading off. Outside there was a dairy, stables, orchards – and many chickens, geese and cats etc.



*The Vicarage in 1937*

We went to the village school where at ten year's old we made our first dresses by hand and they were very nice. We were not allowed to play with the local children [*by the Allens*]. Shortly after our arrival at the vicarage, two nephews and a niece of Mrs. Allen arrived from London. They were one, two and three years old and Eileen, Phyllis and I had one each to look after.



*The Rev. Allen in the Vicarage Garden with the new Council houses behind. He was vicar until 1942.  
The Rev. N.P.Stevens took over in 1943. .*

Being an only child I suppose I 'played up' a bit and soon I was found another billet, this time with Mr. and Mrs. Rock [*Mr. & Mrs. Rock snr. lived in Church Lane*]. Mr. and Mrs. Rock had two grown up children and one of them lived next door where a school friend, Margaret Edmunds, was billeted. Mr. Rock snr. was the village blacksmith [*his forge was in Manor Road*].



*Church Lane. The Rocks snr. lived in the middle cottage. The. Rocks jnr. in the right hand cottage.*

The vicar's wife found out that I hadn't been christened, so in April 1941 arrangements were made for me to be christened. My mother travelled up from Margate for me to be confirmed. She had never left Margate before so she found the journey daunting. I was very shy at meeting her again. June and



*Margaret Edmunds on the Yoxall Road with New Trent Behind*

I was very happy living with Mr. and Mrs. Rock. I Had a lot more freedom and their daughter taught me a lot about sewing which I still enjoy doing. I still have particular memories of my time in Kings Bromley: like the milkman, 'Old Groves' who had a wonky eye and drove a high stepping pony and trap. He brought the milk around in a large churn and we would leave a jug on the wall for him to fill up:



Then I remember when the Hills girl was drowned and the first time army convoys passed through the village. During harvest time we were given time off from school to help with potato picking, probably because most of the village men were away at the war. When I reached eleven years old I went by bus each day to Rugeley senior school. It was a ten miles journey by 'double decker', with all the boys upstairs and the girls downstairs. We were always mucking about on the bus and one day Margaret Pearce fell out!.

The war came quite close to us on a couple of occasions. I remember the milk factory on the outskirts of the village being bombed, and once a plane crashed in the village, leaving the pilot dead in a tree.. Over a period of time many of the evacuees had drifted back home. Of the 52 evacuees I started with, by the time I left to return to Margate there were just three. One of the girls from Margate was abandoned in Kings Bromley by her family and was eventually taken into care. When I finally returned home I had such a strong accent that mum and dad couldn't understand me at first. I have very fond memories of my stay in Kings Bromley. We had a lot of freedom and I think we grew up and matured quite fast.

# Phyllis Allen's Story

*Phyllis Allen, (now Mrs Vale) was billeted with the Rev. and Mrs. Allen at the Vicarage along with Eileen Morley and June Edwards, who subsequently moved in with Mr. and Mrs. Rock senior.*

On June 10<sup>th</sup> 1940 we were sent away (owing to the war) to the Midlands. I first went to Kings Bromley nr. Lichfield. I can remember first going to the school and all of us were in a line waiting to be picked up by one of the villagers to live with them. I hung on to my friend Eileen Morley so we could stay together. But a short tubby lady thought differently and took Eileen and another girl called June Edwards. I just cried and the tubby lady asked my name and I told her Phyllis Allen she said you had better come as well as my name is Allen and my sister is Phyllis, so that is how I got to the vicarage with Eileen and June. It was a big house standing in grounds (about three acres), woods and orchards and a very big garden.

They had two children of their own, Michael and Ann, the same age as us, ten and twelve years old. When we had been there a few weeks Mrs. Allen's sister and two nephews came to stay. They came from Northfleet, so that made eight children – we had great fun. I can remember there were a few bombs dropped all around the village (no damage) so we all came down stairs and slept in one big room. The room led out into the garden. When the fruit was ripe we had a midnight feast, but we got caught. Next night we were put to bed early with a good dose of cod liver oil. After the feast we didn't need it.



*Mrs Allen with two evacuees (Phyllis and Eileen?) in the Vicarage Garden*

Mum sent my bike up to me. [That] made my life a lot better as I had got something from home.

I can remember that we all got nits in our hair so we did not go to school for a whole week, but we had our hair washed and combed with a fine toothed comb until our heads were sore. Another time I hurt my foot but I was made to go to school – Eileen and June carried me. We went over the fields, forgetting about the bull, but luckily he just looked at us. When we got to school it was a day for [the] doctor, so he wanted to know what was wrong. We told him and he made Mrs. Allen keep me at home as I really had a sprained ankle. I was off for two weeks.



*The Old Vicarage in 1937*

It was not too long after this Mum and my sister came to live at Kings Bromley owing to Mum having been in hospital. She stayed at Mrs. Osborne's in a thatched cottage. Mrs Osborne used to do raspberry teas. She gave me some once with some milk on and maggots were floating on top. I have not liked raspberries ever since.

But I do remember the young girl that was drowned in the river Trent, and the bombs that fell in a field. Also Mrs. Allen used to do the baby clinic at the house.

Joan Horn and her sister Joyce, as they were then, we still see each other now and again. Joan only lives two roads away.