

# Evacuation

Jim woke up on September 4th and looked out of the window at the grey Manchester sky and the familiar row of terraced houses on the opposite side of Raglan Street which mirrored the one from which he now stared unhappily. It was hard to believe that the country was at war with Germany because nothing looked any different and yet he knew that his life would never be the same again. He pressed his face against the glass and tried to soak the details of the street into his mind so that he would never forget.

Downstairs Mum was buttering bread, "There you go," she said, "two slices today. Eat up, who knows how long it will be before you get something else to eat." She forced a smile, "I bet you'll be having eggs for breakfast in the country!"

"I wish I could stay here," he said. He glanced at Mum, she looked very sad as she checked the contents of his little suitcase again. She lifted out the teddy bear he'd packed, pressed it to her lips for a moment and then placed it gently on top of his blue jumper and closed the case.

As they walked down the street, Jim looked back over his shoulder at his house for a second and wondered when he would see it again. He fingered the cardboard box containing his gas mask and the label that hung from the button of his coat, on it were written his name and age, his address and school. He felt like a parcel.

When they arrived, the school playground was already a sea of bewildered faces with children lining up and weeping parents saying their farewells. Then, with Mr Moss at the head of the line, they marched purposefully towards the railway

station and the train that would take them to the safety of the countryside.

Jim had never been on a train before and even though he felt horrible about leaving Mum, the sight and smell of the billowing engine was very exciting. He waited his turn to climb aboard one of the carriages and took his seat next to the window. As the train pulled out of the station, Jim listened to the buzz of conversation among the other children, some were distressed because they thought they would never see their parents again, others were optimistic that they would only be in the country for a couple of weeks.

Jim watched the grey buildings of the city disappear and for the first time in his life he saw wide, green fields and cows and horses. They passed through villages and towns and just when Jim felt that the journey would never end, he felt the train slow down and the signs said that they were in Preston.

Passers-by applauded and cheered as they marched through the streets to a large school building where they were given a carrier bag containing emergency rations. Jim peeped into the bag and was amazed to see tins of corned beef and condensed milk. He hoped he would live with someone who had a tin opener! There was also a big bar of chocolate and he wasn't surprised to see that some of the children were already eating theirs.

At last all the children from Jim's class were taken to a bus, which drove them to Woodforth, the village where they would be staying. The roads twisted and turned past farmhouses, churches,



chapels and pubs and at long last drew up in front of Woodforth Village Hall. They were now close to the end of their long journey. Jim felt as though he had entered a completely different world and wondered how long it would be before he saw the streets of Manchester again.

Inside the Hall, trestle tables full of cakes and sandwiches welcomed the weary travellers and Jim was glad he had resisted eating the chocolate bar. "Welcome! Welcome!" shouted a lady in a large, feathery hat when they had finished eating. A hush fell over the room, "Welcome to Woodforth, boys and girls. I trust that you have enjoyed your tea and now we are coming to the part of the day when we shall tell you where you are going to stay. I expect many of you are feeling a little bit homesick but try not to worry, we are going to look after you. And hopefully the war will soon be over and you can go back to your parents."

Jim listened carefully as she began to read down the list. When she read out his name, a kind looking lady stepped forward to shake his hand. He smiled nervously at her and to his relief she smiled back.

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## Section A

Choose the best word or group of words to fit the passage and put a ring around your choice.

Jim looked out of his window. He could hardly believe his country was at war with

- 1 **France**                      **Italy**                      **Germany**                      **Japan**

as nothing looked any different. Downstairs his Mum was

- 2 **buttering bread**                      **making toast**  
**boiling an egg**                      **cooking sausages**

for breakfast. Mum gently placed his

- 3 **blue jumper**    **green shirt**    **spare shoes**    **teddy-bear**

into his suitcase. They walked to school and joined a line with

- 4 **Mum**                      **Jim**                      **Mr Moss**                      **Woodforth**

at the head. After the train journey they travelled by

- 5 **car**                      **bus**                      **plane**                      **ship**

to a village called Woodforth where they were welcomed by a tea of cakes and

- 6 **buns.**                      **pies.**                      **fruit.**                      **sandwiches.**

Jim waited until he was told who he was going to live with.

## Section B

- 1 Jim's 'life would never be the same again'. Why was Jim's life changing that day?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Why did Jim spend so long staring at the street before he went down for breakfast?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Why do you think Mum had to 'force a smile' while she was making breakfast?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 What made Jim decide 'He felt like a parcel.'?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Why were the parents weeping in the school playground?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6 What did Jim see for the first time in his life?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Why did Jim hope he would live with someone who had a tin opener?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8 What is meant by the statement 'Jim felt as though he had entered a completely different world'?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Section C

Write a short story telling what happened to Jim during the first evening he spent in Woodforth.