

# THE THREAT OF GERMAN BOMBING

Fear that German bombing would cause civilian deaths prompted the government to evacuate children, mothers with infants and the infirm from British towns and cities during the Second World War. Evacuation took place in several waves. The first came on 1 September 1939 - the day Germany invaded Poland and two days before the British **declaration of war**. Over the course of three days 1.5 million evacuees were sent to rural locations considered to be safe.



# LEAVING THE CITIES

Children were evacuated from cities across Britain. The children in this photograph are evacuees from Bristol, who have arrived at Brent railway station near Kingsbridge in Devon, 1940. Parents were issued with a list detailing what their children should take with them when evacuated. These items included a gas mask in case, a change of underclothes, night clothes, plimsolls (or slippers), spare stockings or socks, toothbrush, comb, towel, soap, face cloth, handkerchiefs and a warm coat. The children pictured here seem well-equipped for their journey, but many families struggled to provide their children with all of the items listed.

# RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Evacuation was a huge logistical exercise which required thousands of volunteer helpers. The first stage of the process began on 1 September 1939 and involved teachers, local authority officials, railway staff, and 17,000 members of the **Women's Voluntary Service (WVS)**. The WVS provided practical assistance, looking after tired and apprehensive evacuees at railway stations and providing refreshments in reception areas and billeting halls. Volunteers were also needed to host evacuees.