# Councillor uncovers family links in wartime evacuation stories from Dover to Gwent



Stories of children evacuated to Gwent from Dover and Folkestone during World War II have resurfaced following a local councillor's discovery of a book titled "Children into Exile," authored by Peter Hayward over 25 years ago. This book chronicles the experiences of children relocated from an area known as ‘Hellfire Corner,’ which was heavily bombed due to its proximity to occupied France.

Peter Strong, a former history teacher and local historian, sought out the book in Caldicot Library in order to gather information about wartime experiences in his village of Rogiet ahead of the coming 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day. Upon finding that the book remained available, he noted the account of Margaret Green, who had been sent to Rogiet, alongside her sister Marie, who was relocated to Undy.

Strong shared the revelations from the book with fellow councillor John Crook, who represents Magor East and Undy. To Crook's astonishment, he discovered that the stories contained in the book had direct connections to his own family. Marie Green, in her reminiscences, recalled living with Reverend Beard and his wife, while referring to Reverend Beard's sister, “Aunty Kate,” who was identified as John Crook’s mother.

“What a surprise to find the people mentioned in this book were my family, especially my mother, ‘Aunty Kate’,” remarked 78-year-old Crook, who was born in November 1946 after his father's return from the war. He reminisced about the family dynamics within St Martins Farm, situated across the road from Undy Church, which housed multiple generations including his uncle Arthur Beard's family and his paternal grandparents.

Reflecting on the era, Crook stated, “We were all one big happy family growing up together. Looking back, those were happy days although things were particularly hard and difficult after the war.” He shared a glimpse into his family's history, noting how his grandfather had moved from Newent in Gloucestershire to work on the railway at Severn Tunnel Junction, where he eventually became a senior signalman.

Councillor Peter Strong expressed his surprise at the book's longstanding availability in the library, noting it has been borrowed numerous times yet remains a treasure trove of local history. “It just shows that all sorts of unexpected treasures can be found in our local libraries,” he commented.

Fiona Ashley, a librarian with Monmouthshire County Council, emphasised the diverse reasons people visit libraries — whether for research, to read the latest publications, or to engage with community activities. She expressed enthusiasm over the newfound historical connection facilitated by the library, asserting confidence that more intriguing discoveries await in their collections.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.waterstones.com/book/children-into-exile/peter-hayward/9780721209463> - This link provides information about the book 'Children into Exile' by Peter Hayward, which chronicles the experiences of children evacuated from areas like 'Hellfire Corner' during World War II.
2. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-evacuated-children-of-the-second-world-war> - This article from the Imperial War Museum details the evacuation of children during World War II, including the relocation of children from heavily bombed areas such as 'Hellfire Corner' to safer regions.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/webarchive/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.co.uk%2Fblogs%2Fwales%2Fentries%2F8491965c-53af-35fd-b593-a085d0845d35> - This BBC blog discusses the evacuation of children to rural parts of Wales during World War II, highlighting the experiences of children relocated from urban areas to the countryside.
4. <https://www.academia.edu/217439/Wales_and_the_Second_World_War> - This academic paper provides insights into the evacuation of children to Wales during World War II, including the challenges faced by evacuees and their hosts.
5. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-evacuated-children-of-the-second-world-war> - This article from the Imperial War Museum details the evacuation of children during World War II, including the relocation of children from heavily bombed areas such as 'Hellfire Corner' to safer regions.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/videos/czx62wz15xlo> - This BBC video features a woman recalling her experience as a child evacuated to Wales during World War II, providing a personal account of the evacuation process and its impact.
7. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25140622.ve-day-surprise-undy-evacuee-link-uncovered-old-book/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data