

Ufford Heritage Trail

18. Evacuees' Oak Tree

In early September 1939, many school-age children were evacuated to Suffolk from Grays, Tilbury and Thurrock. Several came to Ufford and were billeted with families locally.



Returning exactly 50 years later, in September 1989, a group of the original evacuees and their families visited their wartime village friends and were entertained by Ufford Parish Council. To mark the occasion, an oak tree was planted at the junction at the top of The Avenue. The evacuees presented

Ufford with a framed pictorial map of Grays and an engraved glass goblet.

The following extract from Thurrock Council's history "Your Thurrock", to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day, describes what happened just before war was declared:

"Before the outbreak of war it had been decided that Thurrock would be a danger area because of its docks, oil refineries and large factories. A plan was therefore formulated to evacuate school children and their teachers from Thurrock. On 2nd September 1939 the children were escorted to Tilbury Landing Stage. An advert to this effect appeared in the Thurrock Gazette of 2nd September 1939 stating the evacuation day for Tilbury children was 2nd September whilst the rest of the youngsters from the area would go on 3rd September.

Children including Eileen Webb and her sister Jill assembled in their school playground at 6.00am complete with gas masks, night clothes and a change of clothing. They were taken by bus to the docks where they boarded the 'Royal Daffodil', 'Crested Eagle' or 'Golden Eagle' which would take them to safety in Suffolk."