

Wartime Evacuation

In June 1940 the children of Yarmouth were evacuated to Nottinghamshire. The High School had to share the buildings of Retford High School for Girls, and it was very difficult for everyone. Yarmouth girls had to attend from 8 a.m. to 10.30, then leave the building as the Retford girls took over until about 3 p.m., when Yarmouth came back until five o'clock. The Retford girls had only a twenty minute break in the middle of their time, so in all both schools had about 4½ hours schooling per day. Games and music took place outside of these hours. It was very difficult, and Yarmouth girls had to travel in the dark at both ends of the school day, in wartime when street lighting was very limited anyway. Miss Copeman and the teachers worked hard to keep the girls occupied in the hours when there was no school so that they didn't get under the feet of their 'billet mothers'. There were clubs and societies, Guides and games, and singing in the Ebsworth Hall with Mr Hunn.

Because it was so strange and difficult the slow haemorrhaging of girls began. A few drifted back to Yarmouth, losing the benefit of their grammar school education, but more moved to other towns in East Anglia which still had functioning High Schools. Some went to Norwich and others to Beccles, and gradually the school shrank from 200 plus to 100 plus. In 1942 under the new headmistress, Miss Kerr, Yarmouth High School acquired a large house, 'Glen Esk', where many lessons could take place, so both schools could resume a normal 9 to 4 timetable, though specialised subjects like Science and Domestic Science still had to share facilities. This eased the situation considerably but there was still great relief in 1944 when the school came home to Yarmouth. Its building on Trafalgar Road had suffered from bomb damage and from the billeting of soldiers. Much work had to be done before the girls could return in September 1944.

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