Barbara Male was a 12-year-old schoolgirl from south London who was evacuated with her school in June 1940 to Illogan, a small village near the north coast of Cornwall. On November 17th 1941, she wrote down all her experiences of her first year as an evacuee in an LCC school exercise book. This extract covers the period June 14th to October 30th in 1940.

*Setting out from London*

It was on June 14th 1940 that I left London. I did not know exactly where I was going. But I did know that we were going a very long way. We left Paddington about nine thirty a.m. Some of the very small children were crying. The children numbered about a hundred and eleven, including a number of teachers, helpers and Red Cross nurses. When the train left Paddington Station, the children brightened up. They soon forgot their troubles, and they were all looking out of the carriage window talking and laughing for all they were worth.

*The journey by train*

The journey was very long. Some of the children had books and comics to read, these they shared with the other children. The younger children began to get irritable as the time went on. They were not very interested in the scenery, and most of them had a nap later in the day. The older children of course enjoyed the journey. They occupied themselves by playing a few guessing games and watching the scenery as it went by the carriage window so fast. It was about five thirty p.m. that the train stopped at Cambourne Station. The children all jumped out of the train onto the small platform. There were a lot of village people outside the station, and boy scouts to help carry the cases, and to keep the people back.

*The final stage by bus, then tea*

We walked up the road and came to a school, we all went into the school-playground and waited around for a little while. A teacher came out and directed us to where there was a wooded hut, in which we could go and sit down. Water was being provided inside the hut, for those children who were thirsty. About half an hour later, we were told to line up in the playground. There were three or four buses outside the school-gate, waiting to take the children to another place. We still did not know where we were going. It was about half past six when we arrived at a little chapel. All the children and teachers were there. When we went inside we saw that there were tables laid for tea. The hostesses told us all to sit down, and we would be served with tea, and cakes.

*Billeting*

After tea, the tables were cleared and put away. The next thing was to billet the children. Inside a little room people were ready to see about billeting. First of all the single children were sent down into the little room. They were lucky because they were billeted early, but the bigger families were left until last and that made them very late in getting to their billets. There were only a few families that consisted of three or four children. Some of the children did not get to their billets until past ten o'clock, and of course they were so tired, that they could hardly keep awake. When they did at last have to walk to a billet that had been found for them, temporarily, they were too tired to walk there.

It was about half past eight when my sister and I arrived at our billet. We had to walk from the chapel to our billet, and being tired and carrying our cases, it seemed that we were never going to get there. When at last we did reach the house, we were glad to get in and sit down. The first thing I had to do was send a post card home, to say that we arrived safely, and were settled down for the night.

*The first days in Illogan*

The next morning soon came around, and when I woke up it seemed very strange. I sat up and I thought I heard my friend's voice, so I looked out of the window and saw her out in the yard with her two nieces. I got dressed as quickly as I could, and went down to her, she was very glad to see me, and she told me what happened to her after she left me, the previous night. She lived a long was away, and she was thinking of the long walk she would have, to school. It was about two miles away.

When I was ready, we went for a walk. We could not go very far as we did not know our way, and if we walked too far, my friend's nieces would be too tired to walk home, as they were only young children and could not walk very far.

Sunday morning I went to the church. We did not have very far to go. The sun was shining, and it was a beautiful morning. We got into the church about ten to eleven. It was a very nice service. It finished about quarter past twelve, then we went home to have our dinner. Sunday soon passed away, and then came Monday.

*First days at school*

We were all told by the teachers to meet at the Girls School on Monday morning. It was lovely to see all our friends again, and everyone seemed to be asking the same questions; "where are you living?" and "what are the people like?" All of the children seemed to be happy. Then came the rearranging of the school.

Miss Hammill the girls' head mistress and Mr Kemp, arranged that our children should go in with the Cornish children, and the Central girls and boys should go with Mr Kemp in the Memorial Hall. This went on for a little while and then it was thought that we should be better in a school by ourselves, as our ways of working did not always harmonise with the local children.

*The boys skip school*

The short time that we were at the Memorial Hall, we had a great deal of fun. One morning all the girls were waiting outside the hall and it was about ten minutes past nine. There were no boys there, and we all began to wonder where they were. It was about twenty past nine when Mr. Kemp arrived. Seeing no boys around Mr Kemp wanted to know where they were but neither of us were any help, as we did not know anything. We then went into the hall and started our work. It was very quiet without the boys, and also a very small class. Our lessons were carried out as usual. During our last lesson, which was from half past eleven to twelve o'clock, we heard the boys coming in. Of course we all stopped our work to listen and to find out where they had been all the morning. Mr Kemp lined then all up in front of the class, and they all started to explain. After a lot of questioning we found out that they had all played truant and had gone down to the tin mines.

At twelve o'clock Mr Kemp said that as the boys had taken the morning off, the girls could have the afternoon free. We were all very glad, as it was a lovely day. It was nearly the end of June. The boys had to work hard that afternoon and I think they were sorry they did it afterwards. That was one of our morning's excitement.

*Our 'Evacuation' school*

It was a good many weeks before we got settled down in our new school. We were all together in the "Infants building". There are three rooms in the school. One room is very long. The other two are rather small. The infants occupied the smallest room, the long room was divided into two with the juniors one end and the seniors the other end. The other room had the Central children in it. This arrangement altered again after a while. The school was rather small, considering the number of children that were in it. This was the reason for a lot of moving about.

We could not have any physical exercise as the playground was too rough. If you happened to slip, the gravel might cause you to have a nasty cut or graze. To take the place of physical training, we used to go for some lovely walks. One afternoon we went for a very long walk out on the cliffs and down into Portreath. There the class was dismissed. Most of us walked home on the railway lines that were not in use. When we got home we were very tired after walking about five miles, although we enjoyed it.

*Two teachers go back*

It was not very long before two of our teachers went back. They were Australians. They volunteered to help on board a ship for children that were being evacuated to America, Canada, etc. They were hoping to get back to their own country, so they left Illogan and went to London. It left us very short of teachers and two girls helped considerably by teaching the infant children, until a teacher was sent to take the place of the two that went away. It was about six weeks before a teacher was sent.

When she arrived, she was told that she would teach the infant class. So on Monday about the middle of October 1940, we started by getting to know our new teacher. The infants seemed to like her very much. It was not many days after her arrival that we were talking to her as if we had known her all the time we had been away which was about four months. As the weeks went by, children continued to return back to London.

*A trip to Redruth*

Near the end of October Mr Kemp arranged for us to attend the library in Redruth. He said we would change our books every Monday afternoon, weather permitting. We were all willing to attend regularly. So, Monday morning, the names of all the children going to the library were put down on a piece of paper, which would act as a register, and told to meet at Cross Lanes just before 1.30 p.m.

It was about 1.35 p.m. before we started off on our first walk to the library. There were about twenty-five of us, boys and girls. After we had been walking for about a quarter of an hour we heard the moaning of a siren. Our teacher thought that we ought to take cover, so she knocked at a cottage door and asked the lady if she would mind if we took shelter until the "All Clear" went. It was about twenty minutes later that we heard the "All Clear" sound. So we got ready to continue our journey. The lady to whom the cottage belonged was very nice, she gave us all a few apples each to eat on the way.