

Millisle Refugee Settlement Farm

Refugees, the Farm and the Kindertransport

Refugees are people who have to leave their own country to try and find safety elsewhere. The Kindertransport was an operation in the late 1930s to rescue Jewish children from parts of Europe under Nazi rule, where Jewish people were being treated very badly. The children were brought to the UK by train and boat. Some were sent to Northern Ireland, to a special farm in Millisle, County Down. The Refugee Settlement Farm was set up in May 1939 as a safe place where Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia and Czech Republic) could stay and work.



The farm's organisers and adult refugees looked after the Jewish children. Local farmers shared their knowledge and skills to teach the refugees how to milk cows, plough fields and plant crops. The children's jobs included collecting eggs and herding cows.

Did You Know...?

There is a sculpture named 'Safe Haven' in the Holocaust Memorial Garden in the grounds of Millisle Primary School.

School and Leisure Time

At Millisle Primary School, the staff placed each new child beside a local pupil. They hoped that this would help the refugee children make friends and learn English.

During their leisure time, the Jewish children would play Monopoly, table tennis, cards, and football matches with local children. They went to the cinema in Donaghadee and the beach at Millisle. Residents of the farm would hold concerts and invite the local community. They would also listen to the BBC News on the radio, to hear about the war effort.

The Belfast Blitz

In 1941, Belfast was targeted in a series of German bomb attacks. The farm's residents reported that they heard German planes flying over Millisle and could see Belfast burning from twenty miles away.

Farm Closure and Legacy

The farm closed in 1948. Some of the refugees stayed in Northern Ireland but many moved to other countries. Tragically, very few of the Jewish children were ever reunited with their families; many of their relations had been killed in the Holocaust.



Did You Know...?

Over the years, many of the farm's former residents returned to visit Millisle, to talk about their experiences and thank the people who helped them.

Questions

1. What was the Kindertransport? Tick one.

- ☐ Transport to take people to work on farms
- ☐ A rescue mission to save Jewish children in danger under Nazi rule
- ☐ A way of transporting soldiers during the Second World War

2. What countries did many of the refugees come from? Tick one.

- ☐ Germany, England and Northern Ireland
- ☐ Germany, Portugal and Greece
- ☐ Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia

3. Tick to show if the sentence is true or false. 'Belfast was bombed in 1941.'

- ☐ true
- ☐ false

4. Join the facts to complete them.

Local farmers	•	to concerts at the farm
Refugees invited locals	•	attended Millisle Primary School
The refugees visited the cinema	•	helped the refugees
Many of the refugees	•	in Donaghadee

5. Why did staff at Millisle Primary School sit each refugee child beside a local pupil?

6. What did the farm's residents see and hear during the Belfast Blitz?

7. Which of the leisure activities would you most like to do? Why?

8. What were some of the jobs that the children had to do on the farm?

Answers

1. What was the Kindertransport? Tick one.

- ☐ Transport to take people to work on farms
- ☒ **A rescue mission to save Jewish children in danger under Nazi rule**
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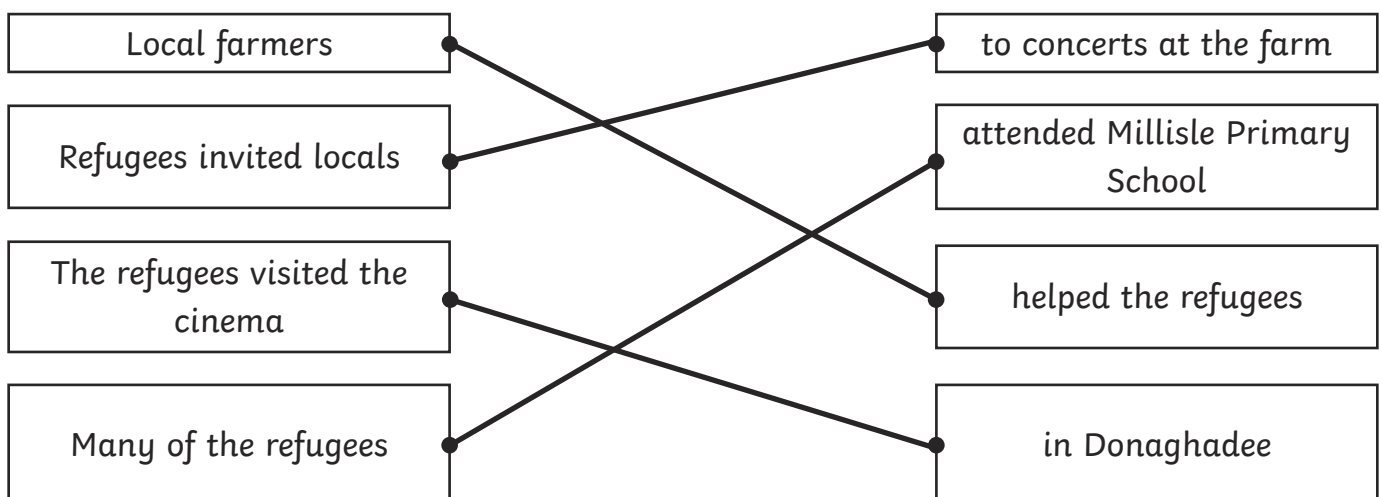
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- ☐ Germany, Portugal and Greece
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- ☒ **true**
- ☐ false

4. Join the facts to complete them.



5. Why did staff at Millisle Primary School sit each refugee child beside a local pupil?

The staff hoped that seating the refugee children beside local pupils would help the refugees make friends and learn English.

6. What did the farm's residents see and hear during the Belfast Blitz?

The farm's residents heard the Luftwaffe planes flying over and could see Belfast burning from twenty miles away.

7. Which of the leisure activities would you most like to do? Why?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I would most like to play board games as I love games.

8. What were some of the jobs that the children had to do on the farm?

The children's jobs included collecting eggs and herding cows.

Millisle Refugee Settlement Farm

Refugees, the Farm and the Kindertransport

In May 1939, a group called the Refugee Aid committee leased a seventy-acre farm in Millisle, County Down. The farm was set up as a safe place where Jewish refugees could stay and work. The Jewish refugees were from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia and Czech Republic). They were seeking to escape mistreatment and persecution in their own countries, where hundreds of synagogues and Jewish-owned businesses had been destroyed and many Jewish people attacked and imprisoned.



The Kindertransport was an operation to rescue Jewish children from the perilous situation that they were in under Nazi rule. The children travelled by train and boat to reach the UK; entry was granted to about 10,000 children. Groups of children continued to arrive until the declaration of war in September 1939, when the borders were sealed. The children stayed in foster homes, boarding schools, holiday camps and hostels. Some were sent to Northern Ireland to stay.

Life on the Farm, School and Leisure Time

The farm's organisers, administrators and adult refugees looked after the Jewish children. Initially, the farm had no running water and the barns and buildings



were dilapidated. Local people helped residents clear the fields of stones and thistles, and local farmers shared their knowledge and skills to teach the refugees how to milk cows, plough fields and plant crops. The children's jobs included collecting eggs and herding cows. Extra accommodation was built, as well as a synagogue for worship and a library. Showers and flushing toilets were other welcome additions to the site.

At Millisle Primary School, the staff placed each refugee child beside a local pupil. They hoped that this would help the new children make friends and learn English. The plan could be deemed very successful as lifelong friendships were formed during the refugees' time in Millisle.

During their leisure time the Jewish children would play Monopoly, table tennis, cards, and football matches with local children. They went to the cinema in Donaghadee and the beach

at Millisle. Residents of the farm would hold concerts and invite the local community. They would also listen to the BBC News on the radio, to hear about the war effort.



The Belfast Blitz

Belfast was a famous centre of shipbuilding. In April and May 1941, the city suffered German bomb attacks on four separate occasions. One of the bombing raids took place on Easter Tuesday night. The farm's residents at the time reported that they could hear the Luftwaffe planes flying over Millisle and see Belfast burning from twenty miles away.

Closure of the Farm and its Legacy

The farm closed in 1948. Some of the Jewish children stayed in Northern Ireland but many moved to other countries. Tragically, very few of the Jewish children were ever reunited with their families; many of their relations had been killed in the Holocaust.

The former residents of the farm were always linked by their experiences and memories. The residents of

the farm erected a plaque in the synagogue in Belfast to thank the Jewish community. A sculpture named 'Safe Haven' was erected in the Holocaust Memorial Garden in the grounds of Millisle Primary School. Over the years, many of the farm's former residents returned to thank the Millisle community, and to help educate new generations of children about their experiences.

Questions

1. Why was the farm in Millisle leased in 1939? Tick one.
 - ☐ As a place injured soldiers could recuperate
 - ☐ As a place for Jewish refugees to live and work
 - ☐ As a place for evacuees from England to live in
2. Why did the Kindertransport cease in September 1939? Tick one.
 - ☐ The Second World War had ended.
 - ☐ There was no more room for refugees in the UK.
 - ☐ War had been declared and the borders sealed.
3. Tick to show if the sentence is true or false. 'As a centre of shipbuilding, Belfast was a target for German bombing raids'.
 - ☐ true
 - ☐ false
4. What countries did the refugees at the farm come from?

5. How did local farmers help the refugees?

6. What changes took place at the farm?

7. How did the staff at Millisle Primary School try to help the refugees?

8. Name three ways that the farm's residents spent their leisure time.

9. The sculpture in Millisle Primary School's Holocaust Memorial Garden is called 'Safe Haven'. What do you think this means?

Answers

1. Why was the farm in Millisle leased in 1939? Tick one.

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- ☒ **As a place for Jewish refugees to live and work**
- ☐ As a place for evacuees from England to live in

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- ☒ **War had been declared and the borders sealed.**

3. Tick to show if the sentence is true or false. 'As a centre of shipbuilding, Belfast was a target for German bombing raids'.

- ☒ **true**
- ☐ false

4. What countries did the refugees at the farm come from?

The Jewish refugees who came to the farm were from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

5. How did local farmers help the refugees?

Local farmers shared their knowledge and skills to teach the refugees how to milk cows, plough fields and plant crops.

6. What changes took place at the farm?

The fields were cleared. Extra accommodation, a synagogue and a library were built. Showers and flushing toilets were added.

7. How did the staff at Millisle Primary School try to help the refugees?

The staff sat the refugee children beside local pupils to help the refugees make friends and learn English.

8. Name three ways that the farm's residents spent their leisure time.

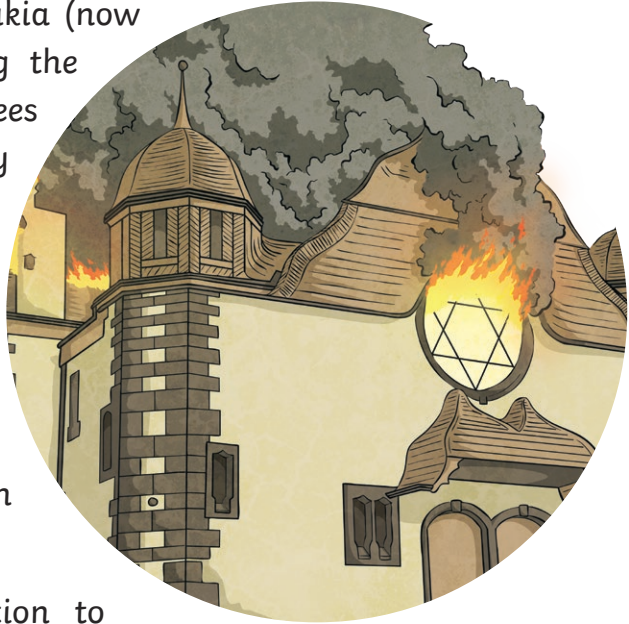
Any three of the following: Playing football; Playing Monopoly; Playing table tennis; Playing cards; Holding concerts; Listening to the BBC News; Going to the cinema; Going to the beach; Going to concert shows.

9. The sculpture in Millisle Primary School's Holocaust Memorial Garden is called 'Safe Haven'. What do you think this means?

Pupils' own responses, such as: A safe haven is a place of refuge and security. This is what the children found in Millisle after they had to escape from the situation they faced in their own countries.

Millisle Refugee Settlement Farm

In Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia and Czech Republic) during the 1930s, anti-Jewish policies and decrees negatively affected the lives of many people. By the end of the decade, hundreds of synagogues and Jewish-owned businesses had been destroyed and burned, and many Jewish people attacked and imprisoned. Given the danger, people were desperate to escape persecution and seek refuge in other countries.



The Kindertransport was an operation to rescue Jewish children from the perilous situation that they were in under Nazi rule. The UK granted entry to about 10,000 unaccompanied children up to the age of seventeen. The children were transported from mainland Europe by train and boat and brought to the UK. Groups of children continued to arrive until the declaration of war in September 1939, when the borders were sealed. The children stayed in foster homes, boarding schools, holiday camps and hostels. Some were sent to Northern Ireland to stay.

In May 1939, members of a group called the Refugee Aid committee leased a farm with seventy acres of land in Millisle, County Down. An old stone farmhouse



called Ballyrolly House stood on the site. The farm was set up as a safe place for Jewish refugees to reside and work.

The farm's organisers, administrators and adult refugees looked after the Jewish children. Initially, the farm had no running water and the barns and buildings were dilapidated. Local people helped residents clear the fields of stones and thistles, and

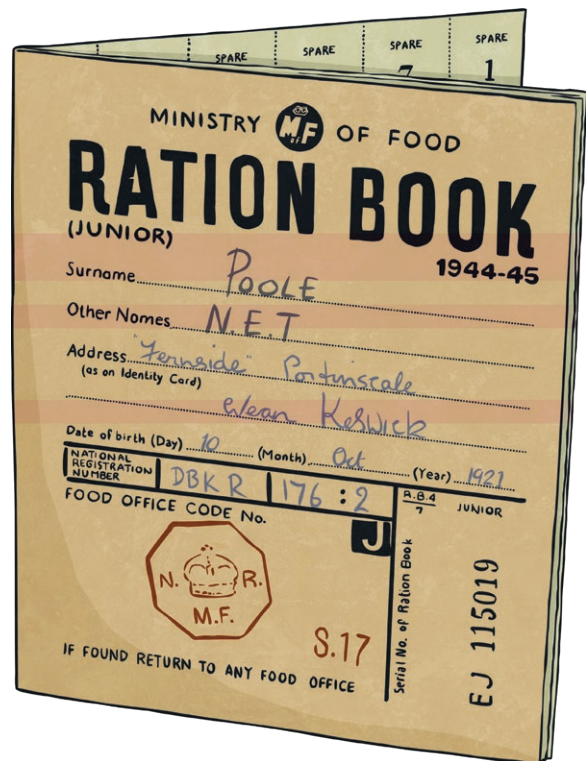
Millisle Refugee Settlement Farm

local farmers shared their knowledge and skills to teach the refugees how to milk cows, plough fields and plant crops. Extra accommodation was built, as well as a synagogue for worship and a library. Showers and flushing toilets were welcome additions to the site. All the farm's residents were expected to work and contribute and everyone was paid for their efforts. The children's jobs included collecting eggs and herding cows.

The staff at Millisle Primary School placed each new refugee beside a local pupil. They hoped that this would foster friendships and help the refugees learn English. The plan could be deemed very successful as lifelong friendships were formed during the refugees' time in Millisle.

In their leisure time away from farm chores and school, the refugees would play table tennis, cards, billiards, Monopoly, and football matches with the local children. They went to the cinema in Donaghadee and the beach at Millisle. Farm residents would use their musical talents to stage weekend concerts at the farm, to which they would invite locals. They listened to the radio too, especially to the BBC News, to hear about how the war effort was going. During the summer, the refugees would attend travelling concert shows staged in Millisle.

Members of the Jewish communities of Belfast and Dublin would visit the farm, forming many friendships with its residents.



During the war, restrictions were placed on locals and refugees alike, such as rationing and black outs. Even though they were refugees, working to support themselves and assist in the war effort, the farm's residents who came from Germany and Austria were technically classed as 'enemy aliens'. Rules meant that they could only live in certain areas, had a 10pm curfew and had to seek a permit from local police before ever leaving the farm overnight. There was also an 'Aliens Registration Book' to be filled in.

In April and May 1941, Belfast suffered German bomb attacks on four separate occasions; these attacks are known as the Belfast Blitz. One of the bombing raids took place on Easter Tuesday night. The refugees reported that they could hear the Luftwaffe planes flying over and see Belfast burning from twenty miles away.

Between the farm's opening and its final closure in 1948, over three hundred people found refuge there. Some of the Jewish children stayed in Northern Ireland but many moved to other countries. Tragically, very few of the Jewish children were ever reunited with their families; many of their relations had been killed in the Holocaust.

The former residents of the farm were always linked by their experiences and memories. They erected a plaque in the synagogue in Belfast to thank the Jewish community for their help

and support. A sculpture named 'Safe Haven' was erected in the Holocaust Memorial Garden in the grounds of Millisle Primary School.

Over the years, many of the farm's former residents have returned to thank the Millisle community, and to help educate new generations of children about their experiences.



Questions

1. What was the Kindertransport?

2. Why did the Jewish children have to flee?

3. Tick to show if the sentence is true or false. In May 1939, members of a group called the Refugee Aid committee built a new farm for refugees.

- ☐ true
☐ false

4. How did local people help the farm's residents?

5. How do you think the refugee children felt when they had to leave their families and board the Kindertransport trains?

6. Why do you think that the children from Germany and Austria were classed as 'enemy aliens'?

7. What happened to Belfast in 1941?

8. Why did the refugees listen particularly to the BBC News on the radio?

9. What restrictions were placed on the refugees?

10. The sculpture in Millisle Primary School's Holocaust Memorial Garden is called 'Safe Haven'. What do you think this means?

Answers

1. What was the Kindertransport?

The Kindertransport was an operation to rescue Jewish children from the perilous situation that they were in under Nazi rule. The children were transported by train and boat and brought to the UK.

2. Why did the Jewish children have to flee?

The Jewish children had to flee to escape mistreatment and persecution in the countries they lived in.

3. Tick to show if the sentence is true or false. In May 1939, members of a group called the Refugee Aid committee built a new farm for refugees.

☐ true

☒ false

4. How did local people help the farm's residents?

Local people helped residents clear the fields of stones and thistles and local farmers taught the refugees how to milk cows, plough fields and plant crops.

5. How do you think the refugee children felt when they had to leave their families and board the Kindertransport trains?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the children felt extremely frightened and anxious as they had to leave their families and home behind and travel to unknown places. They perhaps also felt relieved that they were escaping the terrible situation they were in.

6. Why do you think that the children from Germany and Austria were classed as 'enemy aliens'?

The children were classed as 'enemy aliens' because they were from countries on the opposing side of the Second World War to the UK where they were now living.

7. What happened to Belfast in 1941?

The Belfast Blitz took place in 1941; the Luftwaffe bombed the city in April and May of that year.

8. Why did the refugees listen particularly to the BBC News on the radio?

The refugees listened to the BBC News on the radio to hear about how the war effort was going.

9. What restrictions were placed on the refugees?

The restrictions placed on refugees included rationing, black outs, a 10pm curfew, seeking police permission if leaving the farm overnight, and having to fill in an 'Aliens Registration Book'.

10. The sculpture in Millisle Primary School's Holocaust Memorial Garden is called 'Safe Haven'. What do you think this means?

Pupils' own responses, such as: A safe haven is a place of refuge and security. This is what the children found in Millisle after they had to escape from the situation they faced in their own countries.