

The Beal School, Ilford

School unsticks and moves away as part of the evacuation during the Second World War (1940)

On 19th February 1940, 182 boys and 12 masters arrived at Kennylands Camp. They were part of a national scheme to set up camps in several places away from the danger of living in large cities which were the target of Nazi bombers.

A local Evacuee boy's story

Leonard Perry was a pupil at Beal Modern School in Ilford when the War broke out. He was among one of the first to arrive at Kennylands Camp in rural Oxfordshire on 19th February 1940. The school stayed at the camp for 5 years.

The boys slept in long wooden dormitories and had to help their teachers run their new camp school. Before long they were keeping chickens, growing vegetables, and even cleaning out the pigs! In September 1940, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited the camp. Leonard stood in line to be introduced and wondered why they had come – *"We just accepted Kennylands as the norm."*

Leonard's lasting memories of life at the camp are of playing cricket and football matches against local lads and the *"comradeship of the boys and masters."*

For many Neal School boys, being evacuated was a great adventure but they were lucky. For others, evacuation was a very difficult time.



Image taken from our visit to Redbridge Museum

When war ended in Europe in May 1945, the parents expected pupils to return to Ilford, but their hopes were dashed as the school building could not be released immediately by the Air-raid Precautions Controller. The Civil Defence finally left Beal School in July 1945, but the children had to remain at the Camp for their schooling until Christmas because the building needed renovation.

It should be noted that during the war the site of the current school at Woodford Bridge Road was being used as a POW camp for Italian and German soldiers.

Sources used: Redbridge Museum & A Brief History of Beal High School (PDF) Published by Beal High School