

BBP75-3 Margaret Wilson Evacuation

SPEAKERS

Margaret Wilson

Margaret Wilson 00:00

And where I lived on Newtownards Road in McMaster Street. On the Easter Monday Blitz, our house got a direct hit from an incendiary bomb, which wasn't one of the explosive types of bomb but it set the house on fire.

Margaret Wilson 00:18

We were able to... with the help of the air raid wardens and that, who are all volunteers, were able to put that out, but the house was very badly damaged.

Margaret Wilson 00:28

And it was after that my mother decided that I should be shipped off to the country for safety.

Margaret Wilson 00:35

Well, I was shipped off, as I say, almost immediately, but my mother had to work and her brother had to work, but they got granny and grandpa a room out at Drumbo. They rented a room.

Margaret Wilson 00:50

Granny had a butter and egg lady came into the market every week and her name was Mrs. Strain and they asked could she give granny and grandpa a room and they went to live down at Drumbo in this one room.

Margaret Wilson 01:06

But my mother, of course couldn't leave Belfast for she had a job and she was the breadwinner and Andy, of course when in those days, when you had the job you've held on to it.

Margaret Wilson 01:19

So there were a lot of men who stayed behind and let their families go. My husband was an evacuee, but he went with his mother and his brother to relatives in Maghaberry and a lot of children maybe would have had relatives in the country that they would have been shipped off to but not not all children had that.

Margaret Wilson 01:42

When I went to Fermanagh, I went into a different world completely.

Margaret Wilson 01:46

There was no war in Fermanagh, and the lovely family that I lived with, I think protected me. And when there were stories about air raids, maybe on the news or something. Now, no television in those days, but they did have a small radio.

Margaret Wilson 02:02

And when there were stories about air raids, I never heard them. So it was as if I was in a completely different world.

Margaret Wilson 02:12

I suppose in a way I missed my mother, but my mother was, to her great credit, she came down once a month to see me, you know, wrote to me, we were great letter writers, she and I, we wrote, and there were no phones of course.

Margaret Wilson 02:28

The government had a scheme that children were sent... the country people farmers didn't have an option. If they had the accommodation, they were required to take an evacuee, or maybe two evacuees, if it was brother and sister or two brothers or something, they had to take them.

Margaret Wilson 02:46

But in my case, it was just slightly different. Although I didn't know the people. My mother had worked with a lady from Fermanagh and she knew this family and they were required to take an evacuee.

Margaret Wilson 03:02

So I was elected to go to them, but I didn't know them. Nor did they know us. But em... it was a wonderful relationship.

Margaret Wilson 03:13

They had two daughters, but they weren't children. In fact, the older daughter was making arrangements for her wedding.

Margaret Wilson 03:20

The other daughter was eighteen. Now I was ten and she, Florrie was eighteen. So I was regarded sort of as her little sister. And we got along very well, mostly mostly (laughs).

Margaret Wilson 03:34

But they had a big farm. They had a big farm. And there were farmers in a very good way. And my foster mother as I would call her. She had been a professional cook in America and had come home to the married.

Margaret Wilson 03:50

And of course, in Belfast, we had the rationing things were very short in Fermanagh she had her kitchen garden, she had her fruit bushes, she had her orchard and what was not to like?

Margaret Wilson 04:06

I do remember the food, oh yes, I do, because I mean food was... food was very sparse, you know, during the war, and were rationed.

Margaret Wilson 04:16

And I mean, your mother or whoever was doing the cooking just to make the best of things, but no, there was a plenty of, I recall the lovely butter and eggs and cream.

Margaret Wilson 04:27

It was a lifelong friendship, it was yes. They were at my wedding. So it was it was a good relationship.

Margaret Wilson 04:36

Not all evacuees were as lucky as that and some farmers were not lucky on the evacuees that they got, you know, so I mean, I was just very fortunate.

Margaret Wilson 04:50

I took to it, just like a duck to water. I'm very fond of animals and they had a big Clydesdale called Bob.

Margaret Wilson 04:58

And they had a dog called Jeff and a cat called Daisy and then had barn cats who didn't come into the house. They kept the vermin down in the like of the barns.

Margaret Wilson 05:11

They had pigs, cows, we always had twelve ducks, always had twelve ducks and we used to incubate them in the incubator, the little eggs and then the little ducklings would have come out and I loved all of this, loved it.

Margaret Wilson 05:25

I collected the eggs, and I would have helped the churn the butter and would have fed the hens and I used to go out to the hay field, but I don't know how much help I was really, you know at ten, but I loved it.