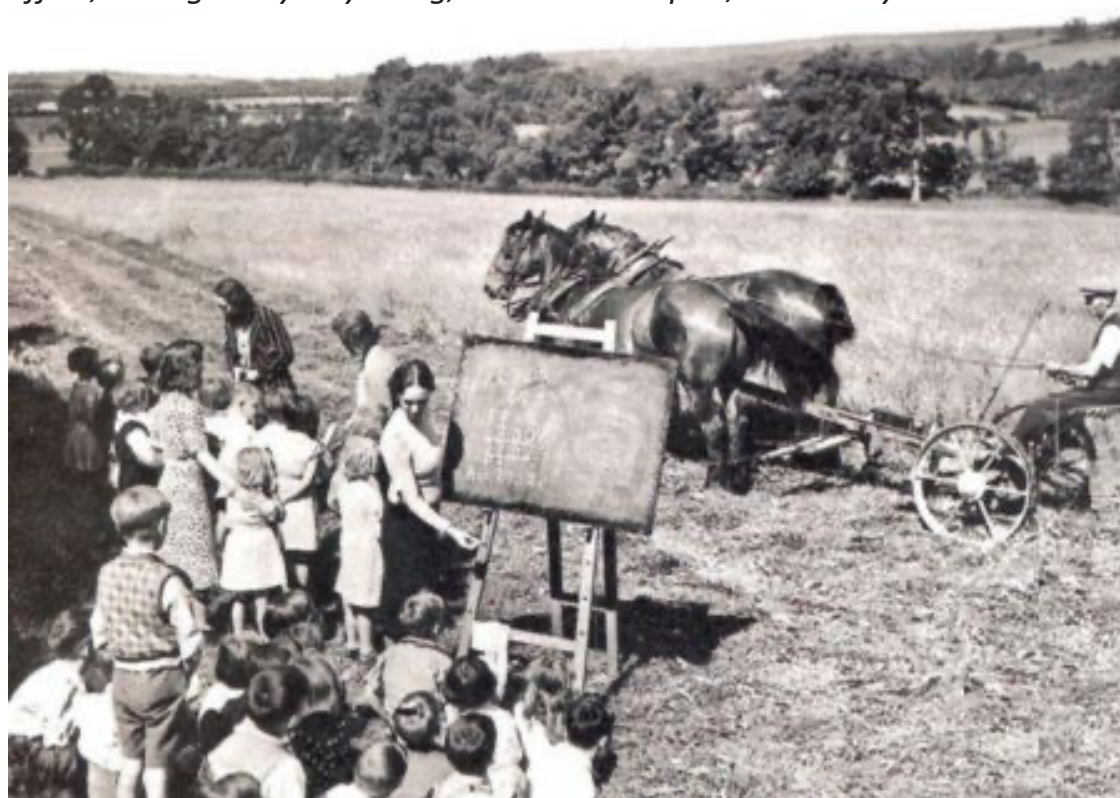


## War time evacuation stories:

In February 2005 Mrs Diana Harding recalled for the BBC *Peoples War*:

*"I was nine, my elder sister thirteen, we went with my mother and our one-year-old brother to our school and were taken by coach to the railway station, where we all crowded on to a train. I remember it was a boiling hot day. We travelled all day as the steam trains then were very slow. In the afternoon we arrived, we didn't know where, and were taken to the local church hall. We were each given a carrier bag with forty-eight-hour emergency meals, consisting of a tin of corned beef and a huge bar of chocolate which started to melt in the heat – but not for long. We were taken to different houses in Selmeston to be billeted. My mother and young brother were billeted with the local policeman, whilst my sister and I were down the lane in a cottage with a lady called Naomi and her elderly father who looked like Father Christmas, with a long white beard. The cottage had no running water, you had to go to the kitchen which had a water pump. The toilet was outside at the back of the cottage. Although we came from the East End in London at least we had running water with a flush toilet. The local school only had two rooms, so with the extra pupils we had to sit three to a desk. The village itself was just one long lane consisting of the school, church, general store with a combined post office, selling every tiny thing, and the local pub, the Barley Mow."*



*“The next day we all went down the lane to a cottage that had a radio so we could listen to the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, who told us we were at war with Germany. As he was speaking I realised my mum and the other ladies were crying and I wondered why.*

*The first Sunday after war was declared was harvest festival at the church. I vividly remember it as I was wearing my brand-new wellington boots to walk up the pitch-black lane to the church. When the church door was opened, a bright light shone out with an earthy smell of all the vegetables and fruit the local farmers had brought. The church was packed, and I have never enjoyed a harvest festival as much as that one. I returned to London just in time for Christmas”.*