

The Journey to Bath

Before coming to Bath, the 50 children from Alkmaar stayed in a converted army camp (the WRENS Warren Camp), near Tunbridge Wells, in Kent. There they received specialist medical care (some could only be fed intravenously when they first arrived, according to an article in the Bath Chronicle at the time).

The children then came on to Bath in December to spend Christmas with their host families – a very different Christmas from the one they'd had to endure the previous Winter...

Remembering the WRENS Warren Camp:

"I'm Dutch, survived the winter of 1944/1945 in that part of the Netherlands still occupied by the Nazi's. Almost no food and cutting trees to get some firewood in order to burn the stove in freezing winter.

The city of Alkmaar (famous for its cheese market) was connected with the city of Bath. Bath invited some 50 starved children to recuperate in England, staying with families. I was one of the lucky guys.

We arrived in Wrens Warren Camp in October 1945 and stayed there for about two months. I now remember the words: Hartfield (a small village?), Tunbridge Wells (where I got my spectacles) and Coleman Hatch (but have no collection what the meaning is).

I remember digging up unexploded mortar shells (filled with a small parachute and a material to light up the sky) - cannot find the right chemical name but we cut it into pieces and when we had a campfire we threw pieces into the fire. Had a very wonderful time in the camp and surroundings."

Ton Kooij

A memory shared by Antoon Kooij on May 21st, 2013.