Teignbridge Remembers Operation Pied Piper

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Thanks to a grant of £3,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund almost 150 local schoolchildren are in for a first hand experience of wartime evacuation next week as Teignbridge Council hosts ‘Teignbridge Remembers Operation Pied Piper’, a special commemorative event to mark the 70th anniversary of World War 2 evacuees arriving in Teignbridge.

14 evacuees will be coming along to volunteer their time on Wednesday 16 September, when they’ll work with council staff and teachers to help deliver a day of practical learning to youngsters.

Children from years 3 and 9 of local schools will be taking part in Operation Pied Piper, which will see volunteers dressed in costumes of the day lead them on a day of discovery, fun and thought.

It kicks off with a real steam train ride at Buckfastleigh Steam Railway, which was where many evacuees to Teignbridge arrived in the 1940s, during which they will be labelled like evacuees were and will make ration books. From there they will walk to Town Hall to see a short film on the 1940s before taking part in a mock air raid. In the mock air raid shelter at Buckfastleigh Primary School, a storyteller will regale them with wartime tales, after which groups of children will work with real evacuees to question them about their experiences. For this exercise, they'll visit the nearby Valiant Soldier, a former inn which closed in the 1960s, but still retains the original furniture, pub items, paperwork and even till money from the time. The day finishes with an evaluation activity as the children write ‘a postcard home’ describing their experiences

Cllr Marie Jenkins, Teignbridge Executive Spokesperson for Communities and Regulation, said: "Teignbridge Remembers Operation Pied Piper will be a fascinating practical experience for school children across the district, getting them out of the classroom and bringing the important historical event to life. They’ll have the opportunity to learn first hand about World War II and the experiences of evacuees, stepping in to their shoes with a steam train ride and a mock air raid.

“The 70th anniversary of Operation Pied Piper is an event that deserves marking, and we’re really happy to have the opportunity to do so with the help of many willing volunteers, who are looking forward to passing on their experiences to young people.”

Commenting on the Heritage Lottery Fund’s support for the event, Head of Region for the South West, Nerys Watts, said: “We are delighted to support the Teignmouth Remembers Operation Pied Piper project which, 70 years after the outbreak of World War II, will allow today’s young people to relive the experiences of a wartime generation.

“Heritage is the story of who we are, and this project will vividly retell part of our story and help to capture it for the future.”