

Handout 2

**Activity 3: Kindertransport
& Child Refugees in Wales:
Part 3 - Arrival in Wales**

Video Transcriptions

CLIP 1 - MARY HOCHBERG**Mary Hochberg - MH****Interviewer - I****I:** What were your first impressions on alighting at Paddington?**MH:** Well, we didn't have many...you know we were tired out, of course, because we hadn't really slept and we were divided up into various groups. Some people were going to families all over the country, and other people went, perhaps to their own families. There was a smallish group that went on to North Wales.

We stayed in an interesting castle in a huge park by the Irish Sea, the little village called Abergele, between Rhyl and Colwyn Bay. Quite a nice area, a very beautiful area in fact. When we got there, it had been empty for some time and there was no water, no electricity.

It was a beautiful place really, inside as well as out. Looked like a mediaeval castle with crenelated walls and it had rooms with bathrooms en suite, but they were locked because there was no water so one couldn't use this.

I: What were your first impressions of the British?**MH:** The first impressions were we arrived there, there wasn't, well, it was British I suppose, but we had nothing to do with the population up there, except one went to the dentist I suppose. And then the...I don't know what they thought of us, they had never seen any Jews, they probably thought that we had horns.

Nobody was ever invited to the families. Nobody that I knew. But the boys worked on farms. Other boys had to do jobs like pumping water into the basement kitchen; that was the only water available. And other boys had to prepare the paraffin lamps because we had no electricity. So, in all the public rooms we used these paraffin lamps which had to be filled and the mantels had to be cleaned. We had a few candles that we could use in the bedrooms.

The first night we had to sleep, the first two nights I think we had to sleep on the floor. We arrived very late at night—may have been 11 o'clock at night—and we were put into a huge room, which turned out afterwards to be our dining room, which was the only room with a very, very big fireplace.

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CLIP 1 - MARY HOCHBERG continued

I: When you were at school when you arrived in Wales, how much English did you have?

MH: I had a lot of English, but I had never really spoken it except in school and I didn't speak English to anyone for a year and a half.

I: You talked about arriving in Wales and, and living at the castle and not having much contact with the local population.

MH: None at all.

I: Did that change as the war went on?

MH: No, never did, no.

CLIP 2 - ROBERT WASSERBERG

Robert Wasserberg - RW

Interviewer - I

RW: I remember when we arrived there were these English ladies wearing these funny green uniforms, bringing us tea and sandwiches on, you know, little boxes and 'You alright love? You alright love?' We couldn't speak a word of English, but they were very sweet.

I: And what happened then?

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CLIP 2 - ROBERT WASSERBERG continued

RW: Well, what happened then, we went through the customs and passport control. Well, I mean, you know, we had, we had little, on our coats, we had labels. Like parcels, like baggage and on the labels, there was a name and all the details.

They put us on a train and we and we travelled on this English train. We travelled for...It was in the evening that we arrived in a little village called Llanwrtyd Wells in Wales. We were taken to a hotel; it was a hotel but it was made into a hostel.

And I was there. I mean, that's where we were met by the Czech Embassy by the Czech Government, the Czech officers they were still wearing their Czech uniforms.

And we were given food and drink, and we were divided into classes and the boys in one, you know. Upstairs there were the dormitories and we went into the dormitories and that's where I stayed. That's where we...

I: Did you receive any schooling in Wales?

RW: Well, it was, this place where we were was the school, was run and owned by the Czech Government in, in Britain. It was a, it was a Czech-organised school.

I: And how were you treated?

RW: Very nicely, very nicely.

I: How about Brits around there?

RW: Well, the Brits were Welsh.

I: The Welsh, pardon me.

RW: And I didn't know for a long time that I was in Britain, 'cause the people in the village only spoke Welsh. And they treated us very nicely, they, I remember their jam tarts, and I remember—I love singing, I mean, I've been singing for many, many years and they say I have a good voice, but I don't know—and the Welsh, they have choirs everywhere. There was a church choir there, and when they found out I could sing, they got me into the Welsh choir. So, I sang in the Welsh choir in the village, which was very nice.

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CLIP 2 - ROBERT WASSERBERG continued

I: Did you still receive mail from Czechoslovakia?

RW: No, no, no. I didn't know what happened I, I didn't know what happened. I lost contact with my parents, with my family. I didn't know anything.

They asked us would we like to leave here and go to Jewish families? So, I said 'Yes, if that could be arranged', so they tried to get us adopted to Jewish families.

But they didn't manage it, but what they did is they got us invited for Jewish, for the *yom tovim* [Jewish holidays], for the *chagim* [another term for Jewish holidays], to Jewish families.

I: In Wales?

RW: Wherever, wherever. They didn't, they didn't say in Wales, so wherever they, wherever there was a Jewish family prepared to take us.