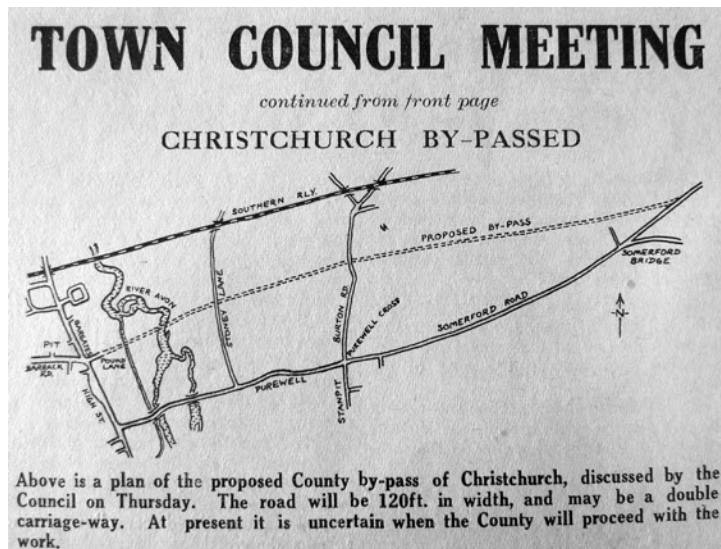


PROPOSED CHRISTCHURCH BY-PASS

"LEAKAGE" ON COUNCIL ALLEGED: STARTLING STATEMENT

An Explanation of Past Mysteries?

C.T. May 20, 1939



AN amazing matter was disclosed by Councillor R. E. Gray at Thursday's Council Meeting. Councillor Gray raised a question on the minutes of the last meeting, with regard to a letter from Mr. E. P. Ward, relating to the Beach Undertakings, "You may remember," said Councillor Gray, "that the Town Clerk had only just received this letter when it was read to the Council, and the Mayor said that he was in fact unaware of it. Half-an-hour after leaving this Council, Mr. Llewellyn, of the Cloisters, Twynham Avenue, Christchurch, was able to give me a practically verbatim record of the context of the letter. I should like to know if there is a leakage of confidential matter either from here, or from Mr. Ward's office; or if the West Hampshire Water Company has anything to do with

the Beach Company?

Mayor: As far as I know there is nothing of the sort."

Councillor Gray: "Can we be assured that there is no leakage from this department?" Town Clerk: "There is definitely no leakage."

A BY-PASS SCHEME.

After the many schemes, speculations and discussions which have arisen in the past on the possibility of by-passing Christchurch, the Town Council have a definite proposal now laid before them by the County Authority.

The Highways Committee recommended that "the proposal of the County Council for a by-pass road from Somerford Bridge along a line to the north of Purewell and High Street, joining up with the existing main road at the Fountain Corner be approved, and that the County Council be asked to proceed with the construction of the road as soon as possible.

The question as to whether this by-pass will seriously affect the traders of Christchurch came up for discussion—the recommendation was condemned by some members on this score; but the majority were of the opinion that if there was any adverse affect on trade it would be only very slight, and from the experiences of other towns similarly by-passed, records showed that trade tended to improve slightly.

There is no definite information as to when this by-pass may materialise, although it is suggested that some considerable time may elapse before action starts; the opposite is as likely.

After Councillor McArdle had proposed this recommendation with the other proposals of the Highways Committee, the Deputy Mayor moved a reference back.

"I think the Council will be making a great mistake if they allow this recommendation to go forward," he said. "We are not only asked to approve this scheme, but to press the County Council to proceed with it as soon as possible."

"With regard to a by-pass road, it is vitally important to visualise the effect which it is going to have on the tradesmen of the town. I am quite aware that this is a matter which is almost entirely in the hands of the County Council, but what I object to, is that we should approve this measure without first soliciting the opinion of the traders in this town, who would be most materially affected by such a road, as to whether or not it would be of benefit or detriment to the town."

RACE TRACKS TO BOURNEMOUTH.

Seconding the reference back, Alderman Tucker said: "I am certain that this would not be for the good of Christchurch. To bring a great road into the centre of the town—"barging into the middle of Fountain Corner—and giving more facilities for people to hurry on into Bournemouth— facilities which are already more than ample —cannot fail to harm local trade. These race tracks for visitors to rush into Bournemouth are fatal to the small borough. Apart from that this road will be an eye-sore and ruin the amenities and the fine views across the water meadows from the old bridges. I should have thought that the by-pass which is being constructed via Ringwood and Matchams would be all that was necessary for this district.

"What is more; consider the enormous cost which will be involved. That will be farmed on to the ratepayers of the county and, of course, on ourselves through the County precept."

Alderman Oakley also supported the reference back. He pointed out that the proposed road was to join the existing highway at Fountain Corner and thus Barrack Road, which was dangerous enough at the present time, would be rendered still more dangerous. If the County and the Ministry had come to the conclusion that in the interests of traffic a by-pass had to be constructed, surely that did not mean that part of the town was to be cut off and then the by-pass was to be swung back into the centre of the town? He felt that the opinion of townsfolk should be taken.

Councillor Commander Pawley said that the arguments put forward against the recommendation were rather parochial. He would like the matter considered from a national point of view.

Councillor Newman also supporting the recommendation, pointed out that when Woolworths Stores had come to town, a similar outcry had been raised. Actually that store had tended to bring more business into the town, more or less evenly distributed among the traders. He maintained that the by-pass would do the same.

STINKING SLUMS OF POUND LANE.

Councillor Gray welcomed the proposal as one which entailed the removal of the "stinking slums of Pound Lane." The Council had a scheme afoot for their clearance, and now it was going to be done by the County. "Let us have a clean centre to the town and clear away these stinking things left to us by our forefathers."

Councillor Lane enlarged upon the many alternative routes for a by-pass, including the "pons assinorum" across the harbour. He also suggested that the by-pass might be either continued over to Blackwater to join the other by-pass that the County was constructing there, or that the new by-pass might be constructed to follow the railway embankment into Bournemouth. He added that he was in favour of deferring the matter in order to see what the ratepayers thought about it.

Councillor McArdle: "I assure you that every advantage and disadvantage has been considered by the committee and we naturally looked at it from the traders' viewpoint."

"The question is: If we object to it, can we stop it? I say no; if the County thinks that it is necessary they will go forward with it."

Councillor Wyatt: "It is merely a surmise as to whether a by-pass will affect the trade of the town at all. The whole point is will Barrack Road be widened?"

Mayor: "That is already scheduled for road widening."

Alderman Barnes: "What is the proposed width of Barrack Road as compared with the proposed width of this by-pass, 120ft. in width?"

Borough Surveyor (Mr. E. B. Wise): "Eighty feet, I understand."

Councillor Howe: "Does anyone know yet exactly how long it is going to be before this scheme is put into effect? I understand that it is not going to be built for many years."

Mayor: "That is what we have been given to understand, but I do not regard that as definite."

Alderman Barnes: "I think it is the most ill-considered scheme of by-passing I have ever seen."

Mayor: "I do not want anyone to be misled over this matter. We know nothing of it as yet, or as to when this road is likely to be built. We only understand that it is going to be a long time before the work starts, and that information comes from a very minor official, hence I do not assess that as at all conclusive."

The reference back was put to the vote and lost, the recommendation of the Highways Committee being approved.

PROFITS!

When the Finance Committee recommendations were being presented for approval, Councillor Gray questioned a payment marked for the Inland Revenue.

Alderman Oakley: "That is the Income Tax on our profits for Mudeford Beach." (Laughter.)

ELECTRIC LIGHT CABLE.

A communication was received from the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, advising the Council that the amenities from Bargates to Purewell Farm were not such that would be seriously impaired by an electrical line across the marshes. They did, however, suggest that the line might: (a) be run as close to the houses in Purewell as possible; (b) be kept below the level of the railway embankment; and (c) be run on an alternative route down Moffat Road and through Purewell Farm.

The Council agreed to submit these suggestions to the Electric Light Company.

COUNCILLOR AND CORPORATION EMPLOYEES.

Criticism of the system of supervision of Corporation employees was made in a motion preferred by Councillor McArdle.

The Councillor moved: "That arrangements be made where two or more men are working together on any job of work, for one of such men to be held responsible for the carrying out of the orders of the Borough Surveyor."

"I am very sorry to have to bring this matter forward," said Councillor McArdle, "but from what I have personally seen I am compelled to do so. I assure you that it is very essential.

"I brought this matter to the notice of the appropriate committee recently, and was assured that it would be attended to."

The Councillor recalled an occasion when a number of employees had been idle for two hours because it "was raining." They could, he said, have been perfectly well engaged with the concrete mouldings at the Corporation store whilst they were unable to be doing the other work.

"I consider that there is no proper supervision exercised over these men, and this time I hope something will be done about it. I know for a fact that these men are continually double-crossing Mr. Wise, and I assure you most of them would kill me if they got a chance. I am too inquisitive. Every time I come along the road I hear them say: 'Here comes that old b-----McArdle.'"

Councillor Stevens seconded the proposition, and it was referred to committee.

A.R.P. DEEP BOMB-PROOF SHELTER.

Councillor Gray, still hammering at his A.R.P. tunnel idea, proposed the following resolution:-

"That this Council, believing that adequate protection for the civil population in time of war can only be secured by deep bomb-proof shelters, instructs the Air Raid Precautions Committee to take the necessary measures so that the Christchurch representatives on the Joint Committee for Air Raid Precautions for Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch may request the Joint Committee to ascertain the cost, the grants and the sites for such shelters and, furthermore, having ascertained such costs, etc.; to submit a comprehensive scheme to the Councils of the three boroughs for approval."

Councillor Gray commented that one of the "planks" in his recent election was the support of a proper A.R.P. system in the borough.

WHAT BETTER INDEED?

Christchurch was supposed to be a safe area, but, he declared, owing to the present trend of foreign policy, it seemed that they might have to contend with Spain in the event of another war. It was known that certain powers had already established air bases in Northern Spain, and this district, which was a most highly concentrated centre of population of the South Coast, would be in direct line of attack. Moreover, it

had already been proved that an offensive in modern aerial warfare might successfully be preceded with a feint at some position away from the main objective, and what better area could an invader find than that of the three boroughs, Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole, for such a feint?

Professor Haldane, the eminent authority on the effects of gas and high-explosive, had pointed out that the only effective shelter against high-explosive bombs was a tunnel of at least 60ft. below ground.

He was asking the Council to instruct their representatives on the joint A.R.P. Committee of the three boroughs to suggest the construction of these tunnels which would cost no more than 15s. per head of population and £15 in marshy or low-lying areas.

After a considerable pause, the motion was finally seconded by Councillor Newman, and the matter referred to the A.R.P. Committee.