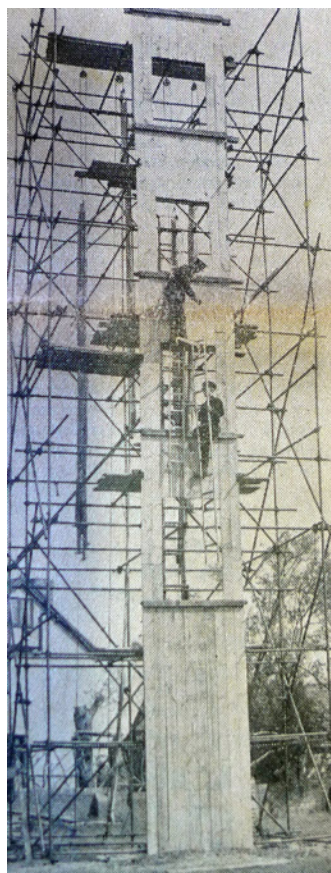


**MUDDLETOWN'S OWN FIRE BRIGADE  
"ORGANISED INCOMPETENCE"  
THRILLS AND LAUGHTER**

C.T. May 13, 1939



**OUR Christchurch Fire Brigade are first-class Fire Fighters and undoubted humourists.**

Seeking a spectacular finale to Whit-Monday's big programme at the Recreation Ground on the occasion of the Southern Division Fire Brigades trials, they have evolved a mighty burlesque—of Fire Brigades in general. Literally an orgie of organised incompetence.

Throughout the day the Christchurch Brigade will vie in competition with the arrayed Brigades of the South of England for supremacy in fire drills, when smartness, alertness and slickness with all the more or less complicated equipment of fire fighting machinery and aids of to-day, will be employed—but at the day's end they invite their fellow Brigades and the local audiences to laugh at their efforts, by staging their own unique burlesque of an How-Not-To-Do-It-Brigade.

Muddleton is situated in that Never-Never part of the Land made famous by a nearby townsman, Mr. Robb Wilton. He has told us by means of broadcasting how the Muddlecombe Town Council blunder through their chequered existence. Now Capt. Bryant and his local Brigade, assisted by the Auxiliary Brigade are to depict "A Fire Call in Muddletown."

**CONFLAGRATION AND CONSTERNATION.**

Aided by a scenic reproduction of a country inn, an outbreak of fire will be reproduced. With all the attendant confusion and obstructive bustle, Muddletown's famous Fire Fighters will come into action—eventually.

In this, added realism will be given by the arrival of the old coach, complete with passengers, just at the critical moment.

The Fire Brigade have a reputation for capital buffoonery when they are in a holiday mood, and on this occasion they are determined to provide laughter and excitement. "At unprecedented expense," as the play bill would run, the most startling realism will be attempted. From the moment when old Gaffer Parkiss raises the alarm, and burns his whiskers, right to the blissful finale, when the Muddlelow'n's firemen save and salve the stock-in-trade of the old inn. Real horses, real flames, real smoke, and real beer!

**THE MODERN FIRE FIGHTERS.**

In order, however, amused audiences should not retain a final memory of our Brigade as comedians, a still more realistic finale is to be staged, in which guests

are rescued from a blazing hotel, and the local Brigades provide an up-to-the-minute fire quelling demonstration!

All this spectacular fun is to be staged in the Recreation Ground in the evening at about 7 o'clock.

The story, as it unfolds, will be explained by a compere and by means of a microphone conveyed to the audience.



**Above-**Christchurch Firemen build 5-storey "Hotel" **Below-** Village Inn. Both buildings destined for flames on Whit-Monday on the Recreation Ground.

# COUNCILLOR TRIES TO REALISE "MUDDLECOMBE" STRANGER HELPS BRIGADE TO A FIRE

C.T. June 24, 1939

Here is a letter from Councillor T. H. McArdle:-

**AT a monthly Council meeting, held at the Town Hall on Thursday last, Councillor Newman made a statement to the effect that I had been giving away the business of the committee meetings to a gentleman well known to you, sir (and incidentally this concerned a matter that had been public property for two weeks). These presumed secrets which he alleged had been "given away," incidentally do him no credit. Briefly, some six weeks ago Councillor Newman made an accusation affecting our local Fire Brigade, which on examination he failed to substantiate. The Captain of our Fire Brigade attended especially to hear this statement. When challenged as to the source of his information Councillor Newman sought shelter by declaring his lips were sealed; the coward's way out. He did not care about the slur he had thrown upon the men of the Fire Brigade. I would ask, what good do these Labour representatives, as they style themselves, do? Making cruel accusations against public voluntary workers such as the Nursing Association the Welfare Centre and now our Fire Brigade. Let it be noted that in none of these have they been able to substantiate their statements.**

**Yours faithfully,  
T. H. McARDLE.**

NO MYSTERY, HERE IT IS.

Councillor McArdle, in sending this letter for publication, hints at some "statement" made to the Council. Happily the report of business taken "In committee" is now published, and we are enabled to dispose of the matter forthwith by printing below an explanation.

The following is taken from the agenda detailing the business of the May private business.

## EXTRACT FROM THE AGENDA.

"Fire Brigade: The Chief Officer of the Fire Brigade attended the meeting and stated that he had made enquiries with reference to the allegation made by Councillor Newman at a Fire Brigade Committee meeting to the effect that he had been informed by a member of the Brigade that the fire engine had broken down on the way to a fire, and that it was necessary for a member of the public to re-start the engine. Capt. Bryant stated that the fire engine had never broken down on the way to a fire, and that each member of the brigade denied having made any such communication to Councillor Newman, who stated that as he was not in a position to divulge the name of the member, he would withdraw the allegation.

"Recommended— That Captain Bryant's statement be accepted, and that the Council express their complete confidence in, and their thanks for the services of the brigade."

## A FRED KARNO "TURN-OUT."

Actually, of course, the laconic statement of the agenda conveys but poorly the very humorous allegation of Councillor Newman, which was to the effect that our firemen did not understand the working of the fire engine and had perforce accept help from a casual passer-by in order to reach a fire when the engine stalled.

Unnecessary to add the whole episode was one of absolute fiction. Quite the most remarkable thing about it being that Councillor Newman saw fit to waste the entire Council's time with such frivolity.

## " MUDDLECOMBE."

*To the Editor of the Christchurch Times. (July 1, 1939)*

Dear Sir.

I was not a bit surprised at the attack made upon me in your last issue. The reason must be obvious to the general public and, of course, again means more publicity for me as promised.

In the first instance there was no accusation made against the Fire Brigade. The origin of the controversy was an ordinary question put in good faith at a Fire Brigade Committee meeting, as is put in nearly every other committee for verification or otherwise.

In this particular case the Captain of the Fire Brigade saw fit to take this as an example case and demanded the informant's name, under ordinary circumstances I would have given same, but the attitude adopted made me suspicious and I declined to do so. Further information from the Fire Brigade has proved this a wise precaution, and has made it more than necessary that I do not give it.

I would at this point say, on information received (from a fireman) that no fireman must pass any Fire Brigade business to any member of the Council. This is surprising, seeing that the brigade is a voluntary one and every man is free to do as he chooses and has a perfect right to seek redress through his ward representative on the Council if required.

The whole business reeks of Fascism as practised in other countries, and the sooner it is put a stop to the better.

I repeat that Councillor McArdle did disclose Council business which he had no right to do, and had either Councillor R. E. Gray or myself done so we should have been dealt with through the chair.

I wish to make it very plain that I am not bound completely by the Christchurch Local Labour Party. When in Council or in committee I am free to do as I think fit and proper as has been proved by the number of items I have taken up for residents who have no connection with the Labour Party. As for wasting the Council's time, if I could do no better than act like a parrot at every meeting as does Councillor McArdle, I would resign immediately and make room for someone more capable.—Yours sincerely,

W. E. NEWMAN.

14, Portfield Close, Christchurch.

### **BOROUGH OF CHRISTCHURCH FIRE BRIGADE.**

*To the Editor of the Christchurch Times. (July 15, 1939)*

Dear Sir.

We, the undersigned, being the whole of the members of the Christchurch Borough Fire Brigade, emphatically deny that we have any knowledge of the following statement which appeared in a letter from Councillor Newman to the "Christchurch Times" in its issue of 1st July, 1939, viz.:—

" . . . I would at this point say, on information received (from a fireman) that no fireman must pass any Fire Brigade business to any member of the Council.

And we do further emphatically deny that we have at any time made any such statement as was quoted by Councillor Newman.

W. Bryant, W. H. Tucker, W. H. Ford, R. L. Reffin, C. W. Moody, E. Hodges, R. Bryant, L. Bagshot, P. Bray, P. Hodges, S. Oliver, J. M. Meadus, G. Guy, W. Hiscock, W. A. Lambert, A. V. Mortimer, D. Burton, S. F. Hiscock.