

## PROTECTION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

This was a matter which the Local Authority looked on as of the greatest importance from the first.

School Teachers were to be trained in Anti-Gas measures as we were warned of a possible gas attack at the start. Training in Anti-Gas measures was taken in hand and by 11th May, Captain Smith, The A.R.P.O. was able to report that 106 School teachers from Christchurch area had been through a course of instruction at Christchurch and had been through the Gas Chamber.

The Senior School with about 580 children had no telephone and it was felt that there were circumstances when it might be very necessary to call the staff up. An application was therefore made to the County Education-Officer for a telephone to be installed. The Committee turned it down as unnecessary.

Directly War was declared on September 3rd, 1939, this matter of the telephone, and, the absence of protection in the schools, became a very serious matter. At a meeting of the Emergency Committee, which now took the place of the A.R.P. Committee, the Chief Warden was asked to prepare a report, and, to find out to what extent the Local Authority was responsible for private Schools. This Report was drawn up, the schools at that date being as follows:-

### Under County Education Authority.

Senior School, Christchurch.....	580 children.
Clarendon Road School (Juniors and Infants) .. ..	600 children.
Church School, Wick Lane.....	240 ..
Mundeford School.....	150 ..
Highcliffe school .....	130 ..

### Under the Roman Catholic Church.

Catholic School, Purewell.....	35 children.
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### Private Schools.

Broadlands School..... ..	40 children
White House (Miss Wyatt).....	25 ..

Clonmanron 3school (Miss Spicer).. ..	25	..
St. Georges School, Shelley Hill, ..	30	..
Miss Hopkins School, Avon Rd. East ..	30	..

Of the above the children of the Senior School, Christchurch had some chance of getting to the Recreation Ground Public Trench. There were serious objections to this as it would mean that after the siren had sounded, there would be numbers of children streaming across the Recreation Ground, very probably being met by anxious parents and thus producing exactly what was not wanted, a crowd in the open as a target for German bombs. Moreover, if the people in the streets near the shelter got into it before the children came, the situation would be still worse, either a crowd round the shelter unable to find room or a crowd inside. In that case a panic would be most dangerous. Of the remainder, none had protection for children except the following:-

THE WHITE HOUSE: Miss Wyatt and her Aunt, who owned the house, had arranged for the children to go to a central passage in the house and, had one end blocked with a large cupboard full of clothes. Sandbags at first were refused for private schools. The main danger was the front door, which led into the garden through a small conservatory. Later sandbags were sent down to improve this. The house was exceptionally well provided with water.

CLONMANRON SCHOOL: Miss Spicer had also made similar arrangements.

ST GEORGES SCHOOL: Miss Norman and Miss Harwood had arranged for using the basement, which was very roomy and had 8 different ways of getting out in case of falls of masonry occurring when all were below. In addition an inner room in the centre of the basement was prepared for occupation in case of gas.

The Report gave this information and pointed out that in all cases except those mentioned above had no protection for children at the schools. It drew attention to a dangerous situation at the Senior School where a tank with 3½ tons of crude oil in it, for the heating of the school, was in the school buildings, and referred again to the absence of any telephone communication between the Senior School and A.R.P. Headquarters, so that timely warning of danger might be given. The infant school building at Clarendon Road and the Roman Catholic School were especially dangerous from fire, being entirely wood, well varnished In the case of the Catholic School. The Emergency Committee decided to take the matter up strongly and wrote at once to the Education Authorities. As nothing further

came from the Education Authorities the Emergency Committee wrote again drawing attention to the serious consequences which might be the result of having no protection and, saying further that if an Air Raid came, the schools would be closed. This produced an answer from the County Education Officer to say (a) that the Education Authorities were the only body who had the right to close the school and (b) that the matter was no concern of the A.R.P.

The Emergency Committee very rightly held that the lives of the children in their Borough was very much the concern of A.R.P. and took the following steps :-

One further letter was sent pointing out that Bournemouth had protection for their Schools and why should not Christchurch have the same. Then, as the only result was a letter from the County Education Committee in which they stated that on the advice of the County A.R.P.O., shelter in Christchurch Schools was not required at present, the Emergency Committee agreed to a request by the Chief Warden to try and get some form of shelter made for Mudeford School, and Highcliffe School by voluntary labour and by using such material as could be got locally, either by buying or by loan.

These two schools were chosen as the most exposed and with very little cover around. The Emergency Committee sent back to the County Education Authorities in answer to their letter to say that now they had said they were not in favour of Shelter Trenches being made for the Christchurch Schools, they (the Emergency Committee) could accept no responsibility in the matter, and they reserved the right to so inform the burgesses of the Borough.

The opinion of the A.R.P. Staff however was that should any disaster occur due to want of protection, the parents of children who were casualties would call on the local A.R.P. and Council for explanations, and, would not be in a frame of mind to take excuses for not providing protection if it could be done in any way.

Work was therefore started at once. Captain Cooke, Head warden of C.3. and Warden Franks, C.3., began, some help being provided by some of the full-time Wardens. But help which might be expected from people living near was from the first only spasmodic, and finally stopped altogether, warden Franks doing by far the greater part by himself. It was noticeable later however that although local people did not help to make the shelters some, at any rate, were very keen to occupy them, when the bad time came later. Orders had to be given out that the

shelter was primarily for the Mundeford School children, but could be made use of by local people when not used the school.

The trench at Highcliffe made in the woods close to it on Miss Mills property, Woolhays, was worked on by contingents of wardens under Mr. Coutts, Head Warden C4., Dr. Gardner, warden C.4., members of the Fire Brigade and A.F.S., Boy Scouts and some of the civil population of Highcliffe. Material was a difficulty. Some was got from Mr. J. Bury from Naish Farm. Then the Rev. Mayall of Highcliffe got in touch with the present owner of Holmhurst and got permission to use some of the vast amount of galvanized iron sheeting with which Holmhurst was surrounded. This gave the necessary means revetting and the trenches. Work on both places continued steadily. The Emergency Committee followed their letter to the County Education Officer by a resolution that the Staff Officer should write to the Controller on the matter and suggest that a similar letter be sent to the Lord Privy Seal in view of special circumstances created by Statutory Rules and Orders No.412 d/Ap6/1939.

But this only produced the reply from the Board of Education to the effect that they were not prepared to alter the decision of the County Education Authority not to provide shelter in schools in Christchurch. Meantime work went on voluntarily on the two lots of trenches until May, 1940, when the great German Offensive began.

Captain Smith, the A.R.P.O. wrote by the direction of the Emergency Committee at once, pointing out that with the new situation, some protection would be imperative. At the same time Mr. Llewellyn, School Manager, Christchurch and the Chief Warden visited all the Schools and on 31/5/40 made their report as follows:-

- (a) That for many months they had been trying to get protection for the schools which were under the County Education Authority, and, that all efforts to do so were negated by that authority.
- (b) That some protection had been made by voluntary efforts.
- (c) The Private School of Broadlands, White House, Clonmanron and St. Georges, had made their own protection in accordance with Government recommendations.

- (d) There was partial protection in trenches at Mudeford and Highcliffe Schools made by voluntary labour.
- (e) Some protection was made at the Catholic School, but sandbags were wanted.
- (f) There was no protection at the Senior School, Clarendon Road School or Wick Lane Church School but the Chief Warden produced some sketches showing what he and Mr. Llewellyn considered should be done.

It was arranged that the Borough Engineer and the Chief Warden should go round the schools and get an estimate cost of proposed protection. That Mr. Llewellyn should see Mr. Coates the County Education Officer. That the Chief Warden should communicate with the Managers of the Church School, Wick Lane. That all should meet the Emergency Committee and go round the Schools on June 6th at 14.30. hrs.

The results of the above arrangements were that after a meeting with Mr. Coates it was agreed that the County Education Authority would pay for temporary work, and at a future date further form of protection should be made. The Borough Engineer had a consultation with the County Architect and submitted plans, cost being as follows:-

Clarendon Road School.. ..	£320.
Senior School.....	£287.
Church School Wick Lane ..	£240.
Catholic School, Purewell..	£35.

A letter, with the above information was sent by the Emergency Committee asking that the work might be put in hand forthwith, as the matter was vital. On the 11/6/40 Mr. Tucker, Chairman of the Emergency Committee arranged with the Vicar of Christchurch, Canon Gay for protection to be made at the Church School, Wick Lane. The County Council Authorities agreed to bear the expense of providing this protection.

A letter from the County Education Officer was sent to the Emergency Committee for information on 28/6/40. There was no further difficulty with the Education Authorities after this date. The protection of windows and, of selected rooms in the schools was put in hand and completed where no protection existed. The two voluntarily made trenches at Mudeford and Highcliffe schools were taken

over by the County and practice given to the Children of leaving their class-rooms as if a warning had gone, and occupying these trenches without confusion or delay.

Later on a proposal was made to Gas-Proof the School Shelters at a cost of £47. This was turned down by the County Architect. It is very doubtful if the trenches could be made Gas-proof.

The Voluntarily made trenches did what was required in the early period of German attacks, but the middle of 1942 they began to collapse and finally became dangerous. A letter from Region on this matter was sent to the Board of Education, and, after some delay due to Labour difficulties, the County Authorities took the matter and work began on making adequate form of protection by reinforced walls within the school and blast walls to shelter such points as windows and doors from a bomb falling outside. Shortly afterwards the voluntary build shelters were filled in and Material returned to the Borough Engineers store.

This completed the Protection which fortunately has not been needed though Mudeford and Highcliffe schools both have had near shaves from bombs.

In 1943 however, the Bill for payment of cartage of the galvanized iron from Holmhurst to the Schools came in. This had been inadvertently mislaid since 1940 The Emergency Committee could give no trace of authority for the work to be done. That was as a matter of fact verbal, unless it is among the missing Minutes.

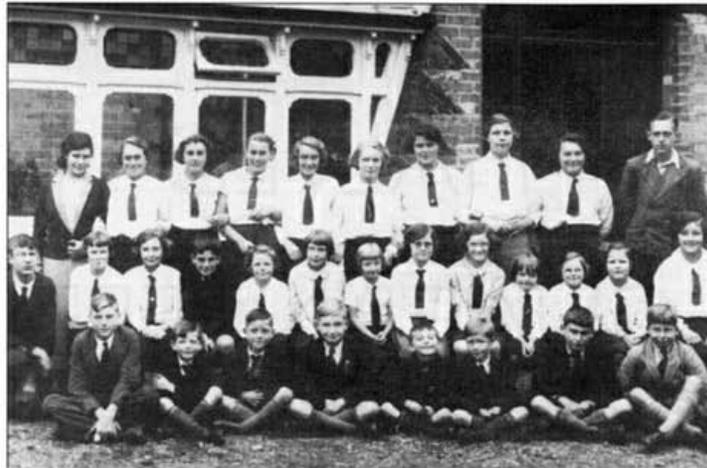


**27 The Grove,corner of Jumpers Avenue.  
formerly White House School  
in the 1930s Miss Ulvatt.  
kindergarten school; Miss A. Searle**

## BROADLANDS SCHOOL Miss Roff



**Dateline: Miss Roff's School, 1940s**



MRS Margaret Bowman of Admiralty Road, Bournemouth, sent this photograph taken circa early 1940s of a class at Miss Roff's Commercial School in Barrack Road, Christchurch.

The site is now used as a second-hand car lot - Mazda.

Margaret, on the right seated below the tall lad, attended lessons there before the Second World War aged 11 to 14, by which time she had passed all her exams in shorthand and typing.

Opposite her classroom was MEXE, the Military Experimental Establishment and they could often see three little old steam engines chugging back and forth along a short rail track which, she says, "rather amused us".

They were testing metal rails to support the weight of tanks in the construction of the famous Bailey Bridge that became so useful to the Army after D-Day.

Margaret remembers the names Alethia Starling, Jean Case, Peg Wayman, Rita Hand, Russell, Hazel Shepherd, Pauline Salt, Margaret Goulding and Valentine Veal.



**Woodend later St. Georges School  
Shelley Hill, Highcliffe**



**Clonmanron School corner of Barrack and Stour Road**



**Avon Road East School  
'Leyton', Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins**