

# NO TEETHING TROUBLES EXPECTED AT AUTOMATIC EXCHANGE

C.T. June 14, 1968

TEETHING trouble is not expected with the G.P.O.'s latest baby, the new automatic exchange in Christchurch, when it makes its appearance later this month.

Already numerous precautions have been taken to ensure that when the great day arrives, June 26, things will run very smoothly.

All the subscribers in the Christchurch area will receive letters by the GPO telling them about the new exchange, how S.T.D. works, and enclosing an S.T.D. code book. They will be told what the new codes are for Christchurch and where to get information about numbers which have been changed.

However, it will be up to the telephone users themselves to let their friends and business colleagues know their new numbers — and they can do this completely free of charge on special postcards and stickers provided by the Post Office.

The Post Office are already sending out directories with new Christchurch numbers to subscribers so that they will be ready for use when the great day arrives.

To avoid frustration it is stressed that these new numbers will not be in use until June 26, and it is important for subscribers to appreciate that when these new directories arrive they cannot be used immediately.

Subscribers will have to be patient and go on using their old one until the exchange goes automatic.

In addition to these helpful measures, for a period after the exchange is opened there will be an operator on duty to deal with queries. In-coming calls to the exchange from other areas will be automatically re-routed if they are wrong.

## EXTENSION

The automatic exchange, which has been installed at a cost of more than £200,000, will utilise the existing building in Sopers Lane, Christchurch, as well as a special extension which has been built on.

The original Christchurch Exchange which consisted of one operating position was situated in the front room of a house in Bargates.

As the number of exchange lines grew a replacement exchange was opened over the old post office at 17 High Street, Christchurch. These premises are now occupied by the Southern Electricity Board.

The existing manual exchange in Sopers Lane was opened on January 31, 1931. The number of subscribers was then 365. In the 37 years of its life the number of subscribers has increased tenfold to its present figure of 3,700.

## OPERATORS

The operating staff has also increased from three day, and one night operator in 1930 to 33 day, and eight night plus 12 part time operators at present.

With the closure of the Christchurch manual exchange there will be no redundancies as all the staff will be offered alternative employment, either in the Bournemouth exchange or as clerical staff in other local government.

A spokesman told the CT that there would be no redundancy because the G.P.O., with its vast staff, many of them women, had quite a high proportion of "wastage," through women leaving to get married or start a family.

Operator assistance will be given by telephonists at the Bournemouth manual board and voices familiar to Christchurch customers, therefore, may still be heard as some of the operators will be working there.

## ONE OF THE LAST

Christchurch is one of the last five exchanges to be converted to S.T.D. — the other four now waiting to go automatic are New Milton, Dorchester, Westbourne and Parkstone.

The new exchange will cater initially for a total of 4,200 subscribers and has scope for expansion to accommodate a great many more.

It had been planned to open this exchange in October 1967 but due to difficulties in the deliveries of stores to the contractor the conversion date has been delayed. It is now proposed to open at 2.30 pm on June 26. An opening ceremony which will be performed by the Mayor of Christchurch Ald. Mrs. Dorothy Baker, in the presence of other local dignitaries has been planned.

### TRANSFERRED

During the two days following the conversion the public kiosks, which have been working as Bournemouth numbers for the past year will be transferred to work on the new Christchurch exchange.

A demonstration of subscriber trunk dialling and dial telephones will be held in a mobile exhibition on the car park at the junction of the High Street and the Bypass from June 19 until July 3 inclusive.

## CALLS FLOOD IN AS PHONES GO STD

C.T. June 28, 1968

THE tension mounted as zero hour got nearer and the voices of the assembled guests were stilled to a subdued murmur as they waited for the command which would set the fantastic machinery in operation—it was Wednesday afternoon, and the Christchurch Exchange was about to go over from manual to automatic working.

When the great moment of "Over and out" arrived —at 2.30 pm exactly — it was a dramatic one. In an upstairs room of the exchange in Sopers Lane the girl telephonists prepared to do their final task; when the moment arrived they ripped out all the leads from the manual exchange.

Meanwhile, downstairs in the new extension built to house the mass of modern equipment, the Mayor of Christchurch, Ald. Mrs. Dorothy Baker, pulled a handle and released all the subscribers' new numbers for use and within seconds the new exchange was in full use as calls flooded in.

### GUESTS

Among the guests who assembled to witness the ceremony were members of Christchurch Borough Council, the Chief Officers of the Corporation, a representative of the police and representatives of the Chamber of Trade and various other organisations.

They were welcomed by the Telephone Manager, Mr. F. K. Radcliffe, who paid tribute to the telephonists who had operated the exchange for many years.

They were not, he said, expert tea-drinkers or knitters, but were a very vital part of any exchange, and most of them would continue to work for the GPO.

Mr. Radcliffe introduced the "first and last of the operators": Mrs. Dorothy Fordham who had been one of the original operators on the first Christchurch exchange, and Miss Olive Frampton and Mrs. Lois Gatter, two of the "last telephonists who were both retiring.

The mayor, before going to the switch room to perform the inaugural ceremony, recalled that the inventor of the telephone, Alexander Bell, had discovered it by chance. It was amazing to think that less than 100 years after he made his invention, the telephone was going automatic.

### EXHIBITION

She said everyone was very grateful to the telephone system and she drew attention to the fact that a mobile telephone exhibition was on view at the Pit Site roundabout. She said she would be going to get instruction on how to make long distance telephone calls.

Mrs. Baker was presented with a bouquet by the youngest operator, 17-year-old Denise Hunt,

After the opening ceremony guests were shown over the automatic exchange by guides who explained how the new system operated.

## NO HITCH IN CHANGEOVER

THE MASSIVE changeover from manual to automatic exchange at Christchurch went off without a hitch on Wednesday. A spokesman for the GPO told the CT yesterday (Thursday): "There were no major snags—everything is going very smoothly."

Subscribers in the Bransgore and Highcliffe areas should not be concerned if they cannot find the new code for Christchurch.

Some time ago Highcliffe subscribers were issued with code books and these contained the old Christchurch number 76, and beside it, the new prefix for Christchurch: 86. Subscribers should remember to consult these code books for the new numbers. Bransgore residents have to dial 985, and those in Bournemouth 85 followed by the Christchurch subscribers' number.



Then and now: Above, the original telephone exchange at 80, Bargates in 1910 — and below, three former telephonists marvel at the sophisticated new equipment at the automatic exchange just opened at Christchurch. In both pictures is Mrs. Dorothy Fordham — she is the young lady in the white blouse and tie at the Bargates exchange, and below she is in between two Christchurch telephonists, Mrs. Lois Gatter and Miss Olive Frampton.  
Lower photograph Rushbrook.

