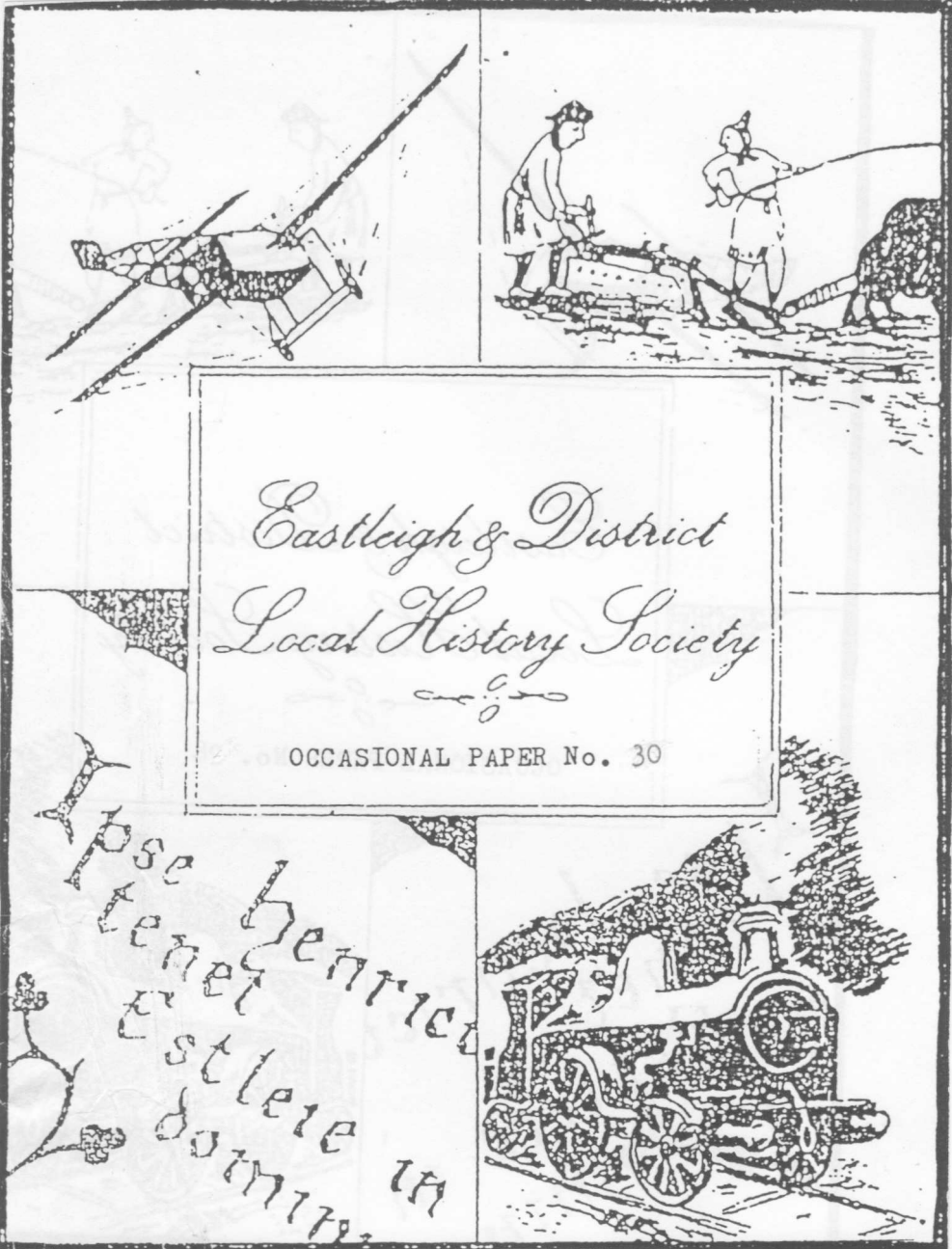
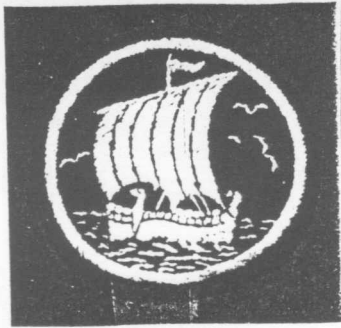


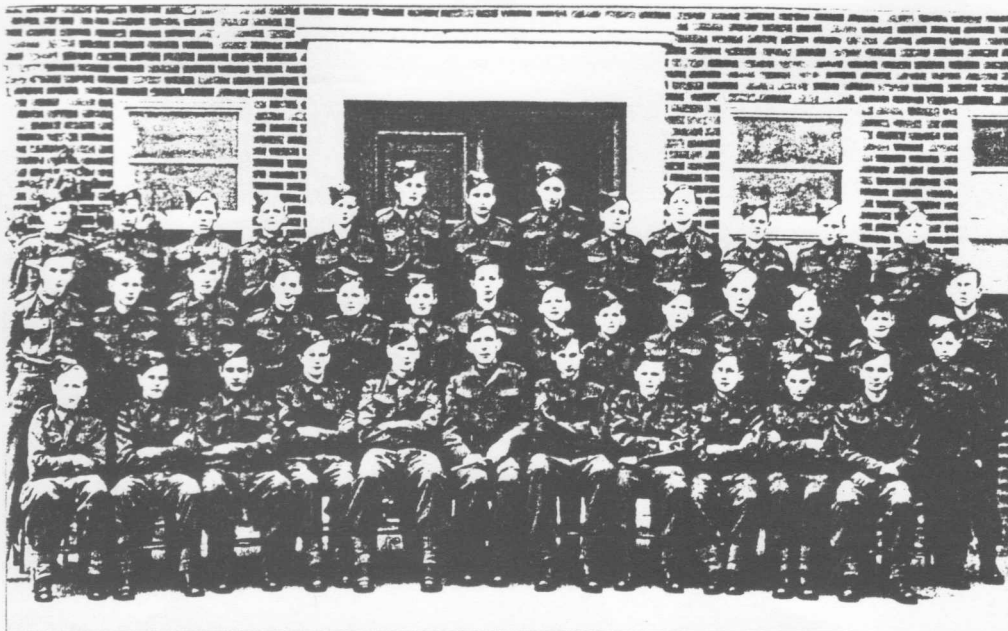
Wartime evacuation from Gosport to Eastleigh.



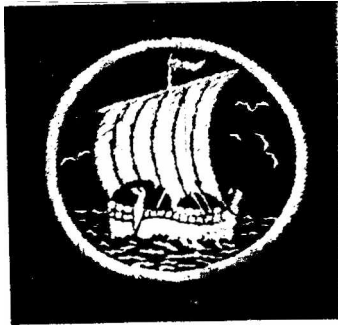


September ~~1st~~ Friday.
Went to bridge in morning. Staff
caught EVACUATION train
from Gosport to EASTLEIGH!!
When we arrived at Eastleigh
got in bus which took us to our new
school. Were told where our billets
were to be and also received a
bag containing two days emergency
rations (corn beef, biscuits,
condensed milk etc.). Was taken
by car to Cox's Row to Mrs
Sutcliffe's. Very nice billet.
Had tea and a wash when I
arrived. Am billeted with
Bernard Davies. Did drawing
after tea.

1st September 1939

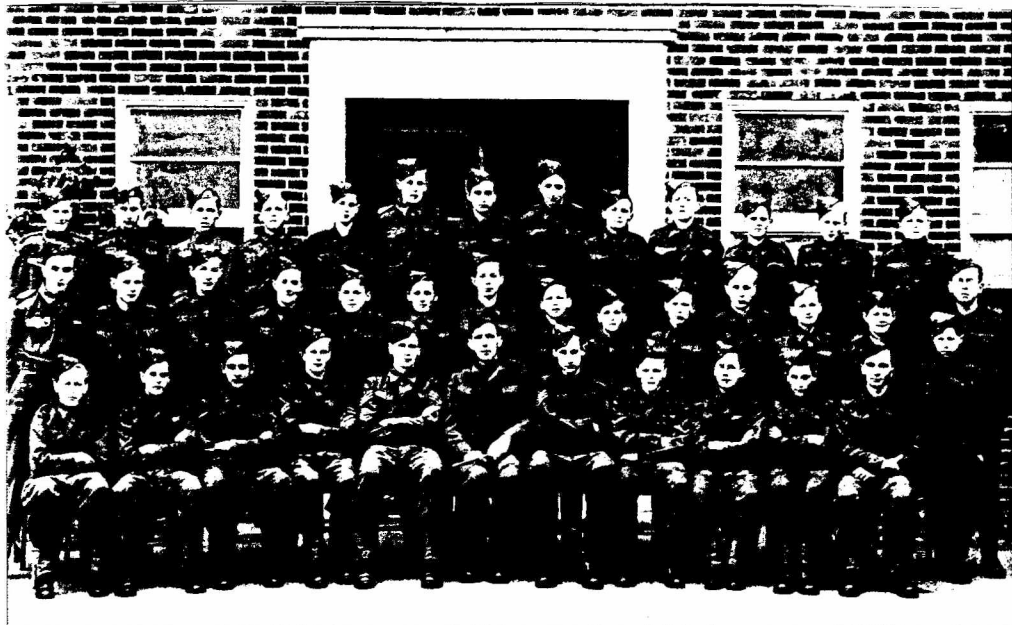


Gosport County School Army Cadet Force North End School circa 1940



September ~~11th~~ Friday.
Went to bridge in morning. Staff
caught EVACUATION train
from Gosport to EASTLEIGH!!
When we arrived at Eastleigh
got in bus which took us to our new
school. Were told where our billets
were to be and also received a
bag containing two days emergency
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Gosport County School Army Cadet Force North End School circa 1940

WAR TIME EVACUATION FROM GOSPORT TO EASTLEIGH AND ITS SIDE ISSUES

In 1939, fear of bombing and population panic had led to government definition of areas as evacuation, neutral or reception to assist rapid dispersal of non essential personnel. Schemes proposed paid little attention to educational needs. In the case of Gosport and Eastleigh the decisive factor was the railway linking the two towns. There was no difficulty in providing a paper plan for smooth evacuation. As a reception area, Eastleigh was to accept some small primary schools, a boys and a girls elementary school, a complete grammar school and some 200 mothers who were either expectant or accompanied infants.

Preparations for evacuation and reception built up in the period March - August 1939 under the general supervision of the Town Clerks and their Passive Defence Committees. At Gosport the problem was simple as the main job was to get evacuees to the railway station and that, with persuasion of parents, was left to individual schools and families. For reception in Eastleigh there were many unknowns. There were constant alarms in the international situation and floods of advice from government departments. This led the Eastleigh Town Clerk, Mr. Cuthbertson, in the summer of 1939, to issue one circular of his own which started with the memorable lines, "Come war or come peace in place of this bastard uncertainty" and then continued with clear guidance and advice on all sorts of problems.

The uncertainty was resolved in the last week of August 1939, with an evacuation rehearsal and list and gas mask check at most schools on Monday the 28th, and evacuation on Friday, September 1st. The train which left Gosport at 1.30 p.m. had as passengers 200 expectant mothers and infants, 266 grammar school pupils and some primary school children. An earlier train had evacuated elementary school pupils for Eastleigh and adjacent areas towards Fair Oak and Hedge End. On a glorious summer day, the platform atmosphere was cheerful and much the same as on any school outing.

For the evacuees, Eastleigh had made extensive preparation. Most householders had been interviewed and there were voluntary places for all. It was planned to billet mothers and infants in Chandlers Ford, using North End Senior School as a billeting centre. This school, now Hampshire Fire Service H.Q., was a brand new elementary school, in style the pride of Hampshire and due to open in September.

On that Friday afternoon its staff and helpers, under the trustful leadership of the first Headmaster - Mr. G. C. Stretton - were awaiting the arrival of expectant mothers and infants from Gosport. But the buses from Eastleigh Station were misdirected and there arrived six double deckers with the grammar school pupils as passengers. By 7 p.m. the energetic North End billeting officers had thrust into about 300 puzzled households throughout Chandlers Ford some very well developed infants and no expectant mothers. There are fond memories of a house in Park Road where kind foster parents, anticipating a mother and baby, were persuaded to accept two 10 stone Bettys and made a great success of it.

On Friday evening at Eastleigh Town Hall there was much discussion with the Town Clerk as to how to sort out the mix up in billeting. But, as it happened, there had been a general welcome and few complaints. The majority felt or hoped that as war had not been declared, evacuees would all return within a few days. For many that was correct due to home sickness, billeting problems, and inadequate facilities for school assembly. By the end of September many primary and elementary pupils and expectant mothers with infants had returned to Gosport.

The problem of school assemblies was a serious one for the evacuated schools. Various authorities were at loggerheads. The Ministry of Education had closed all schools. Local children could remain on extended holiday but evacuated children had to be assembled somewhere. Eventually, Hampshire Education Committee agreed that the Grammar School could accept the generous offer of Councillor Wright - owner of a local cinema - for the school to meet there in the mornings. It seemed very odd that children could meet in a cinema but could not use school facilities until air raid shelters were available. Luckily, the September weather was brilliant and for a few days there were activities organised from the playground of Eastleigh County High School. But with distant billets in Chandlers Ford this could not last and a decision was made to transfer the Grammar School base to North End School and to co-operate with the elementary school.

In 1939, Hampshire Grammar Schools had a good deal of independence and when the school moved its base to North End the authorities at Winchester were willing to accept it as a result rather than as a problem. From September 5th, Gosport Grammar functioned from North End, albeit from the playground. For about a week school life consisted of varied school journeys. One of these, to a B.B.C. station in the New Forest, introduced several pupils to B.B.C. apprenticeships and permanent careers in broadcasting. One enterprising teacher took most of the Upper School to Gosport to collect cycles. Non cyclists were kept busy in the North End field. They dug for victory or roamed the adjacent countryside collecting massive amounts of acorns for farm pigs and blackberries for foster parents.

By 21st September, air raid shelters had been built at North End and the new elementary school was opened. An arrangement was made for shift working so that classrooms were available for each school in alternate weeks from 8.30-12.30 or from 1.00-5.00. In the session when classrooms were not available, the grammar school had practical sessions from 9.30-11.30 or from 2-4. In addition, the evacuated pupils had Saturday morning school and "enjoyed" a longer week of 33 hours. Educationally, the shift system was ideal for the grammar school as pupils in billets had to be kept busy and for the long practical sessions ample staff was available. This was not so for the elementary school and from September 1940, when its roll increased, rooms were made available throughout the school day.

The Grammar School overflowed into other buildings in Eastleigh. These included schools in Desborough Road, Shakespeare Road, Toynbee Road and Chamberlayne Road. At Toynbee Road, two extra rooms were released in 1942 by a co-operative Headmaster. They were equipped with furniture from Gosport, used for one day and destroyed with all the furniture in an air raid that evening. This grouping of pupils was then moved to a room in a Baptist Chapel and to a room above a public house in Leigh Road. By 1942, with pupils sharing six widely separated buildings, cycles were becoming as necessary as text books. In that year, an advertisement for an English teacher stated, "Ability to ride a bicycle desirable". The only applicant was a non-cyclist and her appointment involved a wholesale time-table change after a fruitless application for petrol to transport her between buildings.

At the post billeting meeting on September 1st 1939, the Town Clerk eagerly accepted the Grammar School offer to deal with its own billeting. The staff merely regarded this as normal pastoral care and within a few days every billet had been visited. They found, despite the expectant mother muddle, that foster parents were understanding and sympathetic. There were problems with the billeting fee - 10/6 (52½p) for senior pupils and 6/- (30p) for juniors. This was to cover weekly full board and lodging. Somehow, parents and foster parents got together and arranged additional payments. One frequent question concerned washing of clothes but this was resolved. There was a general shift of billets from Chandlers Ford to Eastleigh. By 1942 the majority of pupils were billeted in the town centre and this continued until December, 1944, when evacuation ended.

Staff responsible for the Gosport school were not impressed by the Ministry of Health evacuation scheme. There was a mean adherence to statutory obligations and the school was informed that the Ministry of Health was not responsible or concerned with educational problems. In 1940 some bureaucrat discovered that 40 pupils billeted in Eastleigh did not reside in the evacuation area of Gosport. Their homes were in the area of Fareham, Bursleden and Droxford, for which Gosport was the normal grammar school for girls.

There was acrimonious correspondence between the Hampshire Education Committee and the Ministries of Health and Education until finally and reluctantly the Education Committee paid the billeting fees for pupils already evacuated. After September 1940, new entrants to the school had expensive, complicated and often tiring journeys from home to Eastleigh at the expense of the Education Committee. Things would have been even more difficult if local officials from Eastleigh Borough Council and from the County Education Office at Winchester had not bent the rules and delayed action until the educational interests of pupils were secure.

The evacuation scheme made no general provision for problems and expenses due to illness. Fortunately, the wartime health of children was good, but when illness worried foster parents, pupils were usually transferred home to Gosport. In the first eighteen months, 40 pupils were temporarily returned. The Eastleigh Medical Officer - Dr. Proverbs - went beyond his duties to assist and, in two difficult cases, somehow secured accommodation in the sick bay of a Winchester approved school.

The Ministry of Education was willing to pay 100% grant to provide facilities for school meals for evacuated children. The new school at North End had a dining room and kitchen and Hampshire Education Committee was delighted to furnish and staff it, at the 100% expense of the evacuation account. By November 1939, it was providing an excellent mid-day meal for 300 evacuees and later for many of the local children, whose parents were glad to have this rationing relief. By June 1940, the joint schools "dig for victory" campaign in the school field supplied the kitchen with potatoes, lettuce, cabbage and parsnips. At one stage the school was threatened with court action because it had not bothered to inform the War Agricultural Committee it had four acres of potatoes. Surprisingly, the schools were eligible for the potato subsidy and in due course collected about £200 over a period of four years.

After the first major night air raid on Southampton in 1940 refugees flooded into Eastleigh. North End School, which later became an official Rest Centre, played a major part in accommodating and caring for shocked and distressed people of all ages. One consequence was to ease the billeting situation as householders preferred children to refugees. Another consequence was the building of Velmore and Hiltingbury Camps. By 1942, the Velmore Camps housed a company from the Army Pioneer Corps and provided room for 5,000 refugees; many of the Nissen huts, however, were empty. The Education Authority asked for eight huts to be made available for school use but the Ministry of Health showed no understanding, co-operation or willingness to discuss educational problems and for more than twelve months the huts were empty.

In September 1943, the M.P. for S.W. Hampshire - Sir Dymoke White - was horrified to see the strain imposed on the school while this enormous area of empty huts languished on the doorstep of North End School. Shortly afterwards six huts were released. The local H.M. Inspector who brought news of their availability said diplomatically that the M.P. had been useful but that a day's fishing on the Test had made a very senior Ministry of Health official prod his Regional Office. Thereafter the school classroom problem was resolved.

The school and billeting authority kept as far away as possible from the vexed question of allowances. This could be quite complex as more and more evacuees travelled home for weekends. By 1942, the school had settled into a five day week with children travelling to Gosport on Friday evening and returning in time for school in Eastleigh at 9.0 a.m. on Monday. Some travellers may remember the congestion on these already crowded trains as 250 children thronged Eastleigh, Fareham and Gosport stations. It made a farce of the evacuation scheme but Grammar School education was maintained. The Luftwaffe collaborated by bombing Eastleigh at weekends and Gosport during the week. One odd effect of this travelling was that rations which were drawn by foster parents at Eastleigh were needed in Gosport at weekends. Here again, tolerant good sense made varied and equitable arrangements.

The Gosport evacuees returned in December, 1944. There were then 223 pupils in billets and 51 travelling daily by train from rural areas. The school had been evacuated by special train but for the return journey all made their own arrangements - many on the cycles which had been so useful. That, possibly, was a measure of the independence gained in this upheaval. Educationally, the pupils had lost nothing and the school had developed a tradition for school visits and journeys and a facility for coping with accommodation problems. Evacuation was almost a training for the post-war period in Gosport as for fourteen years the school, with numbers which increased to 800, had to work in five widely separated centres.

Gosport Grammar School retained many pleasant memories of its evacuation to Eastleigh. From Day One the Borough Council gave pupils the freedom of its sports facilities at Fleming Park and its swimming pool. Through 5½ years, residents provided an average of 250 billets for pupils and staff with no unreasonable complaints. Friendships were established which still persist.

One long-term result of the accident which threw a grammar school and an elementary school into a five year partnership was possibly the ease with which Hampshire as an education authority accepted the Comprehensive system. Educational leaders on the County Council, including Sir Samuel Gurney-Dixon, Sir Alan Lubbock and Alderman Quilley, came as guests to the evacuated school, often with their chief officials, in the period up to 1944. Twenty years later, when reorganisation towards the Comprehensive system was discussed, there were memories of the stark differences in independence, staffing and financial resources in Grammar and Elementary schools maintained by the same authority. The development of modern schools had already reduced these. The Comprehensive school system swept them away.

ALAN WALKER

July 1987

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Former Evacuees with their distinguished Headmaster Alan Walker at the First Reunion of the Old Gosportians (Eastleigh) Association, held in the hall of their old school building, Walpole Road, Gosport on Monday, 12th October, 1998



The 1939-1940 Girls' Hockey Team

*Joyce Maton, Anita Gurowitz, Mary Tyrell, Barbara Fox, Norah McCabe, Pat Mullins
Miss Maton (standing), Miss Harris (standing)
Enid Cummins, Joan Walker, Barbara Warner (Captain), ? Mary Francis*

THE GOSPORTIAN

The Magazine of the Gosport County School.

No. 76.

JULY, 1940.

EDITORIAL.



ONCE again *The Gosportian* makes its familiar appearance as a sign that in a world of change and upheaval some things remain unchanged. Evacuation has given us new homes, new school-buildings and a new arrangement of forms and lessons, but essentially the School remains itself, and we all have a sharpened consciousness of what the School means to us.

Our numbers have been substantially maintained, work has gone forward with normal intensity, and activities have been varied and well-supported. When we first came to Eastleigh, our concern was to keep together and fill in time, but very soon we got down to regular lessons and homework. By the time we were used to the weekly alternation of periods and the separation of formal from practical subjects, we found ourselves doing a full week's work,—including Saturday mornings! Our application to work has been so serious that examination forms have returned in the evenings for extra tuition and private study—efforts which have already been rewarded by a County Major Scholarship and good results in the Artificer and Dockyard examinations. Games and activities were more difficult to organise, but with the generous help of the Eastleigh Council we have been able to run a fairly full programme of games (including swimming), while the expanse of tarmac at North End School has enabled us to add netball and skittleball to the list of school games. Social activities were difficult to arrange in black-out conditions, but Boys' and Girls' Clubs, Chess Club and Discussion Group have had record seasons. Excursions have flourished, both botanical rambles and trips to places of historical and scientific interest.