

EXTRACTS FROM NEWCHURCH SCHOOL LOG BOOK (C/ES263/1/2)

17 Oct 1939: 'Air-raid siren at New Romney sounded at 2pm. All clear at 3.50pm Raid on Firth of Forth & Yorkshire coast.'

30 Oct 1939: 'Air-raid warning at 9am. All clear at about 9.50am. Unidentified enemy aircraft off east coast.'

20 Nov 1939: Air-raid warning during "blackout" – All clear signal given after two hours – planes driven off without gunfire or bombs.'

29 Jan 1940: 'Snow has drifted and blocked many roads. Miss Hinds struggled through it on foot from Bilsington to Newchurch, Miss Wilson did not arrive. 6 children present and one robin (without a tail)'

30 Jan 1940: 'Drifts worse than ever. Miss Hinds struggled from Bilsington again, although the drifts at Pear Tree corner & near School Field corner too deep to get through. It was necessary to go through the fields at those places, as luckily there was a way out in each case, for the ice on the dykes is too thin for one to cross over it that way. 2 Heads, 1 evacuee and the robin present. The robin ate crumbs off the H.T's shoulder to-day'

10 Jul 1940: 'Two air raids in vicinity during the day. The second one was most exciting. A roar of aeroplanes was heard and from the doorstep the head teacher counted 32 planes, she stopped counting the numerous planes which followed the 32 in order to watch the others attacking one another. They wheeled, circled, dived and attacked with great rapidity. Now and again some seemed to flop to earth. Great thuds were heard, and the rattle of machine gun fire. Then a cloud of smoke was observed behind some distant trees, possibly it was a crashed plane, as 14 are now reported to have been destroyed and 23 severely damaged. 2 of our fighters were lost, but the pilot of one was saved. The children remained under the cover of their desks and were thrilled to hear the "running commentary" of the fight. When a few planes flew over the school the H.T took cover.'

21 Oct 1940: 'Bombs dropped on way to Bilsington gave us a fright but nothing more.'

22 Oct 1940: 'Heard shells whizzing by when we were gardening & wondered whether they were Germans firing across.'

23 Oct 1940: 'Discovered that shells heard yesterday were from our guns near Ruckinge. A British plane fell in flames about 100 yds from the school, last evening.'

31 Oct 1940: 'Eileen Cobb absent as she had little sleep owing to excitement at a Hurricane coming down in her father's field, the plane had its engine shot through, but the pilot was quite safe, he walked away after having asked if he had done any damage.'

5 Dec 1940: 'Terrific air-fight overhead at dismissal time. Children cheered lustily when they saw three German planes fall with black smoke pouring from them. No signs of fear.'

5 May 1941: 'The children are rather excitable to-day, not because this is the first day of 'double summer time' i.e. school opens at 7am Greenwich time, but because a Hurricane plane fell near White Horse yesterday. The pilot, a Pole, landing by parachute in St Mary's & the engine falling in Bilsington.'

9 Jun 1941: 'School re-opened after a week's holiday for Whitsun. Air-raid shelter used for the first time. We were there about 30 mins as many guns were firing & the Bren gun in the rectory garden was manned. Planes flew low.'

11 Sep 1942: 'Head teacher has gone home for the rest of the day, with permission of the managers, as her home was damaged in an air-raid at 6.30am today. Left school at 10.20.'

18 Jan 1943: 'Several children absent today owing to the raid last night. Albert Grenden and family have had to leave their house owing to an unexploded bomb being in their stable.'

4 Mar 1943: 'During the night a heavy bomb was dropped about 300 yards from the school, in Mr Milton's field – north of the school, only a few panes of glass damaged. The crack in the wall became slightly wider.'

24 Mar 1943: 'At about 10.15am, nine or ten German planes flew low and fast over the village, machine-gunning as they went. Telephone wires just outside the large window at the school were cut through and bullets rattled on the roof, but no damage was done. The children were very calm and controlled. Sheep and cows were killed and a chimney at "The Bull" was shot off. Cannon shells pierced the west door of the church and exploded inside the church.'

16 Jun 1944: 'Only 18 children present today. Others absent on account of the numerous German shells which were fired over the district during the night. Shells, with wings like aeroplanes were fired at fairly frequent intervals from the time we arrived at school until 11.30am. Many guns fired at them as they purred over at about 500 miles per hour. The noise was terrific. Children brought shell splinters to school which they had picked up near their homes. All were of good courage when the bombardment was at its height.'

5 Jul 1944: 'Every day since flying bombs started coming over the attendance has been erratic. Today, between noon and 1.30pm about nine or ten came over, some right over the school. One, in the distance, was hit by gunfire from planes as we watched. It soared high in the air, turned back, fell, went again on its course, made another summersault and finally came to earth far away, the smoke from it being visible some seconds before the explosion was heard.'