

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945
AIR RAIDS – SHELTERS

Air raid shelters in schools

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DISCONTENT GROWING OVER AIR RAID SHELTER POLICY

Working
Class Areas
Dissatisfied

R.D.C. Will
Carry On
Construction

Schools—
Improvements
Now In Hand

THERE IS A GROWING DEMAND FROM THE RATEPAYERS OF WORTHING FOR THE PROVISION OF MORE DEEP AIR RAID SHELTER PROTECTION. THIS DEMAND COMES WITH MOST PERSISTENCE FROM THE WORKING CLASS AREAS

THE OPINION THAT UNDERGROUND SHELTERS ARE NECESSARY WAS UPHELD BY A MEMBER OF WORTHING R.D.C. "THE COST WILL BE VERY HIGH AS MUCH OF THE LAND IN THIS AREA IS BELOW SEA LEVEL," HE DECLARED.

GRAVE DISCONTENT HAS BEEN EXPRESSED BY PARENTS BECAUSE OF THE CONDITION OF SCHOOL RAID SHELTERS. WORK OF PROVIDING SEATING ACCOMMODATION, HEATING AND LIGHTING HAS NOW BEEN STARTED.

AS a result of numerous complaints reaching this office a "Herald" reporter toured some of the town's school air raid shelters, to find out just what they were like under working conditions.

In every case he found conditions far from comfortable. Damp walls and floors, children, some wrapped in rugs and blankets, sitting on home-made stools, boxes, mats, and, in some instances the bare floor—except in one shelter where seating has just been installed—and in almost total darkness. Many of the teachers have endeavoured to rig up some sort of temporary lighting with candles and hurricane lamps, and to improvise seating for a few of the children with any odd bits of timber they could lay their hands on.

At one school, where the floors of the shelters are in a very bad state, consisting of a cement centre surrounded by rubble, the head teacher feels that it would be detrimental to the health of the children to use the shelters, and she now keeps them in the school building during the "alerts."

After a long spell in these shelters, she described the children as looking like a "regiment of corpses" when they emerged, covered with dust from the primitive floor. Although they were sitting on mats, "four children to a tiny drill mat," there were many complaints from irate parents about ruined clothing.

TEACHERS HOPING

Amongst the teachers as a whole, however, there is now a feeling that things are about to improve in the immediate future. Many were able to report that a start had now been made on the eagerly awaited lighting, heating and seating equipment. Meanwhile they are just "making the best of things."

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