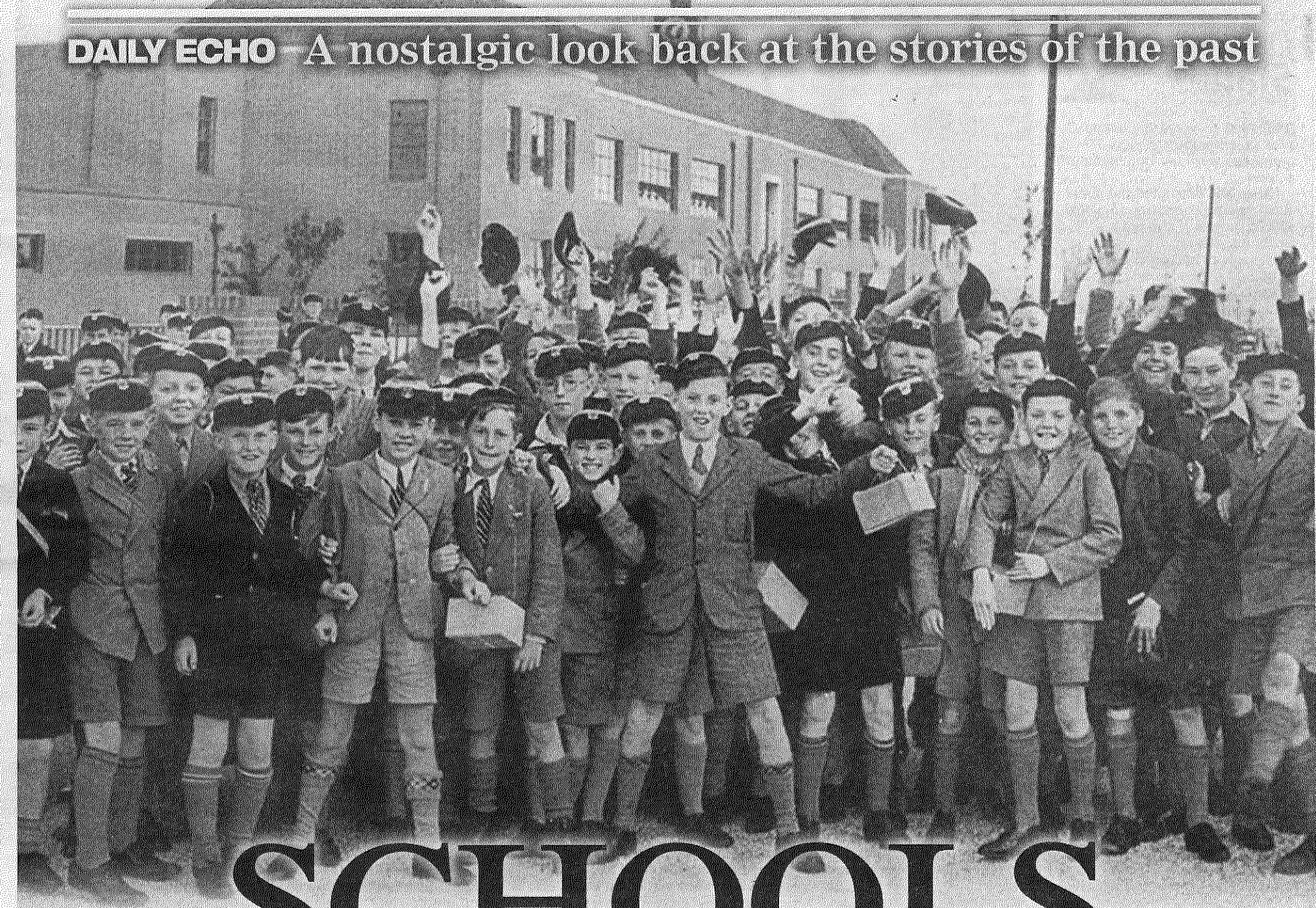


ECHOES

DAILY ECHO - A nostalgic look back at the stories of the past



SCHOOLS OF WAR

Echoes discovers how Bournemouth welcomed pupils from nearby Taunton's in Southampton

Turbulent transition t

Darren Slade



THE first students at a brand new Bournemouth School 75 years ago were not Bournemouth pupils.

Hitler had disrupted the plans for a smooth transition to a new site for pupils of the town's grammar school.

The school had outgrown its original Lowther Road site and work had begun on a replacement at East Way in 1937.

But in the summer of 1939 it was clear that war was looming in Europe, and plans were made to start evacuating children from Britain's cities.

On August 24, teachers were told to report to their schools in two days' time. Soon after, the government announced that as of August 29, the summer holidays would be considered over.

The Bournemouth Daily Echo's front page headline on August 31 ran: "Evacuation to begin tomorrow."

"Evacuation of children and other priority classes will take place tomorrow," the report began.

"The Ministry of Health stated that the evacuation is purely a precautionary measure.

"The statement adds that the decision does not mean that war is regarded as inevitable."

In Southampton, notices were posted, setting out the arrangements for evacuation of school pupils to Bournemouth.

The evacuation began as planned on Friday, September 1. That same day came the news that Germany had invaded Poland. "Germany starts world catastrophe," reported the Echo.

On the Saturday, pupils of Southampton's grammar, Taunton's School, arrived at school at 6.30am, each one carrying a label, one piece of hand luggage, a raincoat, a carrier bag and a cardboard box containing a gas mask.

They were taken by train to

Pupils' reunion

PUPILS of the two schools who shared the East Way site still maintain links through the Old Bournemouthians Association and the Old Tauntonians.

The Old Tauntonians outlived their school, which became a sixth form college in 1969. The Old Bournemouthians Annual Dinner will be held on



TOUGH TIMES:
Evacuees in
1939

Bournemouth, where they were moved on to distribution centres and billeted to homes around the area.

On Sunday, many of them listened to the radio with their families to hear Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declare that Britain was at war.

As a new term began, the headmaster of Bournemouth School, Mr JE Parry, and the head of Taunton's School, Mr

Hemmings, had to devise a workable system for educating the 1,200 pupils of the two schools. They settled on a way of sharing the East Way premises – one school occupying it in the morning, the other in the afternoon for six days a week. This was considered 'two-thirds education', with the pupils given extra homework.

The next May, the schools went with a new system, splitting pupils according to whether they were doing practical or academic work, and hiring two local community halls.

That June, with the war going badly in France, the school was used to accommodate first French, then British soldiers evacuated from Dunkirk.

As Old Tauntonian Alan Cairns wrote later in his accounts of the period, the time in Bournemouth was anxious for the Southampton children.

Their city was subjected to three devastating bombing raids in November and December 1940

and evacuees could sometimes hear the raids from the homes where they were billeted.

One boy, Jack Levene, returned to Southampton one weekend to visit his parents, only for the whole family to be killed by a German bomb.

Many of the masters were leaving to join the forces, while others signed up to the Local Defence Volunteers, later renamed the Home Guard.

Among the Taunton's masters at the time was the English master Dr Horace Maybray King.

John Walker, who was then an evacuee and is today one of Bournemouth's top local historians, is among those who remember Dr King, who joined local entertainer Leo Wells to entertain the troops and organise an Evacuees Club.

After the war, Dr King became Labour MP for Southampton Test and served as Speaker of the House of Commons from 1965-71.

Alan Cairns remembered addressing pupils on D-Day, June

6, 1944, and saying: "When you can, keep our soldiers in your thoughts and in your prayers."

The Taunton's pupils returned to Southampton for the summer term of 1945, allowing the Bournemouth students to finally have the run of their school.

One fascinating footnote from those years is that two significant figures from the world of entertainment shared the school together then.

The Bournemouth pupils included the future actor Charles Gray – later to be best known for two James Bond films and the Hammer horror The Devil Rides Out – while the Tauntonians included Alfie Hill, later to find fame as Benny Hill.

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to new school

An Orderly Invasion Of Bournemouth.



INVASION:
September
1st 1939,
evacuees

Allotting Their Billets.



ALLOTING
September 2nd
1939, billeting
officer

Southampton Pupils At Bournemouth.

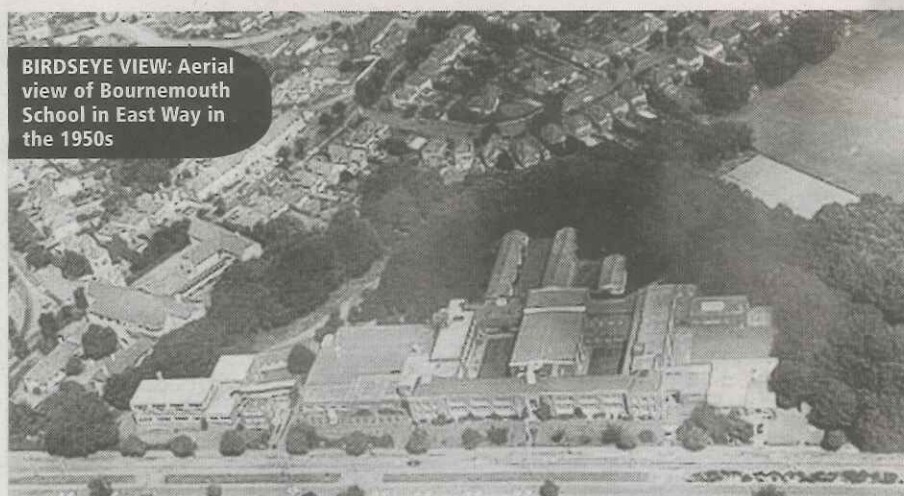


ARRIVAL: September
6th 1939, Taunton's
School pupils in
Bournemouth

EVACUATION:
Taunton's
Evacuees led by Dr
Horace King



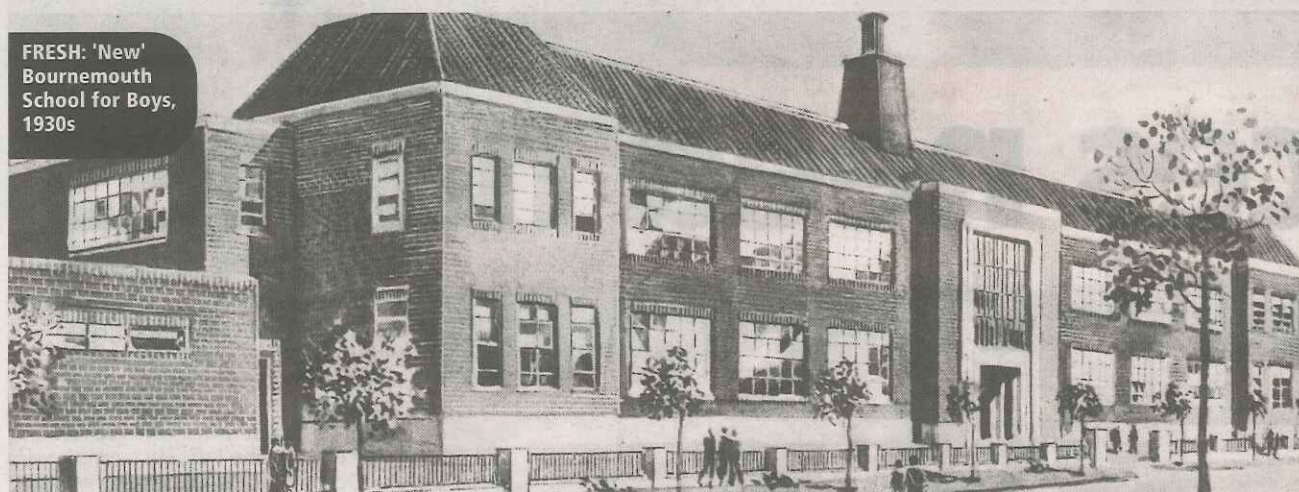
BIRDSEYE VIEW: Aerial
view of Bournemouth
School in East Way in
the 1950s



County Borough of Bournemouth
NEW PREMISES
Bournemouth School, East Way
Laying
of
Foundation Stones

PLANS: Programme
for the laying of the
foundations for
Bournemouth School
in 1937

FRESH: 'New'
Bournemouth
School for Boys,
1930s



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HEADLINE:
August 31st
1939, front page
headline

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No 11937

THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 1939.

PRICE: ONE PENNY.

EVACUATION TO BEGIN TO-MORROW—Official