

PREPARATIONS FOR WAR: WORLD WAR II CIVIL DEFENCE IN THE CITY OF WINCHESTER

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a brief overview of the civil defence programme in the City of Winchester from 1939 to 1946. It draws together some examples of the physical and documentary evidence that still survive. The focus of the article is work carried out during an archaeological survey by Context One Archaeological Services (COAS), of two extant WWII air raid shelters, beneath a car park to the rear of Winchester Public Library in Jewry Street. Documentary research has revealed the location of more than 50 additional air raid shelters and provided locations for various elements of the civil defence network constructed in the city.

INTRODUCTION

It is sixty years since the outbreak of World War II, a war that affected the hearts and minds of generations of people around the globe. Growing public concern for the vulnerability of wartime remains and the gradual erosion of contemporary knowledge, has prompted a number of initiatives to preserve our dwindling wartime heritage.

At a national level, English Heritage's Monuments Protection Programme (MPP) began in 1994 to examine defence sites across the country, with a view to identifying monuments for statutory protection. Results of the initial MPP documentary work carried out by Dr Cohn Dobinson have begun to emerge, and a seminar hosted by English Heritage entitled 'Monuments at War', in 1997, provided a landmark view of the state of the work so far (Schofield 1998, 1). Alongside MPP, 'The Defence of Britain Project' was launched in 1995, with the aim of undertaking a nation-wide archaeological survey of twentieth-century military sites and structures. Its creation was initiated by the

Fortress Study Group and was prompted by the rapid disappearance of defence structures through coastal erosion. From its home at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford, the survey aims to help provide a basis for conservation policies and promote a greater understanding (Schofield 1998, 1).

At a local level, interest in wartime heritage is fuelled by a growing realisation that whilst much has been lost, physical remnants of this recent past still survive. It is not difficult to see how these monuments have undoubted relevance to present communities through personal experiences, or those of our parents or grandparents. As a result of this growing interest, access is now available at an unparalleled level, both physically and intellectually, to these monuments.

Winchester itself has changed considerably since 1945, and those who lived in the city during the war years are now spread throughout the county. But interest in particular events, such as the bomb that destroyed the greengrocer's shop of Mr A Sowerby in February 1943, continues to surface. This individual event has provoked a number of letters to local papers since the war, the most recent dialogue, taking place in the Hampshire Chronicle in March 1993. The discussion that ensued clearly displayed the painful nature of the memories for those who witnessed the explosion, and lost relatives to it. It provided a chance to share the burden of their memories and ensured the tragedy will not be forgotten. This particular event brings us face to face with the potentially difficult tasks of recording both the physical and psychological remains of Winchester's wartime heritage. As with the bomb in Hyde Street, wartime memories evoke a wide range of emotions, which, however viewed, seem to lead to the unavoidable conclusion that their story should be

told to ensure that it is not forgotten. This article sets out to introduce the kinds of wartime information that has already been collected by the Defence of Winchester Project, and provides a start point for future research.

Sources of Information

A large number of documents relating to Winchester's wartime heritage still exist, most are stored at the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester. A brief assessment of the documentation relating to Civil Defence in Winchester between 1939 and 1945 has been undertaken.

Much of the more detailed and accurate evidence for the construction, maintenance and eventual removal of civil defence structures comes from the City Of Winchester Council Agenda and Minutes of the Council Committees and sub-committees. Additional information is contained within the City Engineer's files, which include his personal recommendations for the construction or alteration of city facilities. His files contain detailed information relating to construction contracts, specifications and standards required by the council. In addition, it gives information including the location, purpose and approximate construction date of the amenities. The City Engineer's files for the last years of the war and those shortly after contain contracts for the removal of many of these structures around the city, giving us a rare glimpse of them before their disappearance.

Home Office records add a national perspective to some of the events and directives that filtered down to the city's committees. In addition, eyewitness accounts are available through articles published in local papers, and local people who lived in Winchester; it is these additional sources that add flesh to the bones of the official documentation. Together they have allowed us to begin to piece together the remnants of Winchester's civil defence programme.

WINCHESTER'S DEFENSIVE ORGANISATION

In order to prioritise the allocation of resources during the early stages of the war, the government

divided the towns and cities of Britain into two categories. Inclusion in these categories was determined by the nature of their projected contribution to the war effort. Class 'A' towns were those considered of 'key national importance' and vital to wartime production. Class 'B' towns were those of 'considerable size and importance' and often very densely populated. Winchester was categorised as a Class 'B' town (HO 205/42).

Winchester lay at the heart of the south coast on a main rail supply line, feeding the docks in Southampton, via the present station on the mainline to London. A second line from a station in Chesil Street linked the area with the midlands. The city contained a significant military presence at the Peninsular barracks and further military works were located at Bushfield Camp, Worthy Down, Chilcomb Down, Flower Down and in Littleton. The city was located between two General Headquarters (GHQ) lines which formed a series of defensive positions laid out across the south of England, designed to act as strong points in the event of an invasion. One line ran up from Romsey, through Stockbridge and Whitchurch to Basingstoke, and the other along the Meon River (Wills 1980, 74). The defence of the city was entrusted to 'A' Company, 5th Hampshire Battalion of the Home Guard, which was linked to the army's Hampshire Regiment. The Home Guard was responsible for the manning and upkeep of the defences that were constructed around the city. These defences, known collectively as 'Tank Island', comprised a two-ringed defensive system; the outer ring consisted of pillboxes, slit trenches, anti-tank positions and, later, spigot mortar posts; the inner ring consisted of road blocks with the final defensive position being at the castle barracks; referred to as 'the citadel' (Waymen 1946, 16). At a meeting of the Local Defence Committee, on 20 February 1942, Col. Sir John McClure informed those present that the purpose of 'Tank Island' was to delay the enemy as long as possible, although in his opinion it was unlikely to do so 'for more than a few hours' (W/B5/28/11).

Civil Defence

The organisation of civil defence was facilitated through a network of local and regional headquar-

ters, with Winchester receiving directives from the Regional Commissioners Office in Reading (HO206). Winchester's civil defence was provided by the City Council, which fielded a number of committees to guide their system (W/B5/28/11). Up until 1938, the 'Watch & Fire Brigade Committee' dealt with preparations for any emergency (W/B5/30/9), but as war loomed, a full 'Emergency Committee' was set up to deal with logistical concerns that would inevitably follow in the wake of any conflict. Alongside this, the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Committee was created to deal with the problem of protecting the civilian population from airborne attack. A further 'Shelters sub-committee' was created to examine possible locations for public air raid shelters.

The ARP committee was made up of the Mayor, City Engineer, Town Clerk and several Alderman of the City, and liaised regularly with other district and regional ARP units who met routinely at Aldershot (W/B5/28/11, 1939, 68-9). This group received directives from the Home Office via Reading. The Minute books show that the committee was responsible for dealing with the provision of public ARP shelters, sirens, emergency static water supplies and communications. Once approval for civil defence structures had been given by the ARP Committee, the plans would go to the County ARP Office for approval before being submitted by the Town Clerk to the Home Office (W/B3/75, 1939, 283). The City Engineer was then responsible for engaging contractors for construction work ordered by the Committee. It was also his responsibility to temporarily requisition land for the accommodation of defence structures, to monitor construction, and ensure that they were properly maintained. The City Engineer had to ensure that the shelters, in particular, met the requirements laid down by the government.

Early Construction Work

Even before the outbreak of World War II, local officials were busily preparing for every eventuality. The ARP Committee had begun to recruit members for Winchester's ARP system in the Autumn of 1938, and initiated a survey of cellars suitable for use as shelters, in accordance with the

Air Raid Works Act of 1938 (W/B5/28/11, 1938, 35-7). The first of many city-wide ARP schemes was submitted to the council in November 1938, and shortly afterwards the first ARP Wardens posts begun to appear across Winchester (W/B5/28/11, 1938, 49-51). Initial sums of £1500 and £10,000, were set aside for cellar modification and Air Raid Shelter provision respectively. Even at this early date, the ARP scheme had enrolled 996 members, 604 of whom were already fully trained (W/B5/28/11, 1938, 49-51). Progress of the construction work was closely monitored, and in February 1939, the ARP Committee reported that it had been asked to supply a map to the Home Office detailing the location for trenches, above ground shelters and basements that could be used as air raid shelters (W/B3/75, 1939, 154). It is clear from discussion between the Air Raid Precautions Committee, the City Engineer and the Home Office, that during 1938, many 'trenches' were dug as temporary shelter from air attack. These trenches were short-term measures and were advocated as useful in areas deficient in standard shelter accommodation:

'... plans should be made for the digging of slit trenches by local inhabitants in their gardens, etc ... slit trenches give almost equal protection against bombing and more protection against shellfire as compared with standard shelters although of course, they do not provide a weatherproof cover' (W/C21/3/1/(3)).

In 1937, the first appeal for volunteers for the ARP services had been broadcast nationwide, but by the first half of 1938 had met with little response (Longmate 1981, 3). Scepticism about the need for protection from air raids in Winchester heightened with the conclusion of the Munich Agreement at the end of 1938. Petitions, such as the one by the Incorporated Chamber of Commerce for the removal of a shelter in Southgate Street began arriving at the council (W/B5/30/9, 1938, 66-7). But in the event, authorities ensured that Winchester was provided with both more permanent trench and surface shelters. The former design was to be constructed by excavating trenches into which standard pre-cast concrete

wall sections (HO206) were inserted. Roof sections were laid over the top of the structure and covered with earth. Surface shelters were constructed with brick or pre-cast concrete and covered with turves and earth. Some of the shelters such as those designed for schools were partially submerged.

Several factors guided the location of public shelters in Winchester. The high water table on the eastern side of the city meant that surface shelters were usually preferred in areas below Upper Brook Street (W/B5/28/11, 1939, 61–2). Communal shelters were usually positioned in areas of the city where large groups of people would naturally congregate, such as near areas of shops, places of work and schools. The smaller Anderson and Morrison shelters were provided for many of the housing estates around the city (W/C21/3/1).

Construction work on the main communal air raid shelters in the city began in early 1939. Often cellars, such as those at Marston's Brewery, Hyde Street (Doughty 1989) and the Coach Station in Worthy Lane (W/B3/76, 1940, 217), were converted to cater for emergencies. It was even considered whether to create a tunnel under St Giles Hill to accommodate over a thousand people (W/B5/28/11, 1939, 65). An article published in the Hampshire Chronicle on Saturday, 23 September 1939, stated that it was estimated that 10% of the population could be expected to be in the main shopping area of the town during an air raid.

Some of the earliest purpose built shelters were those begun in Jewry Street Car Park, St Thomas Street Car Park, Abbey Gardens and Norman Road. The first two were trench shelters and the last two were originally surface designs, although the shelter in Norman Road was eventually constructed as a trench shelter. The construction of these shelters provides a good example of the pattern of civil defence works that were to become familiar throughout the war. Contracts for the construction of these shelters were arranged with local construction firms, and the main standard pre-cast concrete sections were purchased from companies right across the south of England. On 18 May 1939, a contract was signed between William James Lansdell of 28a Jewry Street and the Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of Winchester

for the construction of three groups of air raid shelters (W/G1/501).

The shelters in Jewry Street and St Thomas Street were assembled by the building contractor William Lansdell from standard units purchased from the Trussed Concrete Steel Co. Ltd in London (Patent Shelters, Horseferry Road, Westminster SW1), at a cost of £1,649 and £439 respectively (W/G1/501). These standard units had to adhere to Government guidelines and were supplied by the company, to a large number of urban areas in the south of England. Construction of the shelter in Normans Road was also awarded to W J Lansdell (W/B3/75, 1939, 283). The shelters in the Abbey Grounds were built with units from a company called 'Trianco' (Trianco Ltd, Imber Court, East Molesey, Surrey), which was to provide 'Trianco' Gothic units for three shelters at a cost of £969. 'Trianco' Ltd provided portable shelters each of which were 70 ft long and constructed of concrete panels. The shelters were placed in position and covered with soil retained by dry stonewalling (W/G1/501).

On 12 October 1939, the City Engineer reported to the Air Raid Precautions Committee meeting, that the shelters were completed and provided shelter for 900 persons 'caught in the street' (W/B5/28/11, 1939, 123–125). By 20 November 1939, The Air Raid Precautions committee had noted from the City Engineer that doors had been provided to the shelters in St Thomas Street, Jewry Street and Normans Road (W/B5/28/11).

The Civil Defence Infra-structure

In addition to the provision of air raid shelters, other elements of the civil defence program were assembled through the early years of the war. Whilst the Home Guard set up road-blocks at key entry routes into the city, such as along the Andover Road, Chilbolton Avenue and Southgate Street (Ford, pers. comm.), other precautions were initiated. Road signs were removed, milestones dug up and citizens were forbidden to give directions to anyone. Photography was also banned. Static water supplies (SWS) were located around the city to provide emergency water in the event of fire caused by bomb damage. One such SWS was

located adjacent to the Jewry Street Car Park (Ford, pers. Comm.) and others could be found at Norman Mede Hotel, St Cross Road, Andover Road and the garden of the Royal Oak Public House, to name but a few (W/G1/557; W/G1/561).

The ARP Headquarters was set up, with its main Control Room, at the Guildhall, linked to the Corporations Private Branch Exchange (W/B5/28/11, 1939, 68–9). From here, the Decontamination Squads, First-Aid Parties and the ARP Wardens could be co-ordinated. Later, alternative sites were set up to help the flow of information locally and to minimise disruption in the event of damage to the system through heavy air attack. At least one alternative Control Room was completed by the spring of 1942, records showing that it was situated on the north side of Hatherley Road (W/G1/540), on land occupied by the western portion of Peter Symonds school Playing Field (W/B5/28/11, 1939, 98–9). A further alternative Report Centre was located in Stanmore Ravine (W/C21/3/1/(12)). The City ARP Control worked alongside the Hampshire ARP Control system based at Litton Lodge in Clifton Road (W/C21/3/1/(12)).

ARP Warden's posts were set up to monitor various areas of the city, housing their uniforms and equipment, and providing localised aid during an air-raid. Seventeen of these posts are recorded on 29 March 1939 (W/B5/28/11, 1939, 78–80) and numbers seem to have remained around this level throughout the war. The location of a number of these posts have been identified at Beggars Lane, Chilbolton Avenue, Queens Road, Normans Road, Cheriton Road and the junction of Weston Road and Fordington Avenue (Fig. 1). Warden's posts were usually constructed from timber and sandbags and could cost between £12 and £35 each to construct. Many of the wardens and local police were also assigned to regularly inspect air raid shelters, most of which seem to have suffered far more from vandalism than enemy attack (W/B5/28/11, 1940, 142–3). First Aid posts were set up across the city, at Danemark School, Holy Trinity Parish Hall and the Royal Hampshire County Hospital, and were prepared to deal with air raid casualties (W/B5/28/11, 1940, 155–7). There are records of air raid sirens in the

Weeke area, at Chilbolton Avenue, Bar End, St Giles Hill, Romsey Road (W/C1/6/1, 31–122; W/B5/28/11, 1940, 139–40), the junction of Battery Hill and Mildmay Street, and the Cattle Market, Andover Road (W/B5/28/11, 1940, 159–60). The ARP system was to be supplied through a series of depots and stores located at Abbey Mills, Bar End, Stanmore, Peter Symonds and Park Avenue. This network of facilities was linked initially by a few telephone lines to the Guildhall (W/B5/28/11, 1942, 288), and the ARP Messenger Service which, in 1940, consisted of some 50 people, many of whom were local boys (W/B5/28/11, 1940, 150–60).

The Potential of Surviving Remains

Perhaps the most impressive survival of the early civil defence works are the two shelters behind the public library in Jewry Street (FCE NGR 4800 2975). These shelters remained largely forgotten until early 1998. Deteriorating conditions within the shelters and concern for their long-term survival prompted Winchester Museums Service to commission an archaeological survey designed to raise awareness and understanding of the remains. The survey illustrates the kind of information available in cases where the structures survive. The survey was undertaken by Context One Archaeological Services between 17–24 March 1998. What follows is a brief summary of the survey findings (for a full account see Marter & McConnell 1998).

THE JEWRY STREET SHELTERS

The City Clerk retained a file (W/F4/2/25) for the shelter, which contains contractor and tender plans for its construction. The Jewry Street shelter appears along with a number of specifications stipulated for William Landsdell in the contract that was to be monitored by the City Engineer. These are as follows:

'The contractor must include for all 3 & 4 way specials, emergency exit boxes & suitable exit covers and frames. The contractor must make good at junctions with in situ 1:2:4 concrete at least 4"



Fig. 1 Work on an ARP Warden's shelter at the junction of Weston Road and Fordington Avenue (by kind permission of Mrs Sherriff)

thick. Roof slabs are to be properly bedded and joined with cement mortar 1:2. Trenches are to be backfilled with the best of the excavated material and well rammed. 8" thick reinforced concrete slabs, mix 1:2:4 and extending at least 1' from either side of the outer faces of the shelter are to be laid to finish at the existing surface level. Slabs are to be reinforced with one layer of mild steel fabric square mesh weighing not less than 9 lbs per square yard and placed one inch from the lower surface. The slabs are to be painted with approved cold bituminous emulsion at the rate of eight yards to one gallon and immediately covered with 3/8" to 1/8" of pit gravel. The contractor is to make good any damage to existing surfaces at his own expense and to the satisfaction of the City Engineer.

Note: The construction of ramps (for the en-

trances) is not included in this contract, and the contractor is to allow for blocking the walls where ramps will be made eventually with 9" x 2" creosote deal, cut to proper lengths.'

Jewry Street site description (Fig. 2)

The original entrances have now been filled in and tarmacked; there was one entrance to the northern shelter and three to the southern. Access can now only be gained through a series of manholes that would originally have acted as emergency exits (EE). The northern shelter has three exits (EE7-9) and the southern shelter has six (EE1-6). The cover for emergency exit EE6 has been tarmacked over.

Both shelters are laid out on a rectangular plan

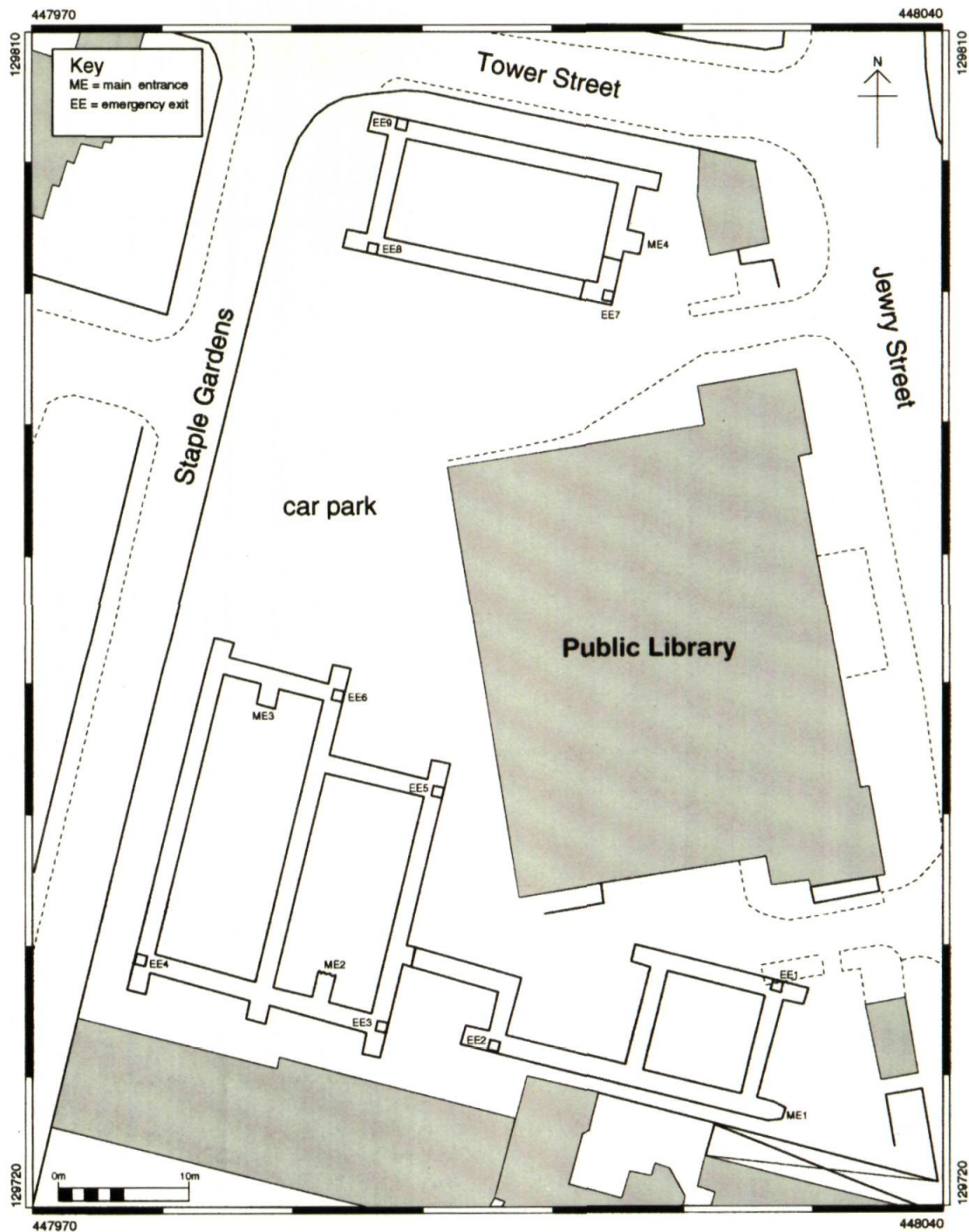


Fig. 2 Location plan showing the Jewry Street shelters (Context One Archaeological Services 1999)

and consist of units of interconnecting corridors or 'galleries'. These have been arranged to fit the open space now occupied by the car park. The original plans show the gap between the shelters was partially filled with a large cycle shed positioned against the western boundary wall bordering Staple Gardens. Figures written on the plans indicate that 400 people would have been accommodated in the southern shelter and 150 in the northern shelter (W/F4/2/25).

The Shelters are constructed on a 'square type' design. The gallery walls are lined with pre-fabricated reinforced concrete sections, which are concave in profile (Fig. 3). These were made to standard dimensions. The sections were cemented together and put into position prior to the floors being levelled with concrete. The roof was constructed from the same concrete sections which were laid flat across the top of the gallery walls. Concrete lintels were used to support the roof at the end of each gallery. The galleries of the shelter are between 1.80 m and 1.85 m wide and vary in length from just over 3 m to around 22 m. Floor to ceiling heights vary between 1.90 m and 2.00 m. The depth between the shelter roofs and the existing ground surface is approximately 0.85 m–0.90 m, but increases over the galleries connecting the western and eastern units of the southern shelter. This variation may reflect a construction sequence where the 2 units were built independently and joined afterwards, perhaps explaining the 4 degree twist observed in the connecting galleries.

Bench seating was arranged along the walls on either side of the galleries leaving a narrow walkway in between. The benches and supports were made of wood and bolted to the floor on upright metal plates set into the concrete floor. The majority of the wooden fittings have been removed with the exception of a few at some of the corridor terminals where they appear to have decayed in situ. The majority of galleries terminate around 1.50–1.90 m beyond the intersection of corridors. These 'compartments' were designed to contain latrines and were probably screened by a curtain. Most compartments were equipped with a vent set into the gallery wall. All of these have been filled in but would presumably have opened at ground level. Chemical 'Elsan' toilets were used within the



Fig. 3 View showing a shelter gallery, Jewry Street, Winchester (Context One Archaeological Services 1998)

compartments. Although none of these have survived, circular score marks on the concrete floor suggest their position.

The main entrances (ME) to the shelters are located along the side galleries in each principal unit and were accessed by ramps leading down from ground level. The original shelter plans show the positions and lengths of the ramps which were approximately 9 m long. The entrances have now been sealed by concrete block walls and filled to the surface from behind. Slight depressions in the tarmac above the entrances are now the only sign of their existence above ground. Copies of the shelter rules, pasted onto the gallery walls immediately opposite each entrance, still survive (Fig. 4).

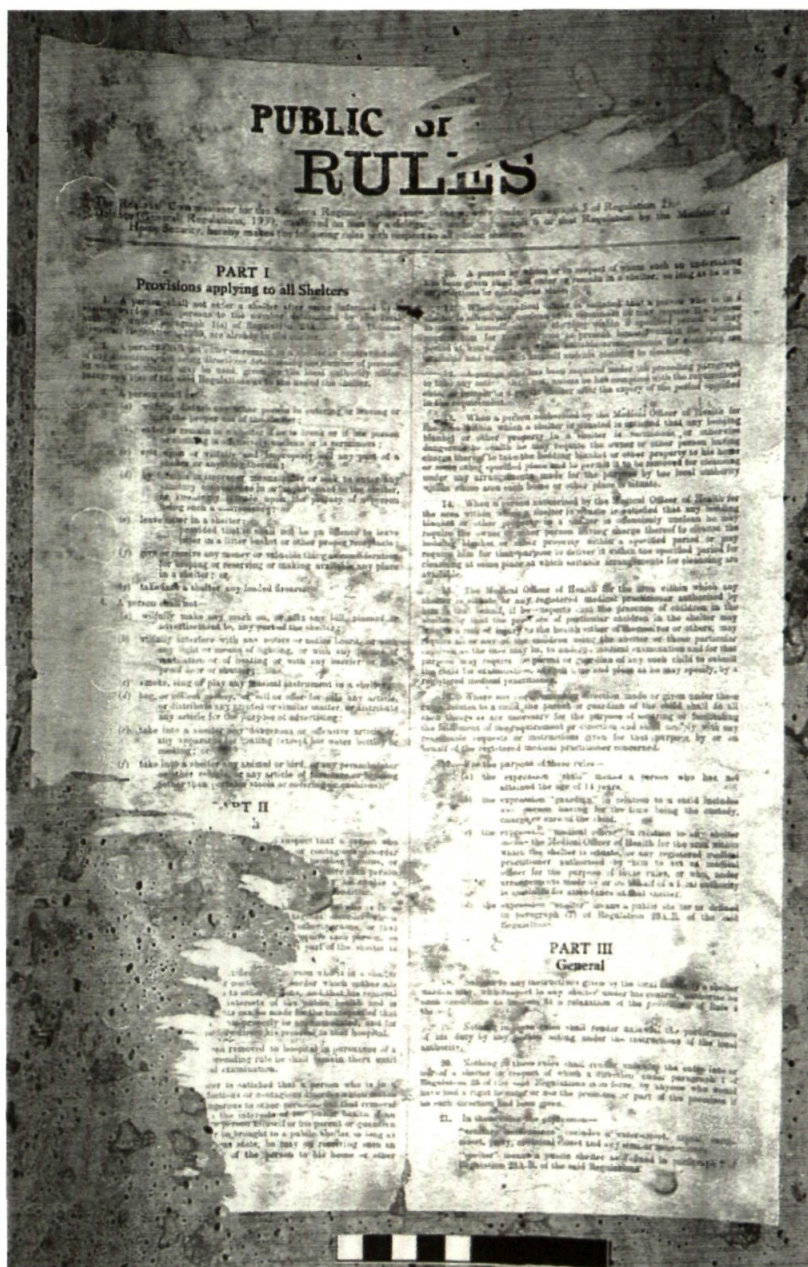


Fig. 4 Shelter rules, Jewry Street, Winchester (Context One Archaeological Services 1998)

A screen located behind the entrance doors was designed to impede a gas attack. The emergency exits are set into the roof of the shelter against the gallery walls and located at the intersection of the corridors. All the original hatches have been replaced by modern inspection covers. Steel ladders bolted against the walls were probably used to gain access into the shelter but none have survived.

Mains electricity for lighting was relayed throughout the shelters by cabling pinned between the ceiling section joints along the centre of each gallery. The cables have been removed but a few light fittings have survived.

Shelter Graffiti

Perhaps the most interesting and poignant survival in the shelters are the large numbers of graffiti drawn by those who used them. There are over 75 separate pieces of surviving wartime graffiti drawn on the gallery walls. These appear in both shelters but are concentrated along the northern and eastern walls of the northern shelter and include dates, names, an address, pencil and lip-stick drawings. The southern shelter contains the graffiti, 'the sunken road', and the occupants of the northern shelter are reminded, 'please keep tidy'. Depictions of military scenes are amongst the more artistic graffiti and include planes, ships, soldiers, a parachutist and 'doodlebugs' (Fig. 5). There are also several drawings of enemy leaders that include simple caricatures of Hitler, and other sketches portraying him alongside the Italian dictator, Mussolini. These are supplemented by graffiti which ridicule both leaders with phrases like, 'Hitler loves Musso' appended to a drawing of a speared heart; a depiction of Hitler in front of a tangled mass of metal which is captioned, 'Hitler reviews his airforce' and a slogan, 'hell to hitler and musso'.

There are nine instances of dates being recorded. These may coincide with air raids but are curiously confined to events between 22/10/39 and 21/8/40 despite further, later, documented air raids in the incident charts for Winchester City. The latter date appears on three separate inscriptions, all of which note a time of 1:30 pm together with the names of those who had written them.

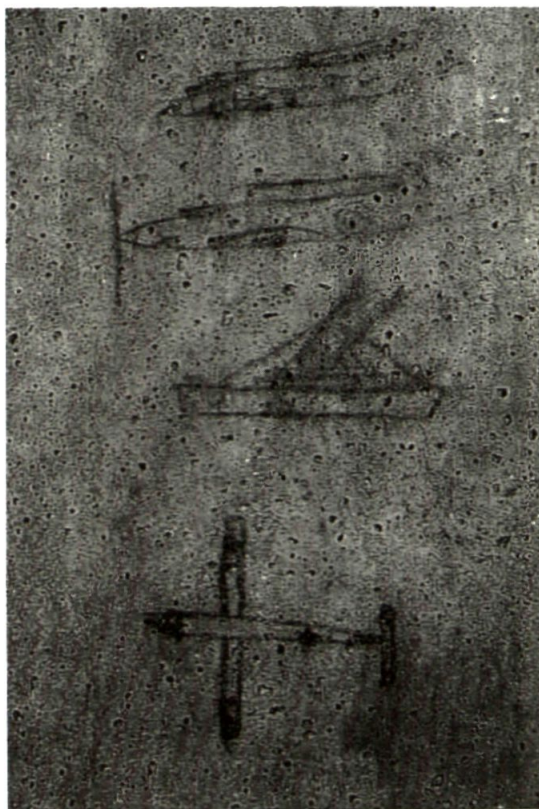


Fig. 5 Shelter graffiti, northern shelter, Jewry Street, Winchester (Context One Archaeological Services 1998)

There are a total of 13 names or initials inscribed on the walls with one giving an address that reads, 'Patricia Ivy Penharewood. 63 High Street, Winchester, Hants'. An alternative spelling of this name appears on a neighbouring piece of graffiti as 'Patricia Ivy Penhorwood'. Evidence of children occupying the shelters might be gleaned from various pieces of graffiti. These include sketches of the cartoon character 'Pinocchio' which were probably inspired from the Walt Disney film released in 1940, an alphabet and a child-like depiction of a house. The remaining graffiti include sketches of female faces, the torso of a semi-naked woman, a woman dressed in a ball gown and several profiles of cloth-capped, cigarette-smoking men.

WINCHESTER'S OTHER SHELTERS

The Winchester Civil Defence Office Emergency Committee continued to press for further public air raid shelters within the city throughout the first half of the war. Surface shelters were constructed in the Cathedral Car Park towards the end of September 1939, for the use of the staff of the Health and Education Committee and the shops in the Square (W/B3/75, 1939, 331). The Town Clerk reported that the Dean and Chapter had given consent for their construction on the understanding that they were removed after the war (W/B3/75, 1939, 260). Further shelters were proposed at Northgate Place, Staple Gardens and Produce Market in Andover Road on 12 October 1939 (W/B3/75, 1939, 379). On 11 November 1939 a contract was signed between The Great Western Railway Company and Winchester City Council for the let of land, for the construction of a shelter in Chesil Street. The contract was made good for three years or the duration of the war, whichever was shorter, at a clear rent of £1.0.0d, per annum (W/F4/2/25). These shelters were designed to provide protection for those using the railway.

The shelters mentioned above include some of the most fully documented sites, although the total number of shelters proposed within the city during the war years is considerable larger. So far, documentary searches have identified around 50 public air raid shelters, which may still only represent a partial picture; further shelters will undoubtedly come to light. Table 1 and Fig. 6 indicate those shelters so far recorded in Winchester, together with the ARP control rooms mentioned in the text. Each shelter appears with a location, shelter type and the nearest established National Grid Reference.

Table 1 gives some idea of the effort afforded to the protection of the civilian population by the City Council. It is clear from the present distribution of shelters that their location is directly related to congregations of people in schools, shops, offices, cinemas and churches. There are however, considerable gaps in current knowledge. There are for example, few shelters mentioned in the western half of Winchester, which may be a result of the area's high level of housing that was serviced by smaller Anderson and Morrison shelters: By

March 1942, the City Engineer was reporting to the ARP Committee that he had received instruction to prepare ARP public shelters for 50% of the population in the city, and that 1000 Morrison Shelters were being allocated in Winchester with 1000 in reserve (W/B5/28/11, 1942, 280–2). Most of these shelters were to be concentrated in the outer zone of 'Tank Island' (W/B5/28/11, 1942, 289–91). It is clear from this massive construction programme that in the earlier stages of the war at least, it was the threat of aerial bombardment that was uppermost in people's minds. But as war progressed, ideas and priorities began to change.

Shifting Strategies

From the summer of 1939, throughout 1940 and well into 1941, Britain had braced itself for invasion. The onset of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, however, signalled a change in focus for the British government and its system of civil defence; a change that was clearly echoed in Winchester. By 1942, the Minute Books of the Emergency Committee detail the refusal by the Treasury to sanction spending on further shelters. A letter dated 1 August 1942, from a Regional Commissioner, stated that it was then hoped to avoid any further construction of shelters, as the city was already well provided for (Hampshire County Local Studies Library, Press Cuttings, W10.9.). Instead, the City Engineer's files detail the Council's initiative to strengthen existing shelters, again using local firms. This improvement work coincides with records held by the Home Office which describe the allocation of funds for this purpose due to 'problems with the construction methods' originally used (H0205/42).

By 1943, attention was being turned towards the invasion of occupied Europe, and increasing demand for steel for the manufacture of military equipment meant that some elements of the civil defence system were required for 'recycling' (Dobinson 1998, 5). Several residents of wartime Winchester remember being asked to donate household items to be re-used, whilst many of the iron railings around the city were requisitioned for the war effort (Ford, pers. comm.).

By November 1944, directives from the District ARP Controller order reductions in ARP staff

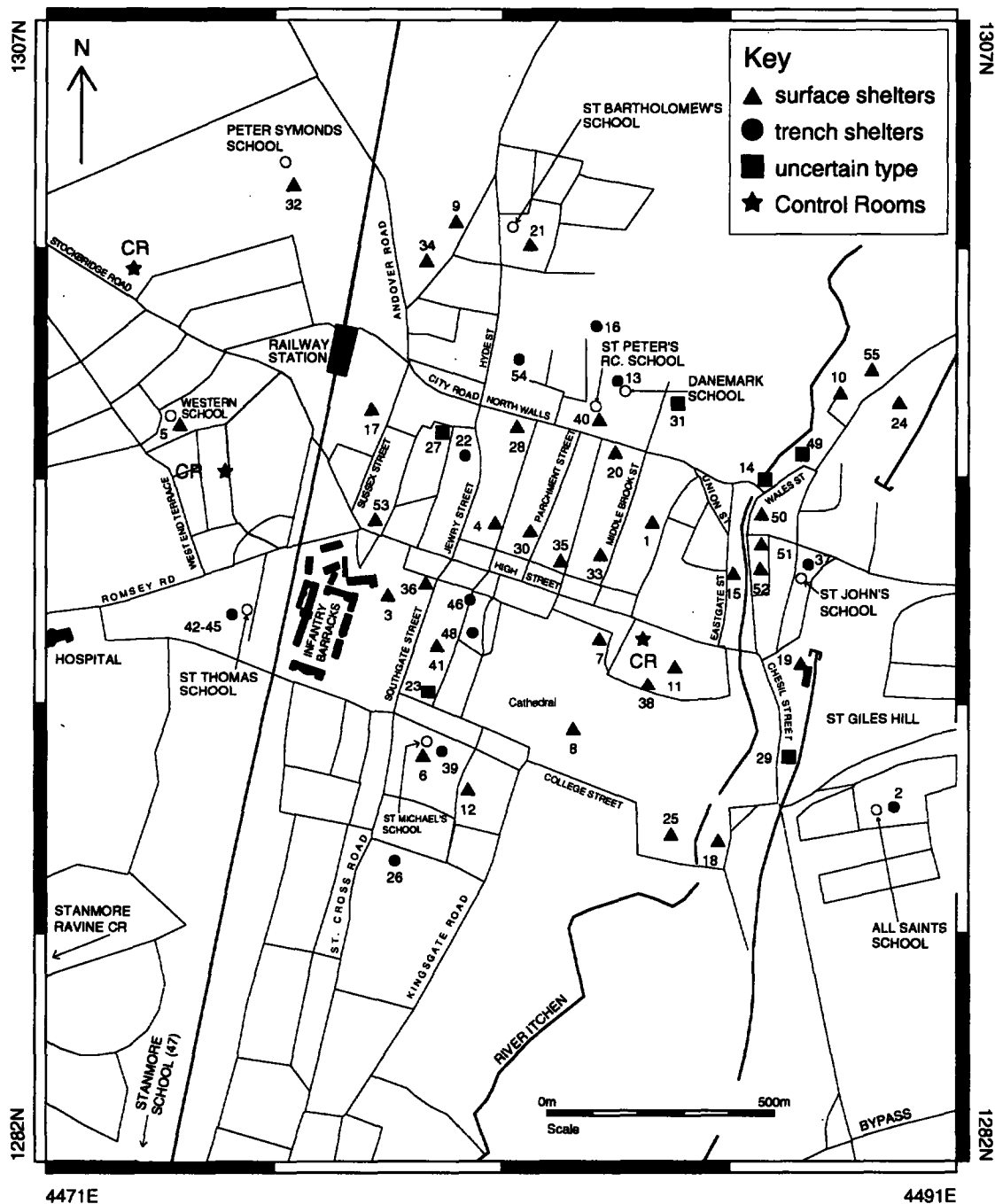


Fig. 6 Map of Winchester, showing air raid shelters (listed in Table 1) and Control Rooms (Context One Archaeological Services 1999)

Table 1 List of air raid shelters in Winchester. The numbers refer to the map, Fig. 6

<i>No.</i>	<i>Shelter location</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>NGR</i>
1	Abbey View Gardens	Surface	4485 1293
2	All Saints School	Sunken	4489 1289
3	Assizes Courts	Surface	4478 1295
4	Avebury House, (St Peter's St)	Surface?	4481 1296
5	Behind Western School	Surface	4474 1298
6	Canon Street	Surface	4479 1291
7	Cathedral Car Park	Surface	4483 1293
8	Cathedral Close	Surface	4483 1292
9	Coach Station	Surface	4480 1303
10	Colson Road/opposite Colson Rd.	Surface?	4488 1299
11	Cossack Lane, (Lower Brook St Junction)	Surface	4484 1296
12	Culver Road	Surface	4480 1290
13	Danemark School	Trench	4483 1299
14	Durngate, (Wales St Junction)	Uncertain	4486 1297
15	Eastgate Street	Surface	4485 1295
16	Edge of North Walls Recreation Ground	Trench?	4483 1301
17	Gladstone Street	Surface	4478 1298
18	Granville Place	Surface	4485 1289
19	GWR Yard, (Chesil St)	Surface	4487 1293
20	Holy Trinity Church Yard	Surface	4484 1297
21	Hyde Churchyard (St Bartholomew's)	Surface/?Sunk.	4482 1302
22	Jewry Street	Trench	4800 1297
23	Junction of St Swithuns & St Thomas St	Uncertain	4479 1293
24	Manor Farm, (Winnal)	Surface	4490 1299
25	Miller's Arms site, (Wharf Hill)	Surface?	4484 1289
26	Norman Road	Trench	4477 1285
27	Northgate Place, (Staple Gardens)	Uncertain	4479 1298
28	Odeon Cinema Car Park (St Peters St)	Surface	4482 1298
29	Opposite Kingsland House (Chesil St)	Uncertain	4487 1291
30	11-12 Parchment Street	Surface	4482 1296
31	Park Avenue (where the School of Art is)	Uncertain	4485 1298
32	Peter Symonds School (200-300 yds from)	Surface?	4476 1304
33	Princes Place, (Middle Brook St)	Surface	4483 1295
34	Produce Market, (Andover Rd)	Surface?	4479 1302
35	Ritz Cinema Car Park (Upper Brook St)	Surface	4483 1295
36	15-17 St Clement's Street	Surface	4479 1295
37	St John's School, (Joyce Gardens)	Sunken	4487 1295
38	St Mary's School, (Foundry Lane)	Surface	4484 1293
39	St Michael's School	Sunken	4479 1291
40	St Peter's RC School	Surface	4483 1298
41	St Thomas Passage	Surface	4479 1294
42	St Thomas' School	Sunken	4475 1294
43	St Thomas School, (Egmont House)	Sunken	4475 1294

Table 1 (cont.)

<i>No.</i>	<i>Shelter location</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>NGR</i>
44	St Thomas School, (No.1 St James Cres.)	Sunken	4475 1294
45	St Thomas School, (No.3 St James Cres.)	Sunken	4475 1294
46	St Thomas Street (Car Park)	Trench	4481 1295
47	Stanmore School	Sunken	4473 1282
48	1 9b St Thomas Street	Cellar	4481 1294
49	Wales Street	Uncertain	4487 1297
50	Water Lane, (Durngate Mill)	Surface	4486 1297
51	Water Lane, (Blue Ball Mill)	Surface	4486 1296
52	Water Lane, (adjacent to Fox Inn)	Surface	4486 1295
53	Westgate & Tower St CC Car Park	Surface?	4478 1297
54	Welch's Brewery, (Hyde St)	Cellar	4482 1299
55	Winnal Church	Surface	4489 1299

(W/B5/30/9, 1944, 215–7), and by 1 January 1945 the ARP in Winchester was officially closed down (W/B5/30/9, 1945, 217–9). The shelters themselves seem to have survived right to the end of the war, probably as a result of the new aerial threat of VI and V2 rocket attack. Indeed, some of Winchester's residents remember playing in the shelters after the war (Hermitage, pers. comm). Removal of the city's civil defence structures was the responsibility of the City Engineer, who in most cases seems to have carried out his task with considerable efficiency. His records detail the removal of road-blocks from 1944 and the removal of shelters beginning in 1946 (W/G1/598, 611, 620). The shelters in Jewry Street finally go out of use at the end of 1944, when the City Engineer suggests that they could be left and sealed, quoting a price of £460 for filling in the entrances (Fig. 7) and resurfacing the car park (W/B5/30/9, 1944, 211–14).

CONCLUSION

Survival

Many of the elements of the civil defence programme can now only be located by the documentation relating to their construction, repair and subsequent removal. Surface shelters were much easier to dismantle than the trench shelters, and seem to have suffered total eradica-



Fig. 7 Blocked entrance in the southern shelter, Jewry Street, Winchester (Context One Archaeological Services 1998)

tion. Furthermore, these surface shelters made little impact in the archaeological record and traces of them have now all but disappeared. The popularity of surface shelters within the city is likely to be closely linked to their very temporary nature; they can be erected quickly and cheaply from standard units on most types of ground and can be removed far more easily and with far less impact than their trench counterparts.

The early construction of 'trench' shelters in preference to these surface shelters betrays much about the psychological impact of an aerial threat. It seems natural, in retrospect, that faced with this new threat, civil defence programmes would turn to tried and tested technology. The battles of the First World War seem to have left a distinctly trench-orientated view of the most effective way to withstand an aerial barrage. It should come as no surprise then, to find civil defence programmes across the country digging in as the army had done only 20 years previously in the fields of France. The Home Office's directives extolling the virtues of 'slit' trenches in comparison with 'standard shelters' (W/C2/3/1/(3)) illustrates the point. It is also interesting to note that the only surviving trench shelter in Jewry Street, contains the graffito 'The Sunken Road', which appears to be a reference to a well known communications route at the 1916 Battle of the Somme; perhaps an indication of where some of the occupants' thoughts lay during an air raid.

For the Future

Since the conclusion of World War II, civil defence structures have been afforded little attention beyond the desire for their removal. They have traditionally held little aesthetic or practical value for the towns and cities that originally built them,

and for survivors of the war they can provide difficult reminders of wartime events. Perspective, gained only by the passage of time, has begun to allow new light to be shed on the remnants of our World War II heritage. These monuments were built with a very limited life expectancy, and in a city where development sites are at a premium, pressure on the few remaining civil defence structures is likely to increase. Potentially, such demands for urban space could threaten the long-term preservation of the shelters in Jewry Street at least. The memories of those that used them will fade, so we must act positively to ensure their story survives.

An ongoing programme of fieldwork in and around Winchester is attempting to refine the location of many of the structures constructed between 1939 and 1945 through site visits, interviews with local people and documentary analysis. It is hoped that in the future the records collected by The Defence of Winchester Project can be fully collated and analysed to provide a tool for better understanding and preserving Winchester's war-time heritage.

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