

Ernest Short who was an under gardener at Corffe was the first person to raise the alarm he was cycling past the school and spotted the fire in the roof. The fire engine was called but before it came several local people formed a human chain, passing buckets of water from the well and tried to contain the fire before the fire engine arrived, but with little success. The weather was frosty and the road being wet had frozen in places and was slippery.

Stanley Symons who lived in the village and was employed at Park Gate Farm came down to the school with a horse and cart to move away the school furniture - desks, cupboards, books, etc. Before he came down with the horse and cart they had to take some nails out from the horses shoes and put in some rough nails to stop the horse from slipping on the icy road. Rough nails were nails with a chisel shaped head on them, this would allow the horses foot to penetrate the ice and give the horse a sure footing.

What with the icy road and the blackout, being in the war years, the task of fighting the fire and removing the furniture, etc was not easy. If I remember rightly we had a sprinkling of snow over the weekend. All the school equipment some of it wet through having been caught by the water from the firemen's hoses, were taken to Tawstock Court.

Sir Bouchier Wrey gave the school temporary accommodation at Tawstock Court. Some of the senior children were called back to school on Monday. We helped to sort out all the equipment, furniture and the books, clean it and dry things off where possible. A lot of books were saturated with water and had to be discarded. The school had 2 rooms as classrooms on the eastern side of the Mansion House, and the use of 1 kitchen for meals. All the desks and school equipment were put into position in the 2 classrooms all ready for school. I am not quite sure whether we started back on the Wednesday of that week or the Monday following. Tawstock Court Mansion I believe had been unoccupied since Sir Basil Peto gave up the tenancy in 1938.

This temporary school arrangement lasted till about the latter part of June 1940 I think. In the mean time the government had acquired Tawstock Court to evacuate St Michaels School from Uckfield in Sussex, to be away from the blitz area of the war.

Our school moved again to accommodate us all, the school was split into 2 groups. The infants were allowed to return to the infant room at Holywell with their teacher Miss Nash. Mrs Maude's class, the senior pupils went up into the Reading Room and Skittle Alley, at the top of the village, while the big classroom at Holywell was being rebuilt. We were all a bit cramped for space at the Reading Room compared to Tawstock Court. We used the road for our playground and for P.E or drill as it was called in those days.