

## Met Office Instruments Division wartime relocation

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Chas reports that while going through a Met Office history of its role in World Wars 1 and 2, he came across this interesting snippet about their instrument division being evacuated to Stonehouse.

The full report is available at:

[https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metofficegovuk/pdf/research/library-and-archive/library/publications/factsheets/remember\\_world-war-one-and-two\\_2023.pdf](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metofficegovuk/pdf/research/library-and-archive/library/publications/factsheets/remember_world-war-one-and-two_2023.pdf)

Stonehouse was well-known as the home of Sperry Gyroscope (in Bonds Mill) and the nearby Hoffman bearing factory, both heavily involved with war-related work. However, little was known of this part of the Met Office and their activities. The following extract is from the above report throws some light on this:

The Instruments Division saw a dramatic increase in the demand on its resources during the war. Not only was it required to supply certified instruments to Meteorological Office stations across the world, it was also tasked with supplying the Naval Meteorological Service, the Voluntary Observing Fleet, and in the latter stages of the war, the Dominions and some allied services. The Division also developed new equipment and instruments as required. The scale of the increase in demand on the division can be seen in the expenditure on meteorological equipment and numbers of instruments supplied. Total annual expenditure on meteorological equipment increased from an average of **£7800** pa in 1929-33 (equivalent to **£472,000** today), to **£37,000** in 1939-40 (**£1,751,000**) and **£225,000** (**£8,442,000**) in 1944-45, falling slightly to **£212,000** (**£7,512,000**) in 1945-46.

During the war, the division supplied 30,000 radiosondes\*, 2,000,000 pilot and radiosonde balloons, 30,000 thermometers, and 18,000 aneroid barometers, and all of the instruments had to be calibrated and certified. Indeed, after the war, the division, which had been evacuated from London to Stonehouse, was too large to fit back into its original premises in South Kensington, and so a new building was found adjoining HMSO in Harrow.

Vicki Walker of Stonehouse History Group confirms that The Marine and Climatology Division was based in Wycliffe senior school, whereas the Instruments Division was in the junior school at Ryeford.

The group previously interviewed a lady who worked in the Climatology Dept during WW2 (see SHG Journal Issue 1. *Wycliffe at War*, by Darrell Webb.

However, not much has come to light about the Instruments Division.

Any further information would be greatly appreciated.



A Met WAAF reads wet and dry thermometers housed in a Stevenson Screen – some of the instruments produced in Stonehouse

**Note:**

\*A radiosonde is a battery-powered telemetry instrument carried into the atmosphere usually by a weather balloon that measures various atmospheric parameters and transmits them by radio to a ground receiver.