

Shirley School - 1930s

Details from the Log Book and the Manager's Minutes¹. Also from Newspaper reports

Overview

The school opened on 19 September 1932. It was inspected on March 1 1934. In 1936 the Education Committee approved the construction of 2 additional classrooms. Low attendance owing to childhood illnesses, now mostly not seen, are regularly reported. The school closed early on the days of the May Bumps Races. The end of the decade sees preparations for WWII, including the building of air-raid shelters.

The Log Book was found during the relocation of Shirley Infants School from its original site in Green End Road to the site it now occupies in Nuffield Road when, on the closure of St Andrew's Junior School 31/08/2006, it became Shirley Primary School.

The Log Book provides school activities as follow

Detail for Saint Andrews CoE School Jan 9 1911- Sept 16 1932

Detail for Shirley School Sept 19 1932- Nov 9 1960

Shirley Infants School was opened in 1932 taking children from the Infant section of St Andrew which became a Junior School.

It gives details of manager's meetings, staff sickness, and various visits to the school inc. medical and dental inspections (of up to 5 days) & treatments, School Nurse visits, weighing the children and inspecting for lice, inoculations, immunization (eg against diphtheria Apr 30th 1939). 'travelling teacher for speech defects', dates of closing and opening, numbers of scholar admissions. There are regular references to 'Holiday this afternoon' in the early period, though no indication as to why. There are entries at various times showing low attendance because of outbreaks of whooping cough, chicken pox, measles or mumps. It also details staff wage increases.

ENTRIES OF INTEREST FROM THE LOG BOOK FOR SHIRLEY SCHOOL DURING THE 1930S

Note: The Log Book is lodged with Cambridgeshire Archives

Sept 16 1932 St Andrews: Miss K Townsend ceased duties at St Andrew's Infants School today

Sept 19 1932

The following staff of the above school

K F Townsend (Miss) Head Teacher

6 Assistant teachers (named)

1 Nurse Attendant (named)

Note: Numbers of children not given



Parent bringing away their children from the first day at the new Infants' School in Green End Road

Cambridge Independent Press CIP, Friday 23rd September 1932 Page 12. Cambridgeshire Collection



Miss K F Townsend Headteacher 1932 Cambridgeshire Collection G.SHI.K32_43158

May 29 1933

Received permission from the Education Secretary to open afternoon school on Jun 7th, 8th & 9th at 1.25 pm and close at 3.30pm. This is to enable children to reach home, so as to avoid traffic caused by the May Races. (*similar entries other years pre and post this*)

March 16 1934 Inspection Report

Received from the Education Secretary the School Report by HMI Mr H F B Fox Inspected on March 1 1934

In September 1932 this school was opened to take the place of the Infants department at Chesterton St Andrews. It is an attractive building on a site which is sufficiently large to ensure freedom from congestion by other developments in event of housing developments in the neighbourhood.

It consists of six classrooms, a hall, full range of cloakrooms, offices & lavatories, so designed that teaching conditions are good & the general facilities for early training in social habits available. In the main the school is well equipped, though the substitution of tables and chairs for dual desks would be advantageous in the room used by the class to which the children are promoted after passing through the nursery classes. Some children are placed in this class on entry to the school. Such furniture would facilitate free movement & so encourage methods in closer accord with those used in the nursery classes.

The staff consists of a Head Teachers and six assistants. A Nurse attendant and usually a monitress assist with the nursery classes.

Numerically the staff is sufficient, but only three of the assistants are fully qualified. In order to adjust the size of the classes a number of the children are promoted each term, while transfer to the Junior Schools takes place at the age of 7+

In the nursery classes the children are suitably introduced to school life, and without formal teaching learn both to be self-reliant and to help each other. After this stage, however, the methods of instruction become very formal with the result that the intention of the early training is not fulfilled & this formal type of teaching continues to the top of the school. A gradual transition should be aimed at, & generally the methods employed should tend to make more possible varying rates of progress within each class. There is no mistaking the energy and zeal of the staff, the effect of which is noted in a satisfactory attainment in the fundamental subjects.

It is possible that help with regard to the points discussed during the inspection may be found in the Handbook of Suggestions & the recent publication on Infant & Junior Schools.

Signed J Holt, Correspondent.

Note: Regular references to Homerton Students teaching at Shirley for varying lengths of time.

May 31 1934 Nurse weighed Malt & Milk children this morning.

June 3 1934 Many children absent on account of Whooping Cough .

Regular 'Mother's Afternoon' were held eg July 16 1934 200 mothers

Oct 1 1934 Milk 1/2d per bottle from today. 201 scholars received milk.

Mar 19 1936 German Measles reported

May 8 1936 Low attendance – Mumps



Staff Group Photo June 1936 Cambridgeshire Collection G.SHI.K36 43179

Dec 17 1936 Permission has been received from the Education Officer that the ordinary Time Tables may be suspended on the afternoon of Dec 21st & 22nd on account of the Xmas Teas for the children here.

April 19 1937 Since provision of additional class rooms (school) provides accommodation for 364 children.

May 11 1937 School closed for Coronation & Whitsun

May 13 (? 18) 1937 Children's Coronation Day Service in Hall. Professional entertainers. Distribution of Souvenirs by Deputy Mayor.

Apr 13 1938 very poor attendance the last few weeks owing to Measles and Chicken Pox

28 Sep 1938 Closed school. School needed for the filling of respirators

School also closed when required as a Polling Station eg, Jan 31 1939

ENTRIES FROM THE MINUTE BOOK OF THE MANAGERS OF THE SHIRLEY COUNCIL SCHOOL

Commenced Oct 7 1932

Last minutes 17 January 1945

Note: The Minute Book is lodged with Cambridgeshire Archives. The Managers were similar to school governors though they focused on the physical aspects of a school rather than the educational. The main business of their meeting was normally scheduling of visits

1932

Meeting 1 Oct 7 1932

Present

Rev W I McKennal

Rev C Byrt

Alderman Squires (elected Chairman)

Councillors Miss Blair Mrs McNair Spalding and Holt

Education secretary Mr T F Foreman

Agreed Rota of visits one per month. Agreed Managers meetings on Wed 2.45

Headmistress Miss Townsend away ill

1933

Jan 25 1933

Head reported 10 children absent because of illness. Correspondent reported that he had just received notice of the closing of the schools until Feb 6th under Medical Authority Request from Education Secretary for a report on the newly appointed caretaker, agree to report that his work had been entirely satisfactory.

"after considering the circumstances of the death of Ruth Norris, a scholar killed by being run over by a motor bus it was unanimously agreed to write to the Education Secretary asking for danger signs to be placed near the school gate in Green End Road"

School visitors appointed.

May 31 1933

Education Secretary confirmed permanent appt of caretaker

Education Committee had decided to fix Celote? to the ceiling of the Hall

Question on window cleaning and grass cutting to be taken up. Broken Fence at west of school. Inspection of premises and new tiles of the hall

Jul 26 1933

Head reported that Parents day had been most successful and that Dr Laird M.O.H had addressed a large gathering of parents in the school hall on that occasion.

"it was agreed to ask the Stores Committee to supply a better quality of petrol for the motor lawn mower and also to ask the Borough Surveyor to arrange for the rolling of the lawn at a suitable time"

Oct 10 1933

Head reported she had arranged another parent's day in November at which the Mayor would attend.

1934

Jan 18 1934

Parents Day Dec 1st very successful

Mayor, Mayoress, Mayor's Chaplain, Vicar of Chesterton, Alderman Squires and Correspondent. The Mayor gave a very interesting address to the parents

BOARD OF EDUCATION REPORT BY HMI Mr H.F.B Fox INSPECTED ON 1st March 1934

See Log Book Entry March 1934 for full Report

April 18 1934

Discussion report of HMI

"With respect to suggestion that the desks in one room should be replaced by tables and chairs, it was agreed that in view of the crowded conditions of the classrooms and the probable further increase in the numbers on role it would be better to postpone this until the question of increased accommodation was brought forward."

Caretaker reported broken fence and frequent cases of trespass.

"It was also reported that the tenants in the Council houses were in the habit of throwing stones and other rubbish over the fence on to the school lawn. It was resolved to ask the Education Secretary to call the attention of the Chief Constable to the matter"

July 19 1934

Permission had been granted to the Hundred Houses Society to construct a footpath from their estate to the Shirley School, for the use of the children of their tenants but the Education Committee would provide a suitable entrance gate.

Two Further meetings; no important information recorded

1935

April 17 1935 Caretaker Mr Gibson took up duties at Milton Road School

July 7 1935 no quorum no business

Oct 16 1935 meeting hurriedly cancelled to give alderman and councillor a chance of attending a memorial service for a former mayor of Cambridge

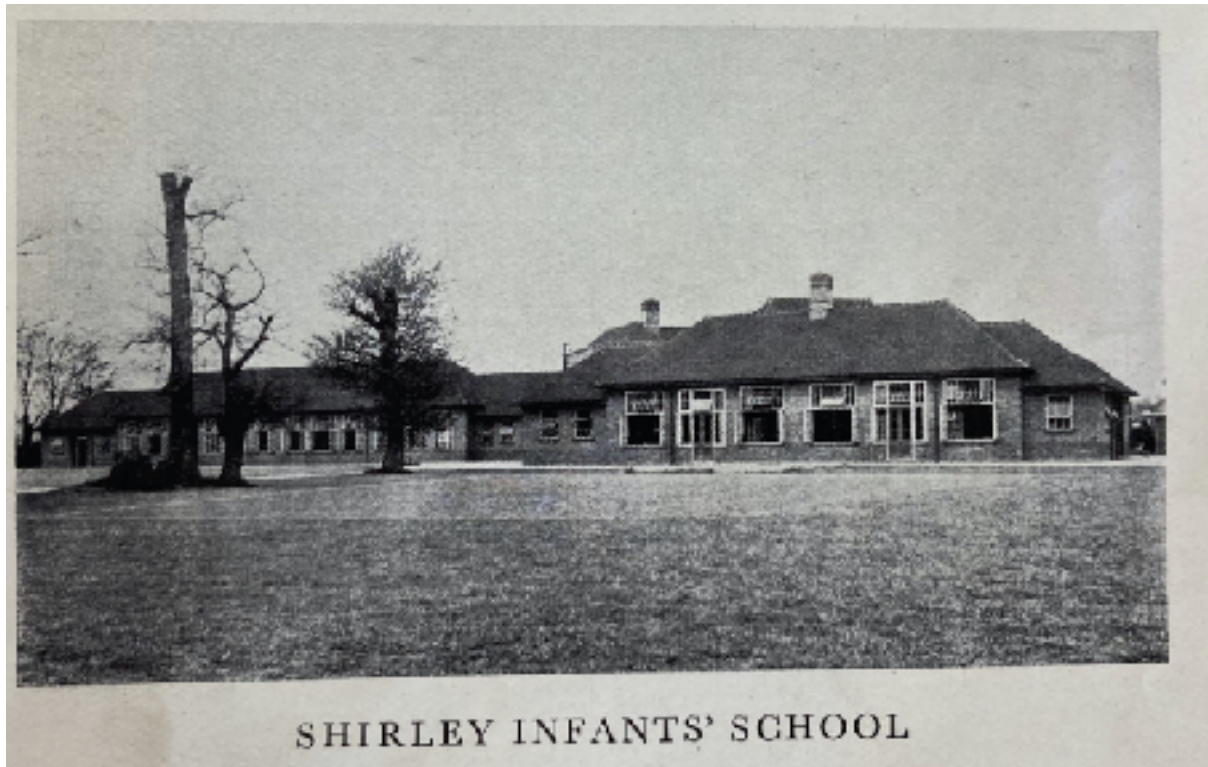


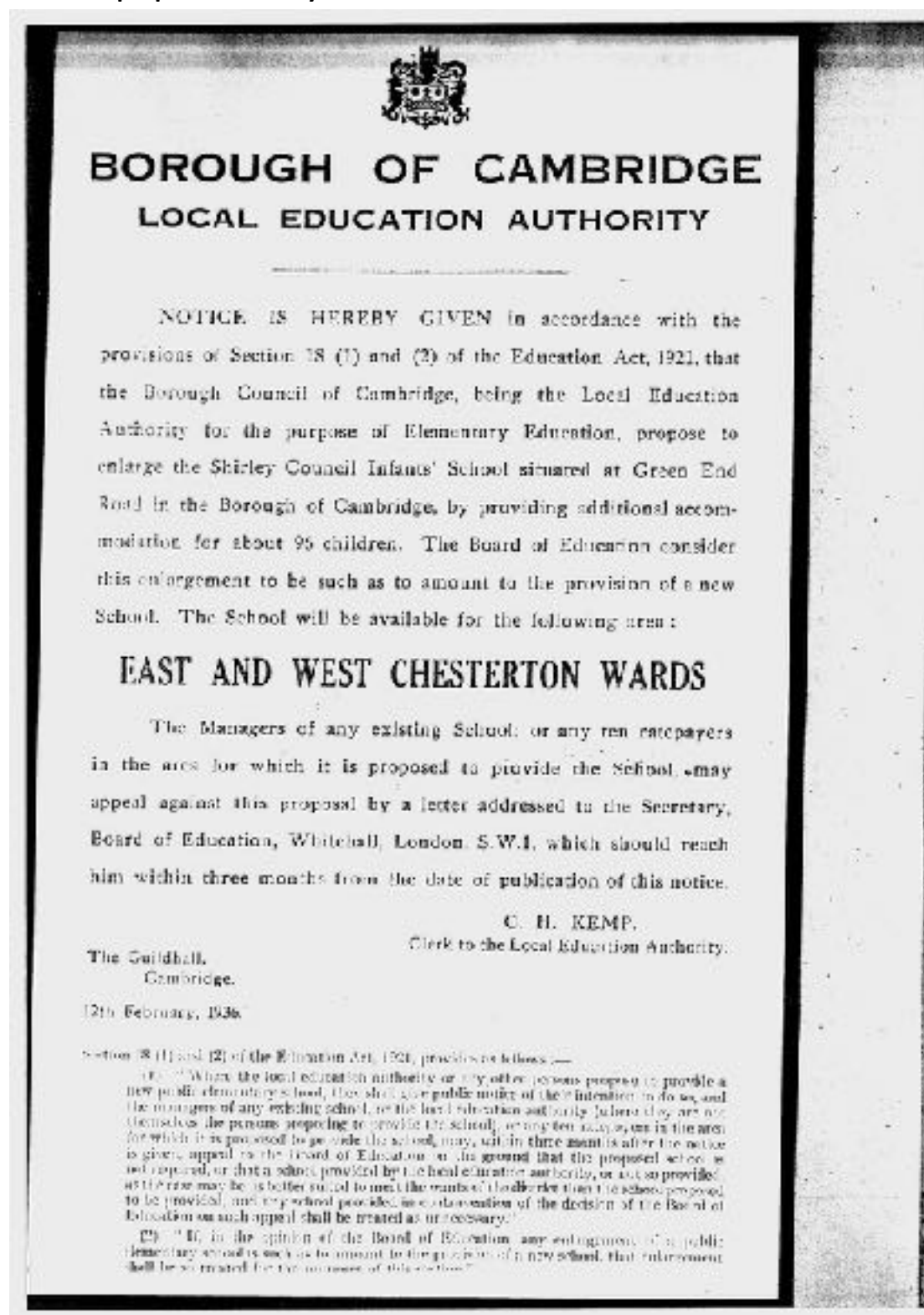
Photo of Shirley School 1935

From: THE CAMBRIDGE BOOK OF THE SILVER JUBILEE OF KING GEORGE V 1910-1935, Edited by S. C. ROBERTS, CAMBRIDGE. PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS FOR THE BOROUGH EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 1935

1936

January 16 1936 On previous day Education Committee had instructed the Education Officer to forward plans for two new rooms to the Education Dept for their approval.

Notice of proposal February 12 1936



April 22 1936 no important information recorded

Oct 21 1936 new classrooms in course of erection

1937

Sept 15 1937

"It was reported that the new classrooms were very successful and that one had now been used as a nursery class making three nursery class in all. Miss Townsend mentioned that 80 children had gone to the Junior Schools & 70 new scholars had been entered in the Shirley School, making a total of 331 on the books.

Miss Townsend also reported that two successful Mothers' Afternoons had taken place during last term. Mrs ? had spoken at the first when 130 mothers were present and Miss Griffiths, Supervisor of Physical Training, at the 2nd when over 250 Mothers attended."

1938

Jan 12 1938 Miss Townsend reported that the School, including the Nursery Classes, was full.

May 25 1938 Letter in the local press (cutting in book) from Mrs Hayward 25 Ramsden Square concerned about children crossing Milton Road. Correspondent had visited the crossing places at the roundabout and the newly erected Belisha crossing at Ramsden Square.

Oct 19 1938 Caretaker call attention of the Managers to 10 Shirley Grove being vacant and asked if the Managers could help him get a house nearer the school. Correspondent to write to the Education Officer. Also concerned about the great amount of his time which is taken up in window cleaning. Matter deferred for the present

1939

January 18 1939 window cleaning discussed

May 3 1939 windows to be cleaned by men from the Surveyor's Dept

September 27 1939

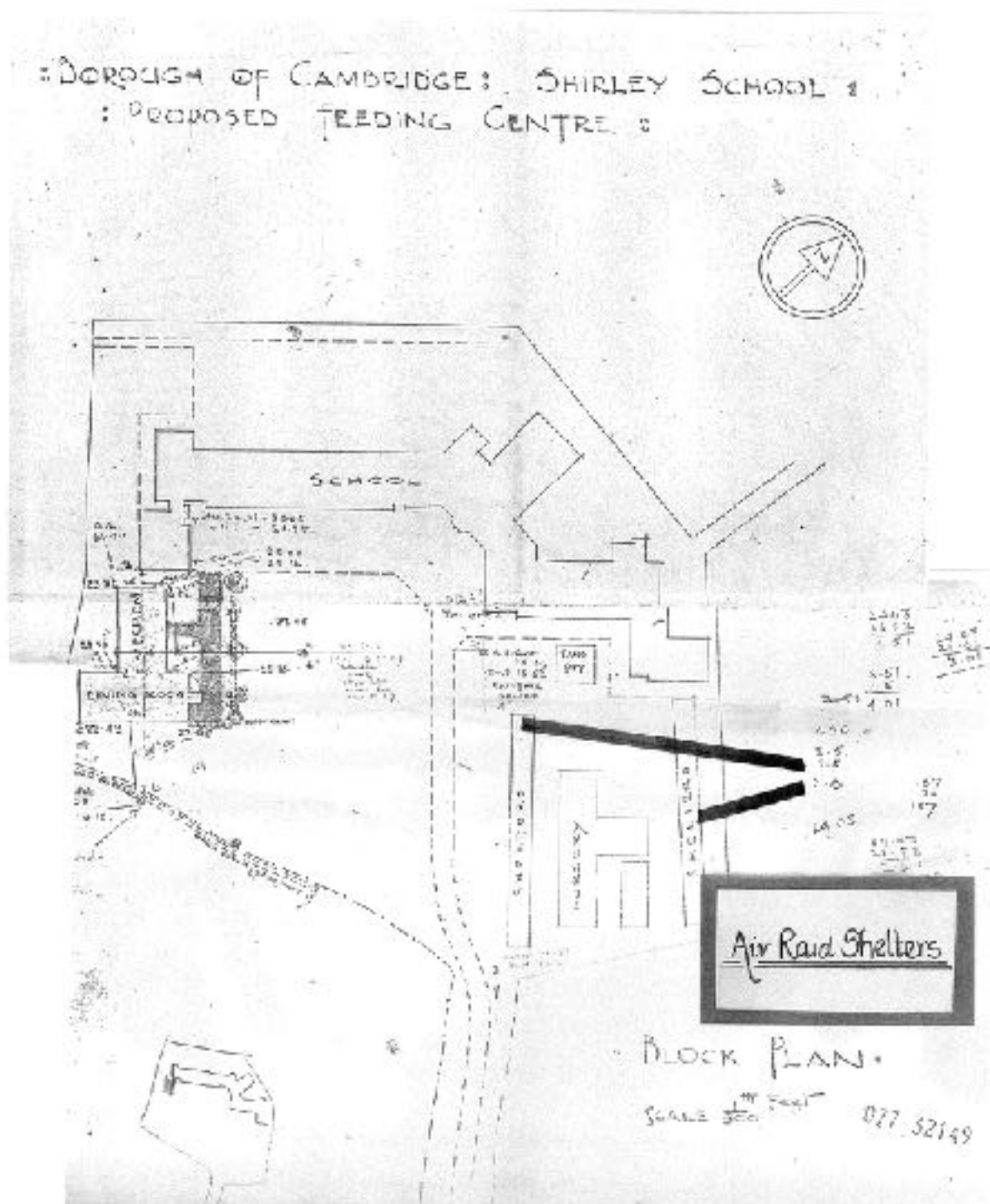
"The Headmistress explained the conditions under which the school was working. There were about 30 evacuees in the school but all the under five children for present were excluded. Some concern was expressed about the absence of these children and it was decided to urge that these children should be re-admitted as soon as it was found possible to do so"

NOTE FROM CORRESPONDENCE: T F Foreman Education Officer 30 Nov 1939

"The Education Committee has decided that you may admit children of four years of age from the beginning of next week, but have instructed me to point out that it may be necessary at alter date to exclude children under five years of age ...

When admitting the four year olds next term you should bear in mind the necessity of reserving sufficient accommodation for the admission of children of five years of age after Easter.

The trenches for Air Raid protection now in the course of construction were afterwards inspected'



Cambridge Borough Surveyors plan for Feeding Centre at Shirley School. This shows the position of the Air Raid Shelters on either side of the original Nursery building.

Tel. 425047

photo returned
163, Green End Road,
Cambridge. CB4 1BW
5/10/92

Dear Ms Bolton,

I attended Shirley School in the middle 1930's when the headmistress was Miss Townsend and two of the teachers were Miss Turner and Miss Birkett. I have no photographs of the school but enclose one of a few pupils of the time (I am in the middle). I recall one vivid memory of the school which happened after I left and was attending Milton Road Junior. It is of the many London evacuees brought to Cambridge. Shirley was a local reception point and as my father was an ARP warden and my mother was in the then WVS they were on duty. I had to wait around while the evacuees were sent to their new homes. Many of them were bewildered, dirty and crying and I couldn't really understand what was going on. Just before 11am on 3rd September 1939 we went home to listen to Mr Chamberlain make his announcement that 'this country is now at war with Germany'. Later on - probably in 1941 or 42 we used the air raid shelters at the school when the sirens went. I remember running down the road in the middle of the night and the musty, damp smell of the shelters while we waited for the bombs, which fortunately didn't come to this area.

Yours sincerely,

Kath Mansfield

(See Kathleen's Note)

Letter (1992) regarding the 1939 evacuees and the Shirley School Air Raid Shelters

Newspaper Reports referencing Shirley School

15 April 1939 Cambridge Daily News

A.R.P. FIRST-AID PLAN PROGRESSES

Arrangements have just been made for the B.R.C.S to man and train personnel for four first-aid posts at Shirley School, Richmond-road School, Cherry Hinton School and St Phillip's School ...

Note: A.R.P. Air Raid Precautions (ARP) refers to a number of organisations and guidelines in the United Kingdom dedicated to the protection of civilians from the danger of air raids (Wikipedia)

B.R.C.S is the British Red Cross Society

14 July 1939 Cambridge Evening News

CAMBRIDGE TASTES CONDITIONS. A.R.P. SERVICES GO INTO ACTION

The report gives details of the testing preparation for war and of blackout conditions undertaken in the town.

"... there were first-aid parties at Shirley School, Chesterton ... Numerous casualties, labelled with their respective injuries, were dealt with by first-aid parties"

1 September 1939 Cambridge Daily News

EVACUEES ARRIVE AT CAMBRIDGE. ARRANGEMENTS WORK SMOOTHLY. CHILDREN KEEP CALM.

The first of the children who have been separated from their families by the dark threat of war arrived at Cambridge Station this morning.



10 trains arrived at Cambridge on this day, the first with 800 children mainly from Holloway destined for county areas who had started their journey at 5 am at their schools. The second train arrived at 11.30 with 500 children from Muswell Hill, these children were to be accommodated in the Borough and were taken to one of 13 Dispersal Centres by bus. Shirley School was one of the designated Dispersal Centres in the City. A reporter at one of the centres details that on arrival the children were examined by a medical man and nurse, their names and London County Council School were recorded, the children were given rations for two days, they then left the school accompanied by a Billeting Officer and helper.

A report to the Town Council on the work of the A.R.P (Cambridge Daily News of 11 October 1939) states that *Approximately 6.600 children and mothers have been evacuated to*

Cambridge.

9 October 1939 Cambridge Daily News

A.R.P. TRENCHES FOR SCHOOLS £8847 SCHEME TO TOWN COUNCIL

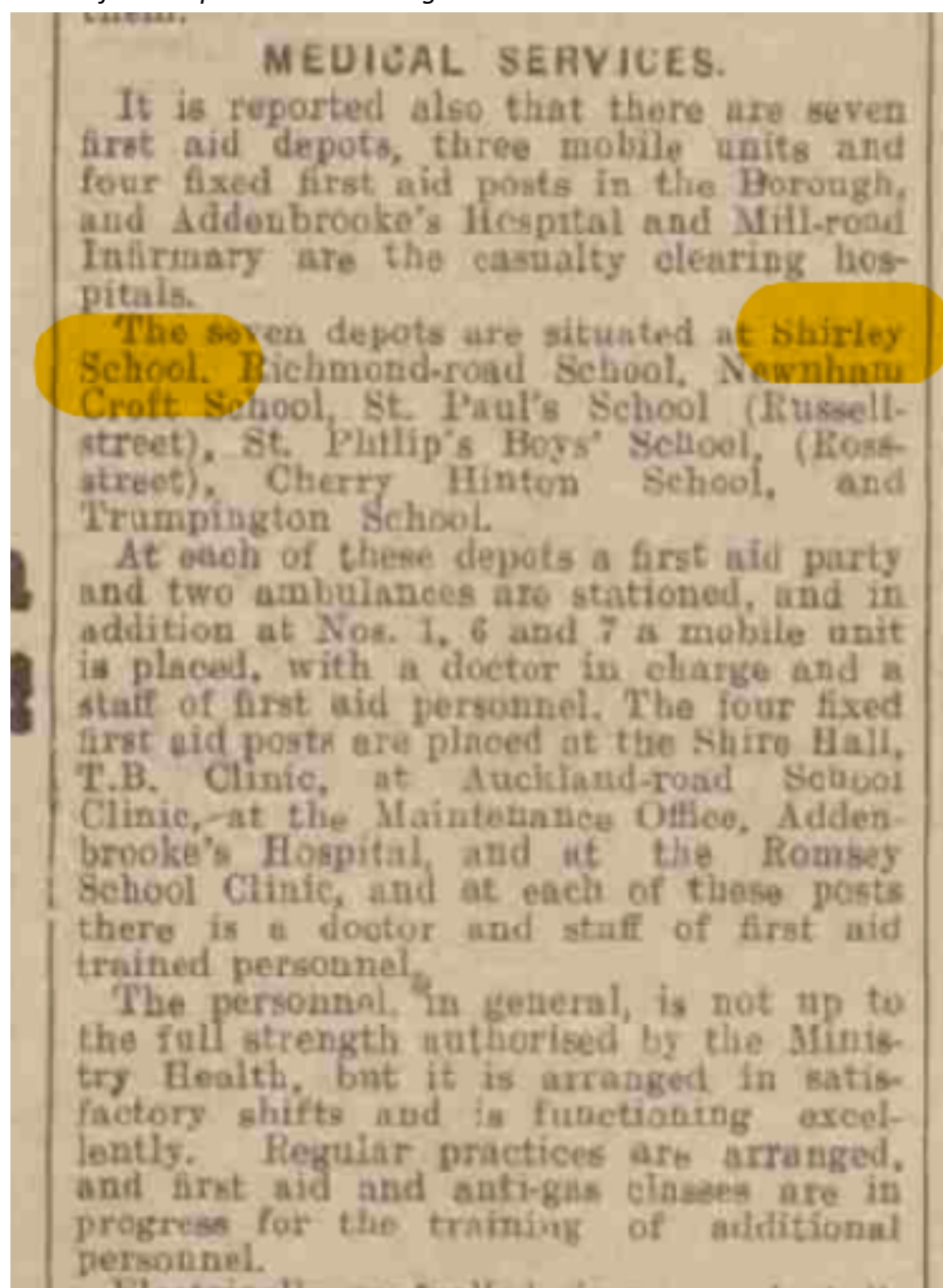
When Cambridge Town Council meet on Thursday they will be asked to approve the construction of air raid trench shelters at nine elementary schools in the Borough.

The tender for the construction from Mr. H D Ridgeon was approved.

11 October 1939 Cambridge Daily News

WORK OF THE A.R.P. COMMITTEE

It is reported that there are seven first-aid depots, three mobile units and for fixed first aid posts in the Borough ...



¹ Deposited with Cambridgeshire Archive