

Shirley School - 1940s

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. The School was inspected in Oct 1948. The early years of this decade sees the impact on the school of WW2

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 Church of England School Jan 9 1911- Sept 16 1932

Detail for Shirley School Sept 19 1932- Nov 9 1960

Shirley Infants School was opened in on Sept 19 1932 taking children from the Infant section of St Andrew which then became a Junior School.

ENTRIES OF INTEREST FROM THE LOG BOOK FOR SHIRLEY SCHOOL DURING THE 1940S

Note: The Log Book is lodged with Cambridgeshire Archives

1940

May 28 1940 The parents were invited to the school this afternoon in order to see the children go to the shelters, & afterwards inspect them.

Aug 30 1940 Kate(?) Townsend resigned as Headmistress

Sep 2 1940 Alice Mary Hehir commenced duties as Headmistress

Nov 27 1940 Manager's meeting record in the Log Book of gratitude to Miss Townsend:

Miss K Townsend has served as headmistress of this school since it was opened eight years ago, and now she is retiring the managers wish to express their gratitude for the faithful services which Miss Townsend has rendered.

They hope she may enjoy many years of health and happiness in her well earned rest, and feel sure that the influence for good which she has exerted on the children will long endure.

1941

Jan 21 1941 In shelters

1) 10.20 to 11.10 am

2) 11.40 to 12.15pm

3) 2.20 – 2.50p,

4) 3.40 to 4.15 pm.

Wet snowy day.

Jan 23 1941 In shelters 10.35 to 11.00 am

31 Jan 1941 In shelters 12-12.30, 3.45 to 4 noted that 'children claimed by parents, all clear went after 6pm'

Entries recorded regarding the use of the shelters in Feb, March, April and May 1941.

Last entry re alerts June 16 1941

Dec 17 1941 Two HMIs visit in connection with the building of a FT Nursery Centre

Extracts from School Log

1941

21st January In shelters 1) 10.20 - 11.40 a.m. 2) 11.40 - 12.15 p.m.
3) 2.20 - 2.50 p.m. 4) 3.40 - 4.15 p.m. Wet rainy day.

22nd January In shelters 10.35 to 11 a.m. Mrs Rockham, Educ. Off.
visited us this afternoon.

23rd January Miss Hinkins returned this afternoon. Miss Bennett,
Physical Training Organiser at school 10 a.m. 12 a.m. and
2 p.m. to 4 p.m. In shelters 11.55 a.m. to 12.10 and
2.55 p.m. to 3.15 p.m. Dorcas Pittsford commenced duties
as mistress.

24th January I visited the school in the afternoon. The All Clear
went while I was there but very few children were in the
school so I did not sign the registers.
As the message came registers were to be marked Mrs Osler
signed them.
Miss Hall returned Wednesday Jan. 29th but was absent Jan.
30th and morning of. In shelters 12 - 12.30 p.m., and
3.45 to 4.30 p.m. (children claimed by parents all clear went
after 6 p.m.)

2nd February In shelters 11 a.m. to 12.15 p.m.

7th February In shelters 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. (all clear 4.35 p.m.)

8th February In shelters 9.45 to 10 a.m.

12th February In shelters 9.10 to 9.20 a.m. 9.55 to 11.45 a.m. School
began 2.30 owing to alert.

15th May About 1.45 p.m., as some children were present the teachers
took them to the shelters. All clear 2.15 p.m. Children
came to school and by 2.30 p.m. attendance normal.

5th June Warning at 11.40 a.m. Mothers came for children who were
then in shelters. All clear during the busy time. Normal
school in afternoon.

1941 Extracts from the School Log Book referring to children's use of the air-raid shelters.

1942

Summer 1942 School remained open after the end of term, July 24th with reduced staffing for recreational activities. Closed Aug 26-Sept 7

Note: Miss Hehir's (Head) records fewer entries giving information on school activities in the Log Book but mainly regarding staff absences and class numbers at start of academic year.

1944

Sept 13 1944 The children had a Harvest Festival and afterwards the fruit and vegetables were sold to the mothers. The sale resulted in £8-1s-9^{1/2} p being raised for the wireless set. After everything paid 11s/5^{1/2} p will be left for charging accumulators.

1945

Feb 2 1945 Attendance this week was very low owing to heavy snow. The mothers find it difficult to obtain Wellington boots for chn (children).

Note: Teachers were given leave 'on account of leave of husband' over the war period.

1946

Sept 9 1946 School re-opened. Former government nursery taken over by the Ministry of Education. Nursery class- children of two years at present in the nursery to be retained but in future only three year olds will be admitted.

Oct 12 1948 Received report by HMIs on the school Inspected on 11 & 12 May 1948.

school inspected on 11th and 12th May, 1948 -
This school of 355 children is a happy
place. Its social life and personal
relationships are governed by respect for
the developing personality of the individual.
The Head Mistress who was appointed in
1940, has made it her chief aim to
give this character of the school.
As a result of her encouragement
she has succeeded in welding her
staff into a keen team which
appreciates her aims & understands
where it is going. The Head Mistress
also maintains close contact with each
child by being readily accessible in
her rooms and by carrying on a
regular correspondence with the older
children which is valuable in
stimulating some of their activities.

Individual activities, as an
alternative to more formal class-work,
were first introduced through free choice

afternoons, where the children were invited to choose an activity & to spend most of the afternoon in a room well supplied with suitable materials and supervised by a teacher specially interested in that particular occupation. The chief choices offered were Dramatics, Reading, Handwork & Pumber. Gradually, as it was found that the different activities were closely related, they merged and expanded into a variety of individual occupations in which could be found the whole approach to the basic skills. Careful records are kept of each child's progress and arrangements are made for some formal teaching when it is considered necessary, but such work is kept to a minimum.

The success of the method may be fairly assessed both by the social atmosphere of the school and by the quality of the children's achievements. In

their contacts with each other & with adults, the children are friendly & responsive. They are self-reliant & independent and at the same time helpful and unselfish in their dealings with each other. A healthy progression in social behaviour from the Nursery group to the top class is noticeable. Progress in Reading, Writing & Number is equally satisfactory. The lively and successful written work of the older children in stories, diaries & letters reflects the freedom given to individual initiative. Number work is often above average for children of this age & the children's liking for this ^{activity} occupation is very evident. The absorption of those in the top class in their occupations is particularly evident and is due to the enthusiasm, insight & ingenuity of the teacher who has provided them with a rich variety

of opportunities. Speech is spontaneous and ready, but details of enunciation need great care. The freedom of expression which underlies these activities is an obvious stimulus to all forms of self-expression, and the work seen in Art, Music and Physical Education was interesting & clearly satisfying to the children.

Of the three Nursery classes, two are housed in the Nursery wing and the third in the adjoining Day Room which was recently taken over by the Local Education Authority. Nursery routine is carried on in these groups although the long mid-day break is not altogether satisfactory. When the new Dining Room is available, it is hoped that Nursery diners will play their full part in the Nursery Day. The four Nursery Assistants are encouraged to feel part of the school community;

that interest in the work as a possible career is maintained by the Headmistress through informal lectures & directed reading. The Nursery classes make full use of the gardens and playground. There is a good supply of big toys and apparatus, much of it is provided by the teachers, but some fixed agility apparatus both for the Nursery groups & for the Infant classes would be a great advantage.

The buildings are pleasant and the equipment well cared for. In some cases the indoor lavatories are very near the class-rooms, and demand careful use and constant ventilation. Some form of direct access from the Infant Rooms to the playground would be an asset to free movement in activity periods.

Contact with parents is an important feature of the school. A small

Children's library has been opened, and parents are encouraged to borrow books for home reading; open days, lectures and discussions keep the parents informed and interested in the various aspects of child development.

- Oct 19 Students end period of practice. Oct 18th (aft) Mrs Reed also returned
- Oct 21st Miss Appleton absent this afternoon, had throat.
- Oct 26th Mrs Atkin absent.
- Oct 25th Mrs. Geldard Tou House, Selwyn Rd Tel. 2701 commenced as nursery assistant - attends Monday, Tuesday, Friday
- Oct 29th Mrs. Geldard absent till
- Nov 5th Mrs. Geldard returned
- Nov 6th Rita Wakefield absent.
- Nov 6th Rita Wakefield returned
- Nov 8th Miss Appleton returned, Mrs. Atkin returned.
- Nov 12th Miss Blades absent ill, Mrs Geldard absent ill
- Nov 15th Miss Blades returned, Mrs. Geldard returned.
- Nov 23rd Miss Burkett absent due to a bronchial cold
- Miss Schenk absent until 10:30 a.m. sickness
- Mrs. Margaret Geldard absent due to a cold
- Nov 26th Miss Burkett returned Margaret Geldard returned.

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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 early years of the 1940s detail issues regarding the use of the school by A.R.P. and the First Aid post for the War effort. Note: items of interest only record here

1940

Jan 17 1940

'The correspondent described the steps he had taken to try to put a stop to the serious damage that was being done to the grass plot by motor vans and private cars, mainly in connection with the First Aid Post. He read the letter he had sent to Ald Briggs as Chairman of the A.R.P Committee'

Aug 7 1940

Miss Townsend was retiring

'Miss K Townsend has served as headmistress of this School since it opened eight years ago, and now that she is retiring the Managers wish to express their gratitude for the faithful services which Miss Townsend has rendered.

They hope that she may enjoy many years of health and happiness in her well earned rest, and feel sure that the influence for good which she has exerted on the children will long endure'

Nov 27 1940

Note of appreciation would be entered in the Shirley Log Book (it is in Log Book)

Headmistress (Miss Hehir) reported that during wet weather parts of the School Shelters became unusable

Temperature charts of the various classrooms were inspected to show the heating was satisfactory

More on problems with vehicles driving across the lawn to the First Aid Post

1941

Mar 26 1941

'The Headmistress explained the arrangement that had been made for the use, if required, of the School as a Rest Centre.

Miss Hehir also reported that the present no on the books was 332 and that in view of the accommodation being reduced by the loss of a classroom, she was not able, at present, to admit under fives. It was regrettable that with its splendid equipment and specifically trained staff for nursery work, the school should not be able to meet the demand for such classes.' Ald. Spalding to interview Ed Off to see what arrangements could be made.

13, Chesterton Hall Crescent,
Cambridge.

18th, Jan., 1943.

Dear Mr Foreman,

Spinkley School.

Crossing of lawn by cars and other vehicles.

On your suggestion I saw Mr Hayes about this matter and I have also interviewed the person in charge of the A. Ambulances etc. at the A. R. P. post.

There is some crossing of the grass by vehicles during night time "Alerts" still going on, and after consultation with the Managers and others concerned, I submit the following proposal which we think, if carried out, would prevent damage to the main part of the grass plot.

The suggestion is that the use of a part of the edge of the grass, as shown in the rough sketch, be granted temporarily to the A.R.P. people, so as to give enough room for turning the vehicles at night, and that the boundary of this piece be marked out by hurdles or something of the kind. What we have in mind are the sort of iron hurdles which are commonly used to block paths that are being beginning to be formed across grass and which are probably available in the Surveyor's Dept.

Letter in Managers Book regarding damage to the grass caused by vehicles crossing during night time "Alerts"

Jul 9 1941

Some discussion on proposals from Ministry of Health to erect protective walls to the windows of a classroom used as sleeping accommodation for female personnel, alteration to the W.C.s and the tar paving of a portion of the ground. Pleas Ed Com. Rejected

1942

Feb 4 1942

Tar paving effected and serving a useful purpose

Classroom used for sleeping in by some of the members of the Mobile Unit (i.e. First Aid)

needs to be vacated by 8am and be no smoking. Request to go to Ed. Officer.
Caretaker, his son and son's friend had done voluntary fire-watching of the premises and was requesting recognition and small payment. Referred to Ed Officer

Dec 9 1942

No central Heating for many weeks now remedied.
No action on fire watching

1943

Dec 1 1943

'The classroom occupied by the First Aid Post was vacated by them during the summer holidays and was now in use by the School, but so far an additional teacher had not been appointed.'

1944

Dec 29 1944

Request from caretaker for additional help for cleaning rejected

1945

Jan 17 1945

Considered plans for proposed site of dining room and kitchen.

LAST MINUTE RECORDED IN THIS BOOK

Papers and Letters inserted into the Manager's Minute Book

Jan 8 1941 Letter from Managers to Education Officer re Crossing of Lawn by cars and other vehicles

Feb 6 1942 Letter from Managers (Mr Wormell) to Education Officer re vacating classroom by members of the Mobile Unit (i.e. First Aid). Includes a request to prohibit smoking and states '*An atmosphere impregnated with stale tobacco smoke is not a suitable one for the children to start their day's work in.*'

Also details of the fire watching in early part of the year when the siren sounded at night by the caretaker

Feb 10 1942 Reply from TF Foreman MA Ed Officer

Request re First Aid Personnel sent to Staff Officer

No powers to make payment to caretaker, though had tried. Will be covered by firewatchers under Civil Defence Duties

Jan 1945 Letters re the erection of a canteen in response to the Ministry of Education requirement to provide meals in all schools

Statement of average attendance for year ending 31 March 1937 compared with 1935-1936

Official Accommodation 364

Estimated Effective Accommodation 364

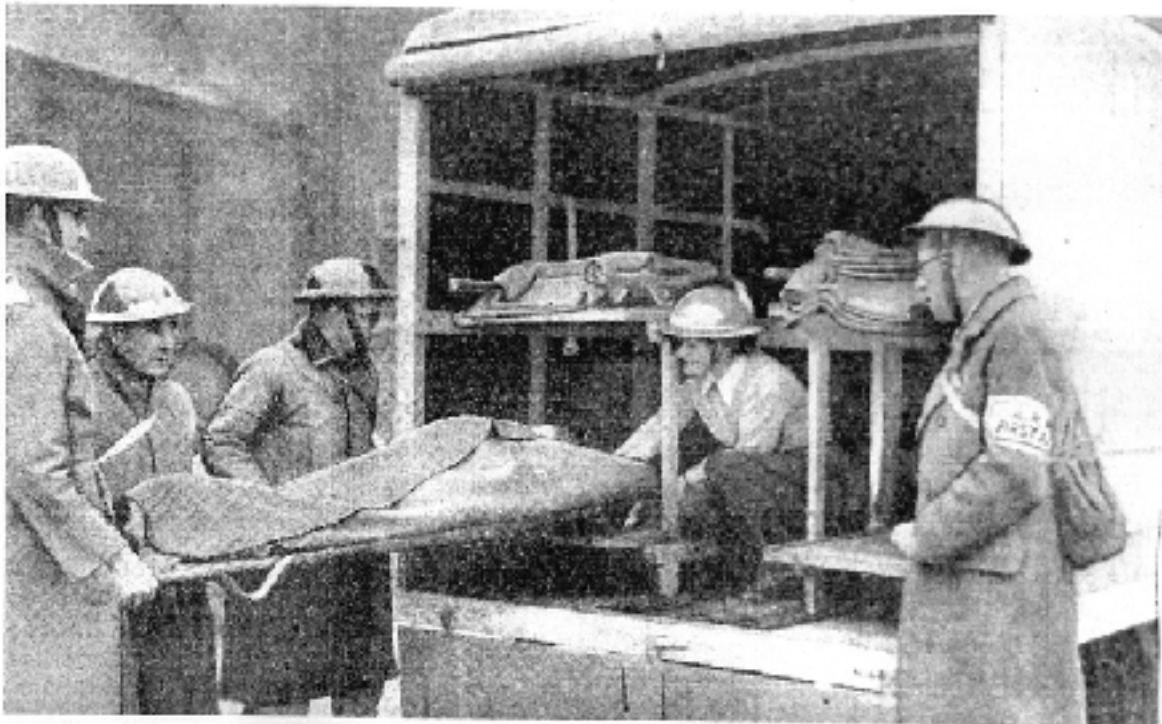
Year ended 31/3/36: Average attendance 269 Average number on books 311 % average attendance to average no on books 84

Year ended 31/3/37 Average attendance 242 Average number on books 312 % average attendance to average no on books 78

Newspaper Reports referencing Shirley School

Jan 19 1940

Cambridge Independent Press on 19 January 1940.



'A.R.P. Ambulance try out - Members of No. 1 First Aid Party carrying out at the Shirley School, Cambridge, an A.R.P. practice with one of the ambulances which are specially converted saloon cars.'

¹ Deposited with Cambridgeshire Archive