

0613 Fred Anson

In October 1949, Fred Anson was appointed headmaster of the new Wheatley Secondary Modern School, later to be called The Shotover School, which was being built in Littleworth Road.

"At that time, it was still under construction", he said, "but it was due to open at the beginning of the September terra 1950. The sewers were completed just forty eight hours before the school started. We moved to Wheatley on July fourth of that year.

THE NEW SECONDARY MODERN SCHOOLS

There were twenty four secondary modern schools in the county and it was not intended that the pupils should take public examinations. They had to undergo a test of achievement which probably tested them far more thoroughly than in the G.C.E. They were tested in the fourth year and had to pass in Maths, English, P.E. choice of History or Geography and a Science subject. The boys did Woodwork and Metalwork and the girls did Needlework and Domestic Science. They also had Rural Studies which included gardening. Their leaving certificates were presented by someone of importance at the Town Hall which was full of fourteen and fifteen year olds. It was quite a grand occasion. The girls wore long gloves and straw hats.

Wheatley was top school out of the twenty four several times and from that came the beginning of the G.C.E. as I told the Director that I had boys and girls capable of taking them.

This eventually led to comprehensive education, as one school in particular, Burford School, was serving a rural area with all grades of abilities from eleven upwards.

Of course, I wasn't very popular when the new school opened as all pupils from the primaries transferred at eleven plus. Before that, the children would have stayed at the village schools until they left but now they were having to leave and go to the Secondary Modern Schools at eleven. I 'decapitated' Mr Keys at Wheatley, also the headmaster of Sandhills, Mr Hunt from Great Haseley and the headmaster of Great Milton school, thus taking the Heads off all the 'feed' schools".

The Shotover School served a catchment area for fourteen villages and the pupils numbered four hundred and sixty seven when Fred retired in 1972. Moira had been working at the same school as a part time needlework teacher but retired at the same time as her husband.

Extracted from 'Tales from the Village Folk' pp. 42-43.