

Clive Hallett

Clive Hallett was born in Newport, Gwent, on May 13th 1944. He attended Rogerstone Primary School in the Ebbw Valley from the age of 5, and moved to Tupsley Primary School in Hereford when he was 8, and joined the choir of the Parish church. He stayed there until he was eleven, when he won a scholarship to Hereford Cathedral School where he enjoyed all the sporting activities, particularly rugby and rowing (but not cross country!). He wanted to encourage other children in similar activities, and decided to become a teacher.

He completed a three-year teacher training course at Culham College (1963 - 1966), where he played rugby and rowed for the college. Later he joined Wallingford Rowing Club, and Chinnor Rugby Club.

When he finished his training, which included a teaching practice at Wheatley, he was offered a position as a class teacher to third year juniors at Wheatley Primary School, under the headship of Glenville Evans - a fellow Welshman and rugby enthusiast. His classroom was in one of the wooden huts in the playground, and he remembers, somewhat wistfully, the coke stove maintained by Ron Summerfield, the caretaker, on which he roasted chestnuts for the children in the winter! He also taught football and athletics. He became an active member of the NUT and took part in the Annual Conference in the Isle of Man.

In 1969 Clive was appointed Deputy Head of Montem Infants School in Islington, where he pioneered a language development course for West Indian children. In the Spring Term 1971, aged 26, he was invited to become Acting Head.

Soon after this he became a full-time Teaching Head with a Year 5/6 class at Swaffham Prior Community School. Unfortunately he had a rugby accident which resulted in damage to his shoulder and, later, while on a mountain leadership course he sustained a spiral fracture to his ankle. This put an end to playing rugby, but he maintained his interest as a referee.

His next appointment was another challenge. In 1975 he was appointed to the Headship of St Matthew's School in Cambridge - a failing Urban School which still had some asbestos ceilings, and a nursery class housed in what was formerly St George's Secondary Modern School. Amongst the pupils twenty-one different languages were spoken.

Clive was Head of this school for eight years and during this time he met Anne Peeke-Vout, and they were married in St George's Church in Cambridge. Their elder daughter, Olivia, was born in 1978, and Georgie followed in 1982. Their son, Charlie, was born, after the move to Wheatley, in September 1988.

Glenville Evans announced that he would be retiring as Head of Wheatley Primary School at the end of March 1983, after 27 years of Headship at the school, and the post was advertised. Clive Hallett was interviewed in November 1982, and appointed to succeed him. The family moved to Wheatley in 1983, in time for the beginning of the Spring Term.

The new Headmaster had two and a half terms in the 'Old School' before transferring to the much larger, Secondary School site in Littleworth Road. During the two weeks of half-term, the loyal school staff including Mrs Jackie Wilson, Mrs Val Targett, Mrs Ann Mason, Mr Andy Walkey, Miss Claire Bishop, Mrs Eileen Dungey, Mrs Hazel Aylesbury, with Ron and Barbara Summerfield, the Caretakers, worked with the local removal firm, Cowley Carriers, and packed

everything up and transferred it to the new site.

Clive remembers that ‘the children took the move in their stride’. They were delighted to have large airy classrooms, newly redecorated, and cheerful curtains in the large hall. They enjoyed the spacious surroundings and, several years later, the opportunity to integrate with children from the John Watson School at the other end of the building.

The new school building was officially opened in October 1984, by the author, Roald Dahl, who had been chosen by the children themselves.

Wheatley Primary School flourished in its new premises: very soon there was the need for two parallel classes for each year group, and parents moved to Wheatley in order to be eligible for a place at this popular primary school. Drama and music had a high priority and there was a major community production every year. Parents also appreciated the opportunities for sporting activities including football, netball, rugby, tennis, cricket, athletics and swimming.

The Headmaster had an ‘open door policy’: he wanted to make himself available for staff, pupils and parents to ‘come in for a chat’ at any time of the day.

The school became a focal point for village activities - especially for those involving drama and music. Nobody who attended the annual village pantomime will forget Clive’s performances as ‘the Dame’ in Mother Goose (1984) Cinderella (1985) Humpty Dumpty (1988) Robinson Crusoe (1991) Aladdin (1992) Ali Baba (1995), Old Mother Hubbard (1996), Cinderella (2000), Sleeping Beauty (2001), The Three Musketeers (2003), Sing a Song of Sixpence (2004), and If you go down to the Woods Today (2007).

Clive Hallett retired in July 2005, after almost 23 years as Head of Wheatley Primary School. He and Anne still live in their family home in Templar’s Close.

Interview with Susan Prest
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