

Wheatley C.E. Primary School

1858 - 2008



150 years
Together we learn

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet has been written to mark the sesquicentenary (150 years) of Wheatley Primary School and combines much previously-recorded historical information with more recent reminiscences of school life from those who have played a prominent part in it. We are extremely fortunate as a school still to possess the original handwritten school log books dating back to the school's inception, as many of these historic records for Oxfordshire schools were destroyed by fire. These fascinating books document the daily business of the school and give us a unique insight into how life has changed over 150 years for primary school children in this village.

Thanks are due to Joan Morters for her enthusiasm and encouragement for this project, and also to Susan Prest for her invaluable input on behalf of the team in the Wheatley Archive Room. Thanks also to Clive Hallett, Wesley Green and Wendy Whittaker whose reminiscences give life to the facts.

We owe acknowledgements to two major sources of historical information: the original 125-year history of Wheatley School produced by the Wheatley Society in 1983 to mark the school's removal from the Church Road site; and *Wheatley: A Most Difficult Village* by John Prest.

Liz Wickens

CONTENTS

Bishop Moss's School (1811 - 1858)	4
The early days	
A most difficult village	
Edward Elton's School (1858 - 1950)	7
Obstacles to schooling	
The Victorian curriculum	
The war years	
The Last Fifty Years (1950 - 2008)	13
School on the move	
Four Long-Serving Heads	17
Rees Leyshon (1891-1925)	
John G. Key (1925-1954)	
Glenville Evans (1956-1983)	
Clive Hallett (1983-2005)	
Wheatley Primary School	20
The present	

BISHOP MOSS'S SCHOOL

The early days

hi 1811 Dr Charles Moss, Bishop of Oxford, left the sum of £3000 in his will for charitable causes, including the establishment of schools at Wheatley and Cuddesdon “for the education and bringing up of children of the same parishes”.

Eventually in 1818 a house hi the High Street, now known as Mitcheldene, was purchased by the Trustees of Bishop Moss's will, for the purpose of establishing the first school in Wheatley. A large schoolroom, which still stands in the grounds of Mitcheldene, was used for the boys, while die house itself provided a classroom for girls and accommodation for the Master and Mistress.

The first Master of the new school was Valentine Guy, with his wife acting as Mistress, and they ran what became known as Bishop Moss's school together until 1828 when he handed over to his wife's nephew, William Saunders. During those years we have some inkling of what life was like



hi the school from accounts entered into the official school log books hi January 1826. At that time, 43 boys are recorded as reading and 16 writing, while 43 girls could read and 11 could write. Income for the school was parfly provided by the children's “school pence”, partly by' subscriptions from local gentry (often paying for children whose parents were unable to pay) and partly by the income from Bishop Moss's endowment.

In his will, Dr Moss specified that the school should be set up as a National School, hi 1808 two Quakers, Joseph Fox and William Allen, had taken over a one-room school on Borough Road hi London and formed *The Institution for Promoting the British System for the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of Every Religious Persuasion*. This roused the established church and hi October 1811, to combat the non-conformists, *The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales* was formed. These two organisations competed with each other to create schools across the country and hi this the National Society had a considerable advantage hi that it was able to operate within the parish diocesan system already in existence. The new school in Wheatley was duly set up as a National Society school and used a system common in such schools where older and more able pupils were appointed as monitors, or ‘pupil teachers’, and paid a small allowance in return for their assistance with teaching duties. By 1814 the National Society had 230 schools and about 40,000 pupils. The dual system of National (Church) Schools and British (Nonconformist) Schools lasted until 1902 when the Balfour Education Act was passed, making local authorities responsible for education.

William Saunders was officially named Master of the School in 1838 on Guy's death, and he and his aunt oversaw the school until his resignation in October 1846 to take up the post of master of an agricultural college near Bath. His aunt's resignation followed the next year.

In 1840 an Infant School was established in Bell Lane by the Misses Tyndale of Holton and responsibility for its running was given over to the trustees of Bishop Moss's estate in September 1841. Mrs Hunt of Wheatley was appointed to run the Infant School and, following the departure of the Saunders in 1849, her son William became Master of the Boys' School and his sister Sarah took over responsibility for the Girls' School, with all three Hunts residing in Mitcheldene. Sadly, however, the Girls' and Boys' schools did not prosper under their new leadership, falling into serious debt and disrepair. Eventually William and Sarah were asked to leave, although their mother stayed in Wheatley for a further 25 years as a loyal and excellent schoolmistress of the infant school until her death in 1870 aged 77.

A most difficult village

By October 1849 the first signs of a change which was to have profound effects on the village and the school became evident. The energetic Bishop Samuel Wilberforce had been in office since 1845 and he was concerned about Wheatley, which he must have passed through frequently on his way from the Bishop's Palace at Cuddesdon to the city of Oxford. Until till time Wheatley had neither a vicar nor a squire to take the position of moral leadership in local affairs, and consequently was a village struggling with poverty and social problems. As a staging post for coaches travelling between London and Oxford, Wheatley's many inns became the focus for revelry; an illicit trade in cock-fighting and badger-baiting sprang up, attracting students from the nearby 'holy city' of Oxford to this outlying village away from the watchful eye of the university. In an age when squire and parson acted as magistrates for the local community, the absence of such figures made Wheatley the ideal refuge for people of dubious character, creating a village overcrowded with people with very little means of supporting themselves.

Bishop Wilberforce described Wheatley as "the most difficult village in my diocese" and, to address these problems of lawlessness and immorality, decided to raise the status of the parish from a curacy to a vicarage, resulting in an invitation to the Rev Edward Elton to become Wheatley's first vicar. This was a significant appointment as the Rev Elton was a man of great energy and missionary zeal, whose legacy to the village is the building of the parish church of St Mary's, a new parsonage (now Morland House) and a new school on land next to the church generously donated by the Oxford brewer, James Morrell. The opening of this new school on 5th May 1858 by Rev Morrell, Rector of Henley-on-Thames and a member of the Morrell bl owing family, marked the beginning of a new era for the children of Wheatley, Holton and Littleworth.

J



EDWARD ELTON'S SCHOOL

The new school was designed by George Edmund Street, the architect responsible for designing St Mary's church, and built out of local stone at a cost of £1,000. It opened on S¹*1 May 1858, less than a year after the consecration of the new Church.



The school buildings on Church Road (1906)

The following account of the opening ceremonies appeared in Jackson's Oxford Journal for 8th May 1858:

“On Wednesday last the Church's work received another impetus and, let us hope, a great source of blessing and strength, in the opening of the new schools (at Wheatley)... The material used is stone dug in the neighbourhood ... (In his sermon) the Revd T.B.Morrell, Rector of Henley-on-Thames ... proceeded to ground upon his text the duty of Christian education, and to meet certain popular but unreasonable objections against education ... The congregation and children having adjourned to the school suitable collects were read by the Revd E. King, Curate, and the Incumbent delivered an address ... he was followed by the Revd A. Pott, Rural Dean, who alluded to the great work Mr Elton had done in the parish. The children were then liberally feasted on tea and cake; after tea they sang, with great taste, some excellent rounds, catches and glees ... Heartily do we wish 'God speed' to the work going on in this parish under the able and persevering incumbent, who has struggled successfully with no common difficulties, and who, since his appointment in 1851 has been instrumental in building a new church, a new parsonage and finally new schools in this parish, once a bye-word for all that was ignorant and demoralising. We feel sure that these new schools will be a blessing to the children of Wheatley, Littleworth and Shotover, for whose benefit they have been erected.”

This account highlights Wheatley's bad reputation in the Oxford area and emphasises the importance of Edward Elton's contribution towards rectifying this. The school log books for this time record his diligence on behalf of the school; almost every day during his time as Vicar of Wheatley Revd Elton, accompanied by his wife or daughters, visited the school to teach the children or support the teachers with advice or practical help. Mrs Elton instructed the girls in needlework and much of their practical work involved sewing items such as shuts and bedlinen for the Vicar's household. Revd Elton took the children for Scripture lessons and Catechism, and

also assisted with reading and arithmetic. The children attended Divine Service at the church on a weekly basis, as well as any significant dates in the Church calendar.

Obstacles to schooling

In these early days of the new school, pupil numbers were small and fluctuated wildly according to the weather. Children living in neighbouring villages who came to school on foot would not attempt the journey in wet weather when muddy tracks became impassable, or after a heavy fall of snow, in extreme weather conditions there would be a marked drop in the usually-good attendance figures and, should the numbers fall below a certain level in a morning, the school would be closed. On at least one occasion the school log books record a terrific rainstorm in the afternoon which necessitated the Headmaster procuring horse-drawn transport to take a number of the children home, particularly those living in the Waterperry area. Heavy rain meant frequent flooding of the High Street, along whose course a river flows (though now buried under tarmac), and often the boys were given the task of placing boards across the stream to enable folk to cross over. Flooding was a constant problem for the school premises on the Mitcheldene site and, later, on Church Road.

Seasonal activities affected school life too - the date for the start of the summer holidays was determined by the harvest, since pupil numbers dropped dramatically as children were kept at home to help with the labouring. A typical comment can be found in the school log book for September 3rd 1866: "Commenced school duties again after 4 weeks holiday. Attendance small - only 24 present owing to the harvest not being yet gathered in."

Aside from these activities, the most common reason for school closure was illness. In the 1900s, before mass immunisation following the end of the Second World War, outbreaks of measles, mumps, scarlatina, whooping cough and chicken pox were a regular occurrence, and occasionally more serious ailments such as typhoid fever, smallpox, diphtheria and tuberculosis. The most common method (if control was to prevent any members of an infected family from attending school, or with a wider outbreak, the closure of the school for anything up to a month was a last resort. Sadly the log books record several deaths of pupils during such outbreaks.

Girls and boys were taught in separate schools from 1858 until 1871 when the school became co-educational following a series of unfavourable inspection reports, especially criticising standards of reading amongst pupils, which led to a reduction in the schools' funding. A change of headteacher in 1874 saw an improvement in standards: the HMI report of 1876 states: "The school has come on wonderfully since Mr Thompson took charge of it: great credit is due to him for its improved condition." This improvement continued under Mr Thompson's headship until he left in 1880 and by 1881 the inspector's report notes that "There is a want of discipline and the general order of the school has deteriorated. The children must learn to hold up their hands before they answer and only to answer one at a time." Eventually in 1884 girls and boys were once again divided into two separate schools. During the period from 1819 to 1891, Wheatley School had no less than twelve head teachers, but in September 1891 Mr Rees Leyshon was appointed head, a position he was to hold for the next thirty four years. His lengthy headship set a precedent which has continued; in almost 120 years since Rees Leyshon became head, only five other people have held the post of Head of Wheatley School.



Rees Leyshon and the school staff

The Victorian curriculum

The school continued to improve and expand under Rees Leyshon's leadership, with pupil numbers rising to 137 by the turn of the century, so that the buildings had to be enlarged and extended.

Children attending Wheatley School in the early 1900s would have studied reading, recitation spelling composition, handwriting arithmetic, geography, history, drawing, singing and needlework, not to mention cookery classes for



the older girls which were held in the Merry Bells. Class sizes were an issue even in those days, with an HMI report in 1907 commenting on the problem of how to "effectively teach 55 children in two different standards, where nearly all the subjects require to be taught separately".

One innovation for which Rees Leyshon was responsible was the introduction of the Penny Bank. This involved each child in the school being given a bank book, into which one penny in every shilling out of the money received for their education was added by way of a bonus, on condition that the money was not touched until the child left the school. In 1893 it was noted that the Penny Bank had invested £80 on behalf of 135 children, and the intention was expressed that every child should leave school provided with a Bible and Prayer Book, a Post Office Bank Book and membership to a "sound Benefit Society" - surely a practical start in life for children from impoverished homes!

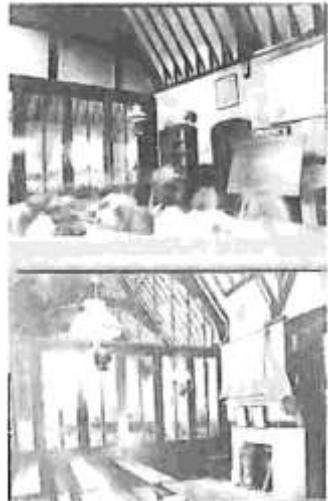


Standard 1 & Mr Leyshon: Wheatley Junior School circa 1897

The condition of the premises continued to be singled out for criticism in inspection reports during the early part of the 20th century: a comment in the 1911 report indicates that there were no lavatories on the premises, and adequate ventilation of a classroom heated by a wood-burning stove proved to be a problem. By 1932 there were 183 children on the books and a temporary classroom had to be erected to ease the problem of overcrowding.



Inside the Church Road school (circa 1904)



The war years

The school also did its bit towards the war effort in September and October 1917 and 1918. On fine afternoons the children went blackberrying for the soldiers. In 1917 they picked 1,251 lbs of blackberries, but the following year an astonishing 3,304 lbs of the fruit was despatched by night train to Oxford, where it was delivered to Cooper's jam factory.

One of the items in the syllabus of a century ago was 'drill'. This consisted of marching in lines, marking time, swinging arms, bending knees and suchlike exercises. The drill was sometimes done to music, and ended with a deepbreathing movement. Beyond this, there were few attempts to organise any other form of sport such as football or cricket - one football match against Garsington is noted in the school log of February 1907. In 1920 a more concerted effort was made to organise the children into boys and girls clubs for 'games'. Netball and hockey were introduced over the next few years and by the early 1930s the annual sports on the last day of the summer term was established. Around this time the first area school sports was organised and Wheatley won the Benson cup in 1955. Swimming was organised in 1927 in the pool belonging to Edward Elton's vicarage, now owned by the Fane family and renamed Morland House.



John Key took over as Head in 1925, serving for 29 years until his retirement in April 1954. He was succeeded by Ronald A. Murray Ransom, who in turn was followed two years later by Glenville Rees Evans who went on to serve as Head for 27 years

despite announcing on his arrival that he would only stay for two years! It was Glenville who finally broke with a tradition dating back to 1858; that the Headmaster should reside in the School House on the Church Road site. His decision to move out on March 21st 1978 followed significant increases in the rent demanded by the owners of the house, the Diocesan Board of Finance, to the degree that it became “economically foolish to remain as a tenant”.

THE LAST FIFTY YEARS

In September 1950 the Shotover Secondary Modern School was built on Littleworth Road, and senior pupils were transferred here from the Primary School, reducing the numbers on roll to 125. A description of the Church Road site at that time stated that the main school building contained four classrooms, two of them divided by a far-from-soundproof glass partition. The smallest of the four was furnished with chairs and used as a spare for the teaching of music. A wooden hut in the playground with a cloakroom attached provided quite spacious quarters for the largest class and there was a rather dilapidated hut, formerly a woodwork centre, which was little used. The girls' cloakroom contained four fixed basins; mains water had been brought to the school a year earlier but not yet extended to the offices. These were very old-fashioned; they were flushed once a day from a storage tank to which water was first pumped by hand - this job being part of the caretaker's weekly duties.

The weather was no longer the primary reason for occasional closures of the school by the 1970s - events recorded in the log books for that time included the closure of the school by Royal Decree on November 20th 1972 to celebrate the Queen's Silver Wedding and again on November 14th 1973 for the wedding of Princess Anne to Captain Mark Phillips, evacuation of the school on October 4th 1973 because of a bomb scare (which proved to be a hoax), strikes by teachers' unions and the use of the school as a polling station.

School trips, or 'journeys', were frequent, including week-long trips to Belgium, Paris and Holland (these trips were only curtailed in 1990 when the cost to the school became prohibitive and the need for such experiences was felt to be less as families were increasingly travelling abroad for their holidays). The school log for September 1976 records the severe drought when the UK experienced its hottest driest summer for over 250 years. As a consequence, children at the school were "forbidden from flushing the lavatories except when absolutely necessary".

Significant national events affecting the school during the latter quarter of the twentieth century were the increase in trade union strike action, the cessation of free school milk (March 27th 1981 saw the last delivery of free milk to Wheatley Primary infants department), and the introduction by the Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker, in 1987 of five 'Baker Days' per year for in-service training. The 1990s brought the advent of the National Curriculum, SATs and Local Management of Schools - all initiatives which demanded extra training of staff and management, leading to the departure of a few staff who felt unable to take on board such radical changes.

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 Clive Hallett was appointed in November 1982 to succeed him.

School on the move

The new Headmaster had merely two and a half terms in post before the decision was made to move the Primary' School. In 1972 the Secondary Modern School was amalgamated with Holton Girls Grammar School to form Wheatley Park Comprehensive School, with the Littleworth Road site being the Lower School. Then, in 1982, Wheatley Park School was totally relocated onto the Holton site and the vacant Littleworth Road site became the new home for the Primary School, and services such as the Register Office, Youth Club, the County Caretakers' Training Centre, and more recently, the John Watson School.

The school log for Friday 10th February 1984 records "we closed the doors on the Church Road site today at 3.25pm after 126 years". The school closed a week early for half term, allowing a fortnight for the huge task of moving a school. During those two weeks 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, along with Ron and Barbara Summerfield, die Caretakers - worked with local removal firm, Cowley Carriers, to pack everything up into two large lorries which spent three days transferring furniture, equipment and books to die new site.

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. One former pupil recalls:

"One memory' that sticks in my head is how big the school looked when we first got there, I remember walking out of the big white gates of the Church Road school, walking along Church Road, down die alleyway by die Sun pub, then walking up to the Littleworth school."

The school was officially opened in its new premises on Thursday 20th September 1984 by the author Roald Dahl, who had been chosen by the children themselves. Wendy Whittaker, then a parent at the school, recalls the eccentric author showing the children a piece of his own bone, having recently recovered from surgery, as part of his opening speech. Needless to say, the children were fascinated! Again, in the words of a pupil who was there:

"I remember Roald coming and telling us all about himself and showing us his false knee. There is also the memory of a lady who came another day with lots of animals, letting loose an eagle in the hall which landed on her hand, and showing us a snake that we could stroke."

A watercolour of the school by Mr Clifford Greatbatch was presented to Mr Dahl, and the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr John Wilkinson, presented the former Head, Glenville Rees Evans, with a watercolour of the old school by Mr Peter Tull, in recognition of his many years of service.

Earlier that month another move took place, which was the transfer of the village Playgroup from its former premises hi Bell Lane to an empty classroom on the new Primary School site.

Wheatley Primary School flourished in its new premises: very soon there was a 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 school. Drama and music had a high priority and there was a major community production every year. Parents also appreciated sporting activities such as football, netball, rugby, tennis, cricket, athletics and swimming. In 1961 the school opened its own swimming pool; the school log book records the occasion thus:

“At 2.45pm a large number of parents and all the school were assembled to witness the official opening of the pool by Mr R Tomlinson. After Mr Tomlinson had spoken and said how pleased he was to present the pool, the Rev H Robinson blessed the pool and it was officially open for the use of the school.”

Integration with the children in John Watson School began in January 1983 whilst still at Church Road, with a teacher and a small group of pupils visiting two or three days a week, and was made somewhat easier when the school moved premises. However, even then the John Watson primary staff and pupils had no permanent base and were moved to a variety of locations before they acquired their first permanent room in 1989. Eventually the whole school moved onsite from Holton in September 1996 leaving a satellite up at Wheatley Park School. Initially mainstream pupils were very wary of the disabled pupils and contact was very infrequent, but the introduction of regular visits and a programme whereby two or three John Watson pupils would spend time in a mainstream class working alongside Wheatley Primary School children, saw a much more positive attitude develop and a clearer understanding of special needs displayed by all the children.

Information Technology came to Wheatley Primary on Friday 18th November 1983 when two members of staff attended a computer course and collected the school's first computer - a Link 4802!

June 1988 saw the introduction of an 'After School Supervision Scheme', housed initially in the school building but later in a second-hand mobile classroom behind the school which was formally opened in March 1993 by the Minister of State for Education, Baroness Blatch. The scheme still operates today as the Cool Kids Club, providing independent before- and after-school care.

FOUR LONG-SERVING HEADS

Rees Leyshon (1891-1925)

Rees Leyshon came to Wheatley in 1891 when he was 29, and settled in the school house with his wife and baby daughter. Many years later that daughter wrote of him: "He was, in addition to being schoolmaster, the organist (self-taught) and choirmaster; he had evening classes for young men who had left school. He used to



do some land measuring for farmers, he kept and looked after bees, he was an expert carpenter; he had much artistic ability. He took a great interest in his pupils as individuals and he inspired much affection." He was also a magistrate and for eight years Chairman of the Urban District Council.

An old pupil, Wilfrid Sheldon, wrote: "He was a wonderful teacher. A complete master of every subject he taught and able to put it over simply and clearly. It is interesting to me to recall that in the mid-1890s he was teaching and advocating the metric system. He also forecast that it would one day be adopted in this country."

This progressive attitude is also illustrated by the work he did on producing relief maps in papier mache (an innovative technique which excited much interest from both educational and commercial quarters), and his introduction of the wireless into school. He kept meticulous records of the weather which he sent to the Meteorological Office. It is sad that a man of such wide interests died at the age of 64, soon after retiring as a result of ill-health. He is buried in Wheatley churchyard.

John G. Key (1925-1954)

John Key was already on the staff when Rees Leyshon's health began to fail and he was given temporary charge of the school, becoming Head in 1925. During his 29 years as Head many developments took place. There was a gradual increase in visiting speakers and in expeditions for the children. On the sporting side there were regular visits from the Physical Training Adviser and the log books occasionally refer to hockey and netball.

In 1939 one of the greatest tests of the whole educational system took place: evacuation. Pupils of a London school arrived in Wheatley and were billeted in local homes. At first the school day was divided into two shifts but later the Merry Bells and the disused Holton School (closed in 1914) were opened so that the evacuees could have fulltime education without having to share the Wheatley buildings. Mr Key often had difficulties with staff shortages as men teachers were called up. For several years following 1942 older boys were having leave to help with the potato harvest. In 1947 the school leaving age was raised to fifteen and the teachers, with no more accommodation and little more equipment, found themselves trying to cope with these often unwilling older pupils.

A rising pupil roll during John Key's tenure saw the eventual split of the school, with the seniors transferring to the new Secondary Modern School when it opened in 1950.

Glenville Evans (1956-1983)

Glenville Evans took over in 1956 with 179 children on roll. In 1959 the Infants and Juniors were combined to form Wheatley Church of England Primary School, and the numbers began to climb until they reached a peak of over 500 in 1971. Records show a great development in opportunities for primary children during these years. One marked feature of the period was the enlargement of the Church Road premises, providing a new staff room, head's room and classrooms in 1957, followed by a new hall and Infants' classrooms two years later. In 1970 a new Infants' block with canteen facilities was built.

Regular open evenings for parents began in 1957 and the PTA was formed. In the same year the first Prize Giving was held, attended by the Bishop of Dorchester, and this became an annual event. In 1958 the centenary of the school was celebrated by a service of thanksgiving in St Mary's Church, attended by over 100 former scholars and friends.

School sports flourished during Glenville's headship with the establishment of a football team and many after-school clubs ranging from country dancing to chess. In 1971 the staff felt that the children needed help in using the long weeks of the summer holiday and provided a fortnight of varied constructive activities during August. This summer school became a long-standing tradition which continued for nearly 30 years.

Clive Hallett (1983-2005)

Clive Hallett was born in Newport, Gwent, on May 13th 1944. His desire to become a teacher began at Hereford Cathedral School where he enjoyed all the sporting activities, particularly rugby and rowing, and decided that he wanted to encourage other children in similar activities. He completed a three-year teacher training course at Culham College (1963 - 1966), where he played rugby and rowed for the college.

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.

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 1971 he was invited to become Acting Head and a short while later became a full-time Teaching Head with a Year 5/6 class at Swaffham Prior Community School. In 1975 he was appointed to the Headship of St Matthew's School in Cambridge - a failing Urban School amongst whose pupils twenty different languages were spoken. Clive was Head of this school for eight years and during this time he met Anne Peek-Vout, and they were married in St George's Church in Cambridge. Their elder daughter, Olivia, was born in 1978, and George followed in 1982. Then son, Charlie, was born in 1988 after the move to Wheatley.

Clive was appointed Head of Wheatley Primary School in November 1983, shortly before the transfer of the school premises to the current Littleworth Road site. His

leadership style was informal; he had an 'open door policy', making himself available for staff, pupils and parents to 'come in for a chat' at any time of the day. In his early days as Head overseeing the settling-in of the school at its new location he organised work parties to knock out walls and remodel areas to allow a more flexible use of the space and create extra classroom space.

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 performance as the Dame in Mother Goose in 1984, and many other such roles over the next 20 years.

Clive Hallett retired in July 2005, after almost 23 years as Head of Wheatley Primary School, and was succeeded by Ms Joan Morters.

WHEATLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

The present

Today the school caters for children aged 4 to 11 and, with around 300 pupils on roll, is one of the largest primary schools in the local area. The school mission statement reads: “Wheatley Church of England Primary School aims to provide a safe, caring and happy learning environment in which all children, whatever their needs or abilities, are given the opportunity to flourish and develop. In our school we try to foster a strong sense of community in which attitudes of mutual respect and responsibility are promoted and where Christian values have a central place.” This ethos is reflected in the feedback received from visitors to the school who find its atmosphere to be welcoming, calm, friendly, hard-working, co-operative and professional. A strong, supportive team ethos exists throughout the school and pupils, parents, governors and staff co-operate to enable all pupils to achieve at the highest levels.

Our school motto is ‘Together we learn’. This was thought up by the children and the process was coordinated by the school council. We were awarded The Healthy Schools Award in 2007 in recognition of high standards in education of the pupils in environmental and healthy lifestyle issues. Each class nominates pupils to become Eco Warriors, responsible for recycling and other green initiatives within the school.

Looking outwards into the community and beyond, Wheatley Primary School is part of the Wheatley Partnership; an association of local primary schools who are committed to providing the highest quality of education for all pupils by combining forces for musical, sporting and other events. The school also participates in the training of students from Oxford Brookes University, and provides placements for children from local secondary schools to gain work experience. Staff are involved in the Commenius scheme which facilitates links with European schools, and we also have a partner school in Uganda.

The school still maintains a close working relationship with the local clergy, but where 100 years ago the children paid weekly visits to the parish church, now the local vicar comes to the school once a week to lead collective worship in assembly.

Wheatley Primary School is justly proud of its long history and its place at the heart of the local community. It is a school that began in order to meet a local need over 150 years ago, and although twenty-first-century needs are different in so many ways to those of our Victorian founders, the importance of education and community remain at the heart of our school.