

Rees Leyshon: Headmaster of Wheatley Church of England School

There is no doubt that Rees Leyshon was one of the most successful Headmasters of Wheatley School, and his wife Eliza Jane also taught in the school. Furthermore, in 1901, their daughter, Winifred Agnes, was one of six children from Wheatley who won County Council Junior Scholarships.

Rees Leyshon was born in Tythegstrey, Glamorgan, Wales on 4th July 1862. He became Head of Wheatley School in September 1891, having previously been head of Cherington School in Bury St Edmonds. He remained in this post for thirty-four years. His appointment followed an unsettled period during which the school had had twelve head teachers between 1819 - 1891 and many of the school inspections had been less than complimentary, (see booklet: *Wheatley Church of England School*, pub. *Wheatley Society* 1982).

The curriculum at Wheatley School was not confined to the Three R's. In 1912 Mr Leyshon was a pioneer in creating 'relief maps' using 'papier-mache'. These were known as 'Newpaste relief maps'. He encouraged the children to go blackberrying in the Autumn, and in 1917, 1,251 lbs of blackberries were picked as part of the war effort. The fruit was despatched each evening by train to Oxford where it was made into jam at Cooper's factory. The boys learned gardening and bee-keeping, and the girls became proficient in needlework under Mrs Leyshon's tuition.

In addition to his professional responsibilities as Headmaster of the Church School, Rees Leyshon was also the Organist and Choir Master of St Mary's Church for thirty-four years. He designed the screen that used to be? (did he donate the reredos?).

He was a much-respected Magistrate who helped farmers, in a practical way, to measure out their holdings. He was also way ahead of his time in his enthusiastic support of the metric system. He took a keen interest in village affairs and recorded them. It is thanks to him that we have exact statistics for the 1910 flood.

Mr and Mrs Leyshon's daughter, Winifred, was also a pioneer for women's professional advancement. She won scholarships for both Oxford Technical School and for Bedford College, London, during the First World War she was employed in developing 'wireless' for military purposes. In February 1923 Winifred and her father 'set up a receiver set in the school so that the children could listen to Cinderella broadcast by Marconi on 2 LD'. There were two sets of earphones and each child was able to listen for a minute. Winifred later became tutor in physics to the London School of Medicine.

The family lived in the house called 'Bryn' - almost opposite the Kings Arms at the east end of Church Road. All three of them are buried in Wheatley churchyard.