

Winifred Leyshon and Radio

Winifred Leyshon of Wheatley made a significant contribution to the war effort. Born in 1890, the daughter of Rees Leyshon, Head Master of Wheatley Elementary School, she won a County Scholarship at the age of 11, the first step in a career achieved by few women in her generation. Her father had hoped she would go to Oxford High School, but she was offered a place instead at Oxford Technical School, where her scientific bent was encouraged. In 1907 she won a science scholarship at Bedford College, London, and graduated Bachelor of Science three years later.

After brief experience as a school teacher, she put her interest and qualifications in physics and electronics towards the war effort, as a Technical Assistant with the Royal Engineers (Signals Experimental Establishment) Woolwich. There she worked on developing a short distance (50 metre) radio telephone.

She was a true pioneer research worker in the radio field, which remained her research interest for life. (*History of Hospital Physicists 1943-83*)

Her wartime activity was later put to good use at her father's school. He noted in the *Log Book*:

February 23rd 1923.

The children listened to Cinderella, broadcast by Marconi 240 on the school wireless.

Broadcasting only began in November 1922. Winifred had spent a vacation building a receiving set. The low and high tension currents were supplied from batteries around the room. Two pairs of headphones were passed from child to child, each being allowed to listen for a minute. It is believed that Wheatley was the first Oxford school to have radio.

In 1923, Mr Leyshon closed the school so that he and his wife could attend Winifred's Ph.D ceremony in the Royal Albert Hall. She later taught at the School of Women's Medicine. After retirement, she settled at 132 Church Road. Much of what is known about the village in the early 20th century is from her work collecting and preserving records and information. She died in 1984 at the age of 94 and is buried in Wheatley churchyard.