

## **GEORGE ROBERT WING, 1908–97**

'It's an ill wind that blows no good!' Had it not been for the outbreak of World War II and fears of raids on London, George Wing, teacher in a Fulham school, would not have been evacuated with his school to South Oxfordshire, and Deddington might never have known him as the distinguished Headmaster of the all age Elementary School and, ten years later, in 1951 as Headmaster of the new Windmill Secondary Modern School in Hempton Road. Although the Windmill was to remain in 'temporary' buildings for the next 16 years, there was nothing 'temporary' in what Headmaster Wing achieved with the youth in his expert care. Bob Stevens, Deputy Head Teacher at the school recalls: "I always admired George as a man with a mission – a man before his time. He took pupils on school journeys all over the country culminating with exchanges in Denmark and Bavaria which proved to be the inauguration of European Studies. Many scholars had never travelled abroad and a boy peering out of the carriage window at German commuters exclaimed: 'They look just like us!'

George Wing certainly was an innovator. A founder member of the National Council for European Studies in Secondary Schools, he was also on the National Council for Environmental Rural studies. He had the first working farm attached to a school. He encouraged the study of Technology which, incidentally, brought fame to the Windmill when pupils of specialist teacher Douglas Ward won a national competition with their entry of a hovercraft and a racing car. During the war years George Wing was commissioned in the Home Guard and joined the Civil Defence team and still had the time to contribute a great deal to village life as Secretary to SS Peter & Paul Church Parochial Church Council and a Deanery Synod member.

Just writing of all his commitments makes my head spin, but there is more to come. He was also Treasurer and three times President of the Banbury & District NUT Branch. In 1967 he oversaw his school's move from the Windmill to the new purpose-built Warriner Comprehensive School in Bloxham and became the Warriner's first Head. He retired in 1973. George Wing died in West Sussex, near the home of his daughter in 1997. On the 6 November 1998 his daughter and family, many friends, teachers, old pupils and a few Warriner scholars assembled in the grounds of the Warriner School to watch the planting of a magnolia tree dedicated to his memory by the Revd Ken Reeves, Vicar of Deddington.

I visited the school grounds last month and am delighted to report that the late flowering magnolia, well-guarded against attacking geese, looks a picture of health. Its shiny green leaves are almost hiding the first huge red-purple flower with plenty of buds ready to open any day now. At the back of the school is the farm and on a distant field graze a large flock of sheep. George Wing's spirit of innovation is alive and well, thanks to the many teachers who have followed in his footsteps.

*Ruth Johnson 2004*

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and Bob Stevens*