

### George Marcus Hollis - Headmaster 1954 – 1973

George Marcus Hollis, Headmaster of Hathern Church of England Primary School from January, 1954 to December, 1973 was an only child and the son of a professional gardener, who had won the Banksian Medal. His mother was a teacher and George attended Market Bosworth Grammar School and qualified as a teacher.

He met his future wife, Maisie Tapp, at an elementary School where they both taught, and they were married on December 26<sup>th</sup>., 1939. Mr. Hollis was not eligible for active service during World War Two due to poor eyesight, but was employed in the Pay Corps in Leicester for the duration of the war. He returned to teaching at South Wigston Boys' Secondary School in Leicester after the war. During this time Mr. and Mrs. Hollis's three children Gillian, Judith and John were born.

Mr. Hollis commenced duties on January 5<sup>th</sup>., 1954 as Headmaster at Hathern. In March of that year, when illness prevented a member of staff from teaching, Mrs. Hollis covered the absence. She became a permanent member of the teaching staff later that year and the husband and wife team was established, lasting for sixteen years until Mrs. Hollis retired on July 3<sup>rd</sup>., 1970.

Mr. Hollis was a highly multi-talented teacher. His piano and accordian playing is remembered with great fondness by many ex- pupils, allowing them the opportunity to enjoy singing and country dancing in the playground. On several occasions dancing events were attended at various locations around the county.

Mr. Hollis was involved with school athletics at County level and he coached several pupils to become excellent swimmers, taking groups to Coalville swimming bathes in his own time in the evenings. He played hockey for a Loughborough team for many years.

Several ex- pupils I have spoken to remember the Leaving parties held at Mr. and Mrs. Hollis's house in Charnwood Road, Shepshed. Mr. Hollis's love of literature and poetry was passed on to his pupils with his reading of children's classics at the end of the school day, when the whole class was transported by their imaginations to a smuggler's cove or a secret garden.

For me Mr. Hollis always went the "extra mile". When my mother was in hospital my sister and I had to stay on my aunt's farm near Shepshed for six weeks and Mr. and Mrs. Hollis would take us to school every day and return us to my aunt's safe keeping at night. When I broke my leg in the school playground, aged five years, it was Mr. Hollis who collected my mum and took us to Loughborough Hospital.

Sadly, Mr. and Mrs. Hollis's eldest daughter, Gill, and her husband, Bernd, died. This was a devastating blow, but, with the help of family, they carried on. There were no major events threatening to disrupt education during Mr. Hollis's time as Headmaster. The School Log Book of the time mentions such events as the launching of the first Russian Satellite, watched by Class One at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hurt in Tanner's Lane: the total freezing of the outside lavatories in January 1963, when temperatures plummeted to 42F in the classrooms. Everyone remembers the frozen milk thawing next to the fire and boiler in the Infant classroom!

School numbers gradually increased from around eighty pupils in 1954 to one hundred and twenty-five in 1972. By this time the school was so overcrowded that the infants were taught in the bungalow in Pasture Lane. In April 1973 the new building came into use. Mr. Hollis retired in 1973.

One of the Hollis's shared talents was amateur dramatics. The both acted regularly in productions performed in Hathern Village Hall and produced elaborate productions for their pupils there. Hanzel and Gretel, Toad of toad hall. The Other Children, Alice in Wonderland and The Reluctant Dragon are well remembered. The hours of painting sets, costuming and preparation were not lost on very appreciative audiences and grateful actors and actresses. An army of mums and grannies stitched magnificent costumes during the run up to these splendid productions.

End of year trips for the older children were always exciting. Places visited included a day at the seaside for the whole school, London, Liverpool, York and Windsor. These were subsidised by Whist Drives!

Mr. Hollis did not "put his feet up" when he retired in 1973. He joined a Country dance band called "The Scallywags", playing his accordian and calling for the dances. He was a founder member of the Shepshed probus Club, helped with "Books on Wheels" and the Shepshed Kottura link.

Mr. Mrs. Hollis visited their daughter, Judy, and her family in Greece regularly and both began to learn modern Greek. Mr. Hollis became proficient enough to be able to converse with the locals in their own language.

In his latter years Mr. Hollis lived in Arnold Smith House in Shepshed, finally moving to Hertfordshire to be near his son John, and his family. Months before his death he asked John for a harmonica for Christmas. This was duly purchased, and , despite John's doubts, his father played it well immediately.

George Marcus Hollis died on 13<sup>th</sup>. September, 2011, but is lovingly remembered by many in Hathern as an inspirational and caring Headmaster and teacher.

Kay Hughes nee Henson