

## JOAN LINDSAY MOLYNEUX 1908–1986

Many readers of the Journal will remember the name and possibly the signature of Joan Molyneux who was Principal of the PNEU School from July 1966 until August 1974 and during that time edited the Journal.

It was as Principal that she signed the examination papers sent in to PNEU Headquarters in Vandon Street for marking and assessment and the strong, upright, straightforward signature mirrored the person she was, a woman of integrity, of strong Christian faith, devoted to the principles of Charlotte Mason, founder of the PNEU, which she upheld throughout her life. “I have always lived within the sphere of influence of Charlotte Mason, as my parents became PNEU members before I was born,” she wrote in her farewell Editorial in the July Journal of 1974.

The second of four daughters of the Molyneux family, Joan, like her sisters, was taught at home by a PNEU governess until she went to the PNEU School in Burgess Hill in 1921. She stayed there until January 1927 when she went to the House of Education (now Charlotte Mason College) in Ambleside, as did her elder sister Elizabeth. That their training was successful is shewn by the fact that both of them, in due course, became Principals of the PNEU.

Joan qualified in 1928 and her first post, as was usual for most students in the college then, was as a governess. She taught a boy and a girl in a family near Winchester. This was a very happy time and it was obvious that she was a good teacher since her pupils became her life-long friends.

For some years in the 1930s Joan and a younger sister, Ruth, taught at Dorothy Bernau’s small PNEU School in St Albans, distinguished by [p 2] their pupils as Miss Molyneux (Joan) and Miss Music Molyneux (Ruth). This was a wonderful time for the sisters who not only worked together but shared many leisure-time interests. Ruth ran a Madrigal Choir which Joan joined. She was very modest about her accomplishments; few knew that Joan was musical. She was also a keen Guide at school and later at college where she became a Guider and in her retirement was actively involved with the Trefoil Guild.

In whatever organisation she was involved, Joan gave of herself unstintingly, being for many years Secretary of the Burgess Hill Old Girls’ Association, Secretary of the Ambleside Old Students’ Association, and a loyal and efficient member of both for over fifty years.

For a few years Joan returned to her old school, Burgess Hill, as a Housemistress where her contact with children in the classroom and in a boarding situation shewed her skill as a teacher. Children responded to her calm, quiet manner and to her respect for them as persons. She communicated with them easily, sharing her many interests with them, enjoying their company and their spontaneity. Her staffroom colleagues recall her delighted chuckle as she recounted some of their exploits and sayings, always with understanding and appreciation.

In 1947 Essex Cholmondeley bought Highlands PNEU School at Peppard Common in Oxfordshire, inviting Joan and her friend of many years, Nora Hamlyn, to run it, which they did most successfully for sixteen years. It was during those years that Joan was able to fulfil herself in close contact with children and parents, carrying out the principles of Charlotte Mason which she believed in and lived by faithfully in a teaching career which spanned forty years.

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Her experience in family and school fitted her for her work as Principal of the PNEU at a time of change and expansion. Here her organising ability, meticulous attention to detail, her determination to ensure that programmes of work were fitting for and attractive to children, her belief in the rightness of PNEU principles, the attention she gave to examination papers sent in by PNEU schools and home-school families, used her fully and she remained at PNEU Headquarters for the rest of her working life. Her particular pleasure in this work was her contact with children, especially those from abroad, when their parents brought them in to meet the person who signed their examination papers with that strong, firm signature.

In 1934 her father bought Mulberry Lodge in St Albans as a family home and here Joan spent her holidays until her retirement from Highlands School when it became her settled home. During her years as Principal of the PNEU she commuted daily from St Albans to London and the recollection of those who worked with her is that she was never once late at the office in the morning.

Even in her years of retirement after leaving PNEU Headquarters Joan led a busy life in her gentle, serene way, helping her sister in her music shop and tending her beloved garden – her fruit and vegetables were the envy of her friends because they never seemed to suffer from pests or plant ailments but simply grew and prospered with something of her own untroubled serenity. Joan continued to be active in the Trefoil Guild and worked on a voluntary basis in the Abbey bookstall in St Albans where she loved meeting the children who came there and found in her a kindred spirit.

In the words of colleagues, friends and family: “Joan was a stimulating and delightful companion with many interests ... a

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reserved, very private person who seemed to sense the needs of others be they children or adults ... a wonderful person, utterly dependable ... a most selfless person ... the most marvellous, supporting and understanding sister that anyone ever had.”

These words speak for themselves of Joan’s serene life of service, sustained by a deep and understanding Christian faith.