

Miss Judith Oyler

Observant visitors to Lincoln Christ's Hospital School may have noticed a room to the left of the Garton Archive. This room is known at LCHS as 'The Oyler Room'. To the right of the room is a framed sketch, reproduced below, of Miss Judith Oyler, with an inscription informing us that the Miss Oyler's works of art in the room have been kindly donated to LCHS by several benefactors in celebration of her life and work. These include Dr Joyce Skinner CBE, a former pupil of Lincoln Christ's Hospital Girls' High School (LHS) and Governor of LCHS, and Mademoiselle Berthe Fournier, a former friend and colleague at LHS.



(Photograph by Catherine Forbes)

Judith Oyler was Head of Art at LHS for 35 years from 1935 to 1970. Her demeanour on the sketch gives the impression that she was strict, and by all accounts the artist has captured this aspect of her personality! In addition to her teaching and leadership qualities she was a distinguished water colourist, and her work has been exhibited at the Royal Academy in London, and in the Usher Art Gallery in Lincoln. The furnishings in the Oyler Room are also from the Girls' High School, and include a Prayer Desk in memory of Rosamond Acworth who died at the School in 1899, and whose short life was celebrated in an earlier article in the Lincolnshire Echo (12 April 2012). The room is also used for prayer and quiet contemplation.

There is a warm tribute to Miss Oyler in the Spring 1973 edition of the LHS Magazine with the initials 'DT' attached. Among her many contributions to the life and work of the School, she clearly inspired many girls to continue their training in Art at college or university. She also delighted the School

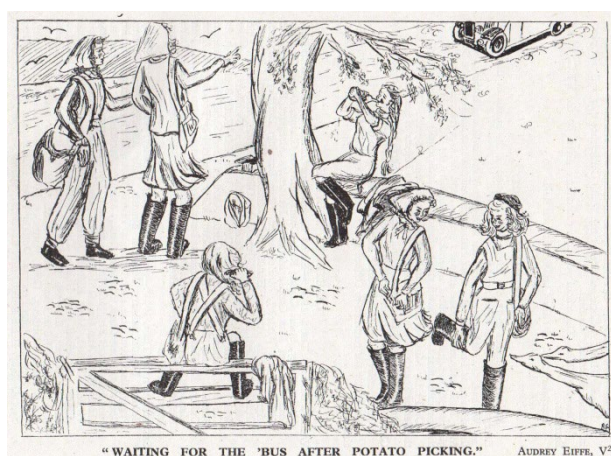
community with her flower arranging skills, especially those in the large copper jugs on the Hall platform; in the Cathedral nave at the Commemoration Service; and in the staff room.

Her choice of pictures, which she borrowed and displayed in the School, was sometimes controversial, but many were later purchased for the permanent collection. She was well-known for her warm hospitality, especially to new members of staff, whom she always invited to tea. The tribute concludes by celebrating the fact that she continued to live close to the School at Greestone Place, where she had more time to entertain her friends and to pursue her hobbies.

There are two references to Miss Oyler in the LHS publication 'A Book of memories'. One alludes to the 'breaking-in' of the new art mistress, Miss Oyler, in 1936. The other contribution is by Miss Oyler herself, who recalls arriving in the autumn of 1935, and about to rearrange the pictures in the Art room, when one of the Sixth Form warned her not to touch them as they had been donated by Miss Huddleston! Miss Oyler realised that, as a new member of staff, she had to tread gently! A little later she approached Miss Savill, the Headmistress, somewhat timidly to ask if she could make a change to the Art syllabus. Miss Savill's reply restored her confidence: "The past is dead; plan the work as you like".

Miss Oyler also recalls the Coronation of King George VI, when she enjoyed planning decorations including banners, shields and heraldic devices, which were stencilled in the Art room by upper-school girls not studying Art for the School Certificate examinations. At that time LHS also entertained four girls from Canada, and Miss Oyler was given the responsibility of taking them around the County to see some of the most beautiful churches, including Heckington and Algarkirk.

During the war, potato-picking was a contribution made by the School to the war effort. The staff supported this venture on a rota system, and Miss Oyler recalls meeting her 'gang' in Castle Square early in the morning, and setting out by lorry to a farm near Branston where the girls spent the day bending over the furrows in a potato field. They usually had lunch in a sheltered ditch or hedgerow, and the reward for the girls was a wage packet at the end of the week. The attached cartoon, reprinted from the Christmas 1944 LHS magazine may bring back memories of those, like myself, who engaged in that back-breaking activity to earn a few bob!



Peter Harrod (Archive Assistant at LCHS)

