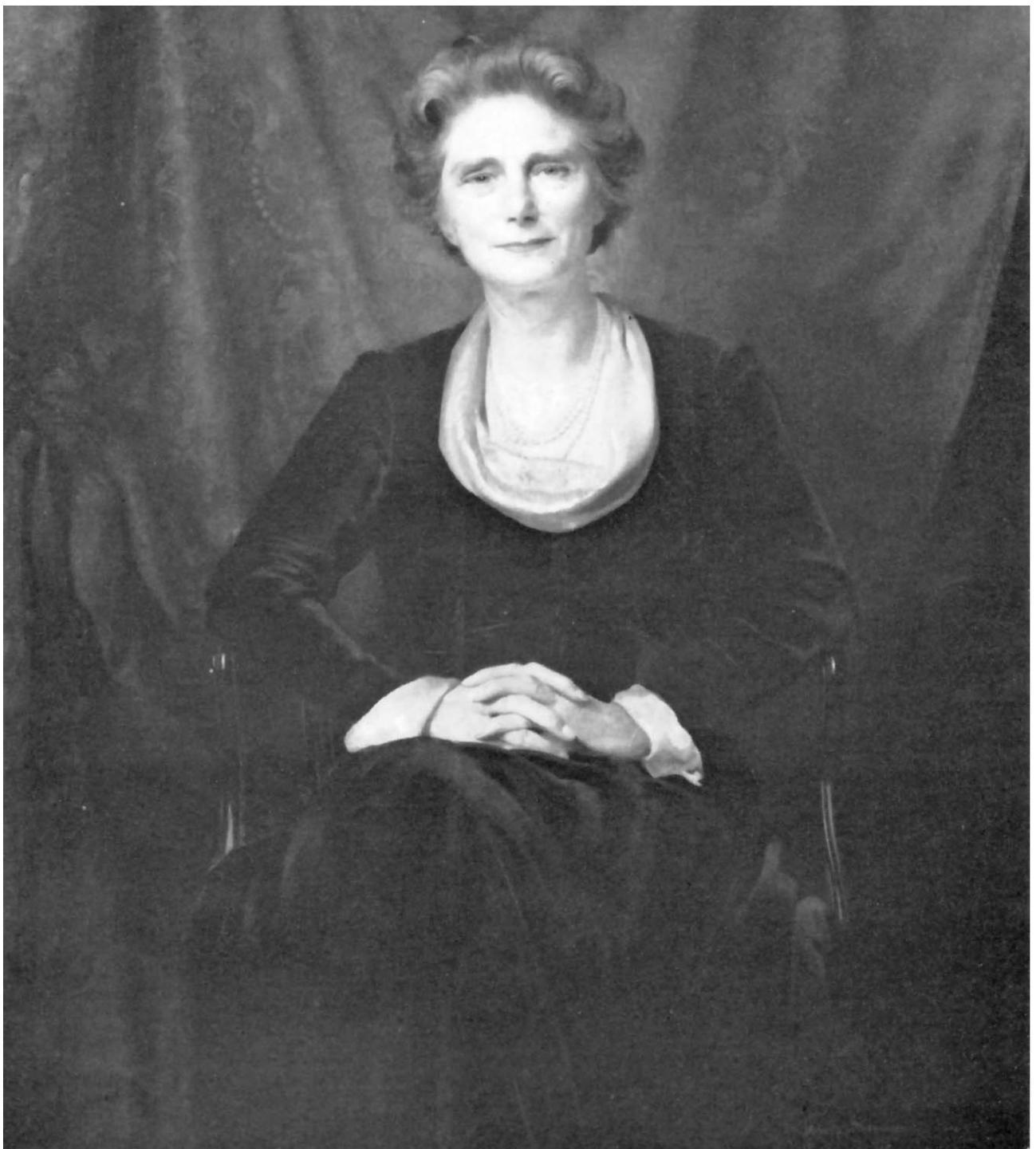


Janet Gray Townshend [5D46]



Janet (left) and Margery Chapman - Speech Day 1934



Portrait of Janet by James Gunn

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(Photo credit Paul Laib, photographer)

Filling some gaps

An article written by Ann Swallow in the Old Hagensian Newsletter 2011

When I wrote *Hawnes, the story of a school*, I was unable to discover anything about how JT funded the purchase of Haynes Park and setting up the school. Earlier this year Penny Sheridan (Haycock) was contacted by estate agent Knight Frank who had unearthed some old documents about Hawnes. They sent them to Penny who realised they filled some of the gaps, so sent them on to me to investigate further. The documents included the initial prospectus, share certificates and early reports to the Council and shareholders. They inspired me to explore further a website I had found about JT's family*. Between the two sources there is probably enough material to write another chapter, but for the present here is a brief synopsis!

JT was descended from Irish landed gentry with property in County Cork. The family has been traced back to Colonel Richard Townesend (1618- 1692). Much of the family history has been chronicled in *An Officer of the Long Parliament* **. This book also contains information about family houses in County Cork, including one called Castle Townshend south of Bantry. The family has used, and continues to use, various forms of the surname – Townshend, Townesend, Townsend. Janet Gray Townshend, born in May 1896, was the second child (she had an older sister and younger brother and sister) of George Chambre Wilmot Townshend and Eliza Susan (known as Bessie) Gray. Her brother Basil married but his only child died unmarried, so the male line of that branch of the family has now died out. Her older sister Ruth was a surgeon, Basil an aeronautical engineer and her younger sister Caroline entered a convent after leaving Oxford. When JT died in 1970 her estate was valued at £56,377.

JT's father's cousin Charlotte Payne Townshend married George Bernard Shaw in 1898. Another relative Mrs Emily Townsend (née Gibson), her great aunt by marriage, was on the Hawnes School Council from its inception until her death in 1934. Emily was one of the first five students to enrol at Girton where she intended to read mathematics; she never finished her degree but did lead an active intellectual and political life. She became a member of the Fabian Society and was an active Suffragette, spending two weeks in Holloway as a result of her activities.

When JT purchased Haynes Park she was living in Paulton Square, Chelsea, in a property which changed hands for £3.7 million in February 2009. I have not yet been able to establish who owned it in JT's time. JT bought Haynes Park in April 1929 in her own name for an agreed price of £12,200. She paid a 10% deposit plus £639 in expenses related to the purchase, foundation of the school and formation of Hawnes School (Amptill) Limited – a company set up to run the school. In May 1929 the company took over the purchase agreement and repaid JT's expenditure. A prospectus drawn up by Messrs Roney & Co (a firm which maintained its relationship with Hawnes probably until the end) was issued offering 3,000 shares for sale at £1 each to help to fund the school. JT negotiated a delay on the completion of the sale until August 1931, allowing time to raise the necessary funds. Initially 834 shares were sold, including 10 to the forerunner of Knight Frank – the source of much of this information. Sales were slow, and never reached the target 3,000. The shareholders report for 1949-50, the last in the bundle of recently discovered documents, indicated that 1,142 shares were held. There had been plans to issue more shares, but these were shelved because of the economic depression in the 1930s. The company decided to take out a mortgage to fund the delayed completion. This was gradually paid off out of income, and appears to have been cleared by 1945. The school accounts show a profit every year right from the start. Most of this was ploughed back into running the school, although shareholders received an annual dividend of 3-5% per share. At launch the annual fees were set at £165.

The initial plans were for a school of no more than 200 girls, organised in houses. It opened in September 1929 with 23 pupils and almost trebled in size in the first year, and had 100 pupils in summer 1938. JT had planned to erect another building to accommodate one of the houses, but this plan was also shelved because of the economic situation. The first major extension was the classroom block in the mid 1930s. However, through the years work was carried out on the building to adapt it from a family home to a school. When the swimming pool was built in 1933 Pro Rich prepared the plans and supervised the work free of charge. An annual fee of one guinea for use of the pool was introduced to help cover the building costs.

This snapshot suggests that JT came from an interesting background and founded a financially and academically successful institution. So far I have been unable to find any background about her cofounder Margery Chapman –if anyone knows anything that could help to shed light on her please contact me!

* Those interested can find out more about the family at the website *The Townsend (Townshend) Family Records* (www.astro.wisc.edu/~townsend/tree/home.php). JT's particular entry is at <http://www.astro.wisc.edu/~townsend/tree/record.php?ref=5D46>. The family information is reproduced with kind permission of the keeper of the site, Colonel John Townsend.

** *An Officer of the Long Parliament — Being an Account of the Life & Times of Colonel Richard Townesend of Castletown (Castletownshend) & a Chronicle of his Family* by Richard Baxter and Dorothea Townshend, published 1892. More information available on the website above.