

## **LADY ALLEN OF HURTWOOD 1897-1976**

### **AN APPRECIATION BY SUSAN HARVEY**

It would be impossible to pay tribute to Marjory Allen in the space of a few pages, so many and so varied were the projects she launched and supported with vigour, imagination, intelligence and sheer hard work. I would like to begin with her own words taken from the last page of her book, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*:

“I am seventy-seven. Sometimes I wake in the morning and think how wonderful it would be to do nothing for quite a long time. I relish the thought that I have no immediate engagements. I lie in bed dreaming about my small back garden. There is a rose, Albertine, that needs to be ruthlessly cut back, and the Agapanthus has out-grown the beautiful copper cistern that comes with me whenever I move house ..... I pick up the post. Here is the agenda for OMEP World Council in Budapest, and a request to speak at a conference in the Midlands. I lay it aside. For years I have been promising myself that I will never make another speech or start a new campaign, but the promise is difficult to keep. The work I have chosen to do is never finished.”

The catalogue of that work is impressive. With a group of friends and professional colleagues she was a founder of the Institute of Landscape Architects in 1929. After eighteen years of exceptionally happy marriage her husband died in March 1939, and Marjory became actively involved in the care of children in the war. Her campaign led to the Curtis Report and the 1948 Children's Act. In 1933 she had joined the Nursery School Association and later became its Chairman. Nationally and internationally she was a superb chairman, achieving constructive policies even in difficult circumstances. Sure of her ground, she could be a determined adversary.

After the war she worked for UNICEF and it was through her travels in Europe that she became a founder member of The World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP). OMEP now has a membership of thirty-six countries across the world and is supported by UNESCO.

Her European travels also introduced her to the first “Adventure Playground” in Emdrup, Denmark. In a flash of understanding she realised that she had discovered something quite new and full of possibilities. Now, Adventure Playgrounds are almost commonplace in many of our cities. Finally, and one of the most exciting developments, has been the innovation of Adventure Playgrounds for handicapped children.

Marjory Allen's life and work has enriched the lives of her friends and children everywhere. We can feel confident that the work she started is never finished.