



ST CHRISTOPHER SCHOOL: A SHORT HISTORY

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Chris McNab



SHIRE PUBLICATIONS



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FOREWORD

FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS St Christopher School has provided a distinctive education for thousands of children. Reg Snell's book documented in some detail the early life of the school and the founders, who were clearly pioneers of their time. This book brings our story up to date.

Today the school thrives and successfully blends the preservation of childhood with preparation for life in a modern world. There is ever-growing pressure for children to 'grow up' too quickly and the school continues to resist this.

When young people leave St Christopher they do so ideally equipped for the modern world: creative, careful, compassionate and considered thinkers who value all people and who are open to change.

Parents, universities and employers constantly tell us that the qualities our leavers possess are more than just good academic results – they are qualities that will stand them in good stead for their role as leaders of the next generation.

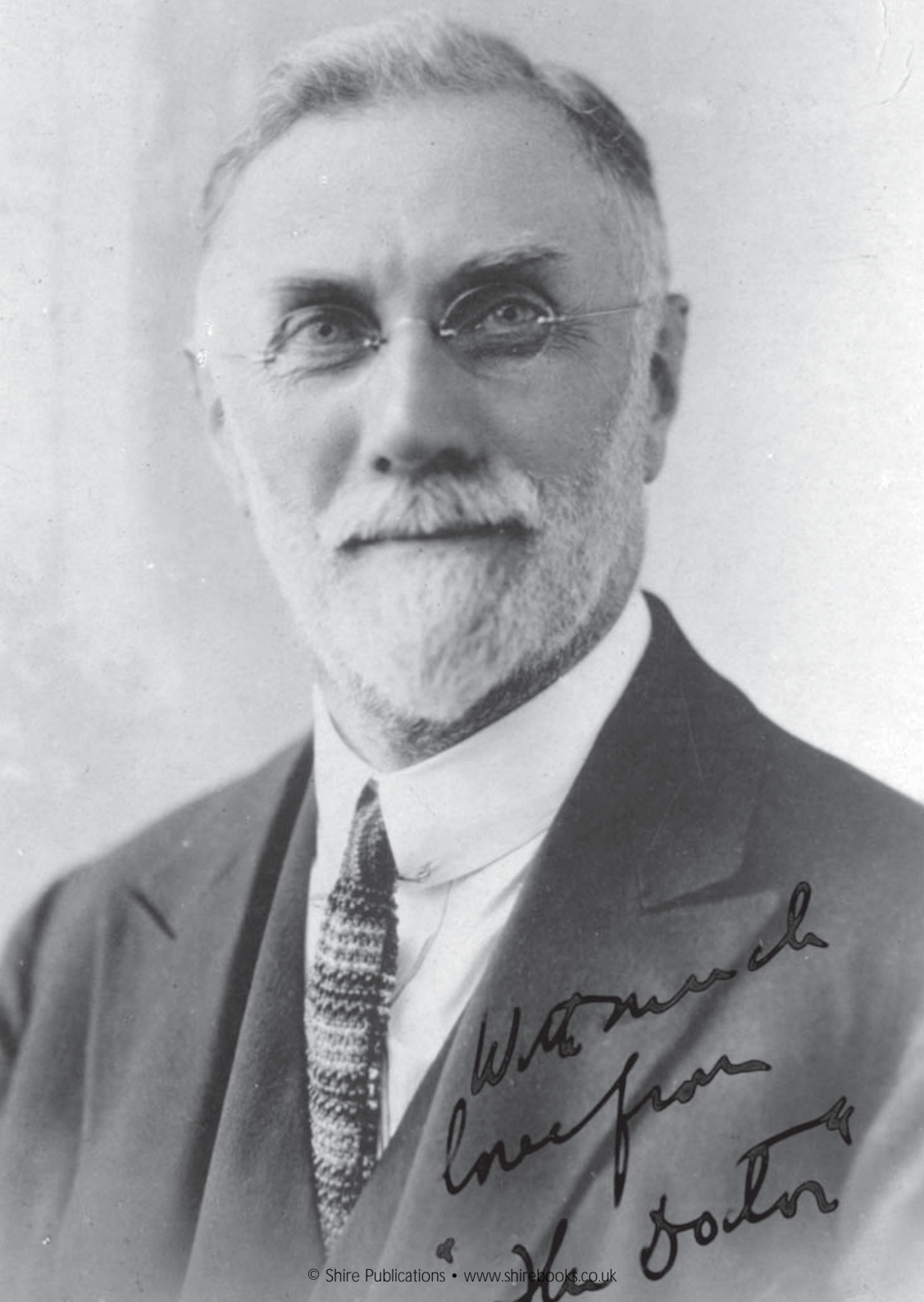
At our last inspection the Lead Inspector wrote that the school does not let pride stifle innovation and I can think of no better accolade for a community that has evolved successfully over the past one hundred years and continues to do so.

Happy birthday St Chris, and many happy returns.

Richard Palmer
Head

Opposite:
Twenty-first century building at St Christopher, designed by an Old Scholar and housing maths, IT and English classrooms. It is linked to the Sixth Form Centre.

Overleaf: A portrait photograph of Dr John Horace Armstrong Smith, the head between 1915 and 1918 of what became St Christopher School.



With much
love from
The Doctor

FOUNDATIONS 1915–18

THEOSOPHY WAS, AND REMAINS, an arcane philosophy to the uninitiated. In its broadest terms, it explores the interaction between the physical universe, humanity and the divine. It therefore might seem an unlikely foundation for an educational institution, but in many ways its values, ideas and practitioners sowed the seeds of St Christopher School in Letchworth Garden City.

On 26 December 1912, George Arundale delivered a speech at the annual convention of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India. Arundale was an influential theosophist and the head of the Central Hindu College at Benares, a fusion of responsibilities that produced an especially progressive vision of education. The topic of his speech was ‘Education as Service’, the theme making reference to the book *Education as Service* by Jiddu Krishnamurti, a young Indian lauded by the Theosophical Society as a future ‘World Teacher’. Krishnamurti’s book would become a conceptual foundation for much of the early educational development at St Christopher. The content of the speech struck a chord with many of the listeners attending from the United Kingdom, not least Ada Hope Russell Rea. Along with a group of other inspired signatories, Rea composed a letter to the Theosophical Society leadership in Britain asking for support in establishing ‘a school definitely and openly on Theosophic lines’.

The idea was generally well received, and fundraising efforts began in earnest in 1913, under the leadership of theosophists Josephine and Sidney Ransom. An initial whip-round collection

Jiddu Krishnamurti, Indian mystic and philosopher, was connected to the life of St Christopher via the Theosophical Society.

