

## CHRISTIAN SCHILLER CBE, MC, MA

Christian Schiller was born on the 20th September 1895. He went to a prep school and then to Gresham's School where he was head boy. Military service in the First World War followed and he was wounded in action.

After the war he read mathematics at Cambridge and then studied with Percy Nunn at the London Day Training College before beginning his teaching career. In 1924 he was appointed HMI and then followed a long period of work with the schools in Liverpool where his contact with poor children and their families was a deeply formative experience. He became District Inspector and later filled this role in Worcestershire.

In 1946 he became Staff Inspector for Primary Education and his influence, often in partnership with his friend Robin Tanner, HMI and etcher, was strongly felt as elementary schools developed into primary schools with a distinctive child centred approach which drew on children's innate creativity and which recognised the powerful learning which comes from direct experience.

On his retirement in 1955 he began a new career as he created a one year course at the University of London Institute of Education for teachers and heads seconded from their schools. Each course was kept small, no more than 12 people who spent their year visiting schools and in discussion led by Schiller who often remained largely silent until he revealed his vision and optimism about the future in a brief summing up. There were no examinations or required coursework yet, as this writer will testify, everyone worked extremely hard. The course was hugely influential and most of his former students have gone on to hold senior leadership positions in education.

Christian Schiller died on the 11th February 1976. The following year the first memorial lecture was presented in London and the annual lectures, now organised by the National Association for Primary Education, continue to the present day. We are pleased to be able to celebrate the work of this great man who contributed so much to the principles and practice of primary education. To those who say look at us, obsessed with children being coached to pass tests, schools competing rather than co-operating, I reply, look more deeply, beyond today's political froth. Schiller's work continues and one day, will prevail.

---

'Christian Schiller in his own words' was published by the Association in 1979. The book is available price £5.00 from the national office. The book and all its wisdom about young children and how we can help them learn should find a place on every teacher's bookshelf.