



GORDONSTOUN
Plus Est En Vous

Lina Richter (1872-1960)

Founding Fellow

Recognised for her work alongside Kurt Hahn in establishing both Salem School and Gordonstoun from the very beginning.

Lina Richter was a teacher, political advisor and feminist - an old family friend of Kurt Hahn, she was instrumental in establishing Salem School and later, Gordonstoun.

She was born Lina Oppenheim in Berlin in 1872, and although at this time, most women devoted their lives to family, she decided to become a teacher. Later, she married prominent Professor of Philosophy, Raoul Richter but after just ten years he died, leaving her with their five children.

At the start of WWI, old friend Kurt Hahn was working in the German Foreign Ministry under Prince Max of Baden whose family seat was Salem Castle. Hahn invited Lina to work with him and during this time they jointly developed his vision of creating a new education system in Germany which then led to the establishment of Salem School.

The school opened in 1920, with Lina as school administrator and teacher, and three of her children amongst the first pupils. But when Hitler came to power in 1933, Hahn was forced into exile in England for publicly opposing his ideals. Lina went with him, and the following year they founded Gordonstoun School.

She was involved in all aspects of establishing the school as well as teaching French and Politics. Her youngest son Roland (Bex) Richter followed her to Gordonstoun and taught Biology for many years. Lina stayed at the school until the 50s before returning home to Germany, where she died in 1960.

Her grandson Colin remembers her.

Without Lina's encouragement and support Gordonstoun may never have happened.

Together, they came up with the plan for these schools, and between them, they made it come to life. Lina was instrumental in Hahn's escape to the UK and he depended greatly on her help. We know how much he relied on her from letters he sent her during the war (when she had returned to Germany), in which he says how he longs to have her back.

It was important to create a school which helped students find their individual success.

By offering a wider variety of non-academic activities, all pupils grew a sense of self-confidence and found opportunities to excel at something other than traditional studies. Promoting character development was another key objective. English public schools were all about academic excellence and team sports. As a result, children who did not thrive in those areas would feel isolated and lacking in self-esteem. One of the great things about Gordonstoun was that it provided this incredible variety of activities and challenges so that every pupil felt they could succeed. Success might require quite a lot of work over a longer time, but that created a grafting mindset - a vital skill set in itself - and the embodiment of the motto "Plus est en vous".

Hahn was the visionary, and my grandmother the practical one.

She was, firstly, a very loving and attentive woman - but she was also desperate to see her family benefit from the good education she had provided, and be successful. This vision has helped generations of children learn to stand on their own two feet, to be resilient and adaptable, and very independent. I feel very proud of what they both achieved and being so close to the action was fascinating. I have been a great supporter of the Hahnian ethos ever since

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