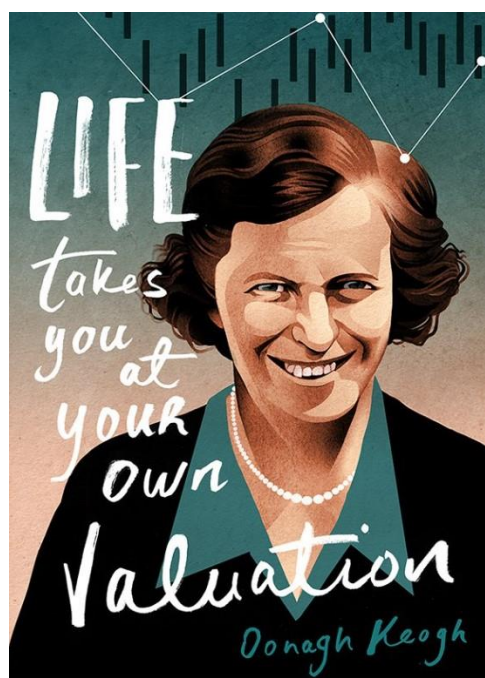


'Peeps of Princethorpe'

Oonah Keogh



As many people will know, *Peeps of Princethorpe* was the name of the school magazine produced by St. Mary's Priory pupils from 1902 until 1964¹. It was an annual publication giving a detailed account of the previous school year, with various contributors. These magazines are a wonderful primary source, abundant with information about school life from sports matches, trips and academic successes to updates on Old Princethorpians. They also give us a real insight into the *feel* of the school, the ethos, and the social and political situations that were occurring outside of the convent walls. In fact, it is easy to think the pupils were sheltered from the turmoil of outside events, but *Peeps* shows us they were well informed about world affairs and played an active role in major events.

The school magazines reveal a world of interesting stories but, most importantly, they show us the incredible people who once walked Princethorpe College's corridors. Throughout *Peeps*, there are so many examples of girls who have gone on to make significant contributions in many ways and it is time to look at one of those in more detail. History has tended to forget pioneering women of the early 20th Century but through promoting the

¹ It is possible that the magazine started before 1902 but we only have copies starting in this year

work of the archives, such stories can be kept alive, inspiring a new generation in the process. In their heyday, these women were grabbing the headlines, but the passing of time has diminished their achievements and memory. Let's address that, starting with an Old Princethorpe called Oonah Keogh.

If anyone can be called a trailblazer, Oonah Keogh must have that accolade. Through *Peeps* we can see what a positive relationship Oonah had with the school. She keeps them up to date with the births of her children, the work she is doing, her house moves, the marriages of her children and she regularly donates money for flowers to be bought for the Chapel. Her name appears throughout *Peeps* for nearly forty years.

Peeps of Princethorpe (1924):²

October 23rd.—Election of Prefects. Three were chosen : Agatha Turner, Oonah Keogh and Madeleine Stapleton.

Peeps of Princethorpe (1932)³

Mrs. Johnson, (Wanda) Oonah and Eta Keogh on the death of their sister Evelyn. R.I.P.

Peeps of Princethorpe (1933):⁴

We offer our most sincere thanks to the many Old Girls who so kindly remembered us with offerings and flowers for December 8th. They were: Marcia and Nettie Kelly, Mollie Colgan, Eulalie Jordan, Oonah and Eta Keogh, Mollie Stilwell, Mrs. Butler (Marjorie Edmondson), Joyce and Rowena Edmondson, Veronica, Peggy, Agnes and Joan Eastwood, Mrs. Marshall (Germaine Lebeaupin), Enid Michell, Lady Rose (Joan Richardson), Nora Margerison, Doreen Patten, Monica and Agatha Turner, Marguerite Keegan, Marie and Gwen Moiser, Imelda Norfolk

² p. 24, Showing Oonah being elected as a prefect in 1922. The 1924 edition of *Peeps* covered several years as there had been a break in publications due to World War I

³ p. 40. Condolences on the death of Oonah's sister, Evelyn, who was also a pupil at Princethorpe

⁴ p. 46. Oonah is also thanked for flower donations in 1928, 1930, 1931, 1955 and 1956

Peeps of Princethorpe (1935)⁵

Many Old Princethorpians are still doing the work chronicled of them in our last number; we will not write of this again but wish them perseverance and success. The last news of Mrs. Giltsoff (Oonah Keogh) was not too good as she was much run-down; Tatiana, Rurik and Nicholas, even with Eta's help, take some handling!

Peeps of Princethorpe (1939/1940)⁶

Mrs. Giltsoff (Oonah Keogh) writes most interestingly of the fascinating work on the restoration of old houses which her husband was doing before the war. She also speaks of Tatiana's coming to school here in happier days to come. Tatiana will find her mother and her aunties well remembered. Eta is at present with Oonah.

Peeps of Princethorpe (1945)⁷

SUMMER TERM, 1945

We returned on April 30th and found four new girls, Anne and Pat Truman (our third set of twins), Veronica Pardoe and Tartiana Giltsoff, daughter of Oonagh Keogh. We also found a wireless in the sitting-room.

Oonah was born in Dublin in 1903 and grew up in a family which, according to the Women's Museum of Ireland, 'placed a high value on education, which led to Oonah attending excellent schools in...the United Kingdom'⁸.

⁵ p.22. By 1935, Oonah has three children

⁶ p. 38. In this edition of *Peeps* we also learn that Oonah has given birth to a son

⁷ P.32. In the same edition of *Peeps*, we learn that Oonah has given birth to another son. Sadly, her sister, Eta, died in the same year. By 1945, *Peeps* has recorded the death of three of Oonah's sisters

⁸ Womens Museum of Ireland, *Oonah Keogh: The World's first female stockbroker*,

<<https://www.womensmuseumofireland.ie/exhibits/oonagh-keogh>> [accessed 4th January 2023]



OONAH KEOGH

Notes and News of Old Princethorpians.

THE unique distinction of being elected a member of the Dublin Stock Exchange is the first note we have to chronicle of one of our "Old Princethorpians." We quote one of the many reports which appeared in the press on the occasion.

"Miss Oonah Mary I. Keogh was elected a Member of the Dublin Stock Exchange in May of this year, having only attained her 22nd birthday on the 2nd inst. and is now the only woman in the British Empire that has full Rights and Privileges of Membership with a seat in the House. She has now gone into partnership with her father.

The Dublin Stock Exchange is a very old body and was founded under an Act of Parliament and as result, Members have on their election to hold a Government License before practising; this is why they are described as Government Brokers.

Under the English Government the License was granted by the Lord Lieutenant on the recommendations of the Committee as to means and fitness. Now the License is granted by 'Minister of Finance of Saorstát Éireann' on the same conditions.

It was a great achievement for one so young to attain such distinction. Some twenty years ago a Mrs. Bolger made an application but was refused.

Great interest was taken in Miss Keogh's Candidature by the majority of the members and since her election the whole body has extended to her a very hearty welcome."

We heartily congratulate Oonah on this achievement and wish her every success in her professional work.

From Oxford we learn that Agatha Turner has resumed her studies and is diligently preparing for her degree.

Eulalie Jordan writes to us in glowing terms of her interesting work as Assistant Secretary to the Manager of the Savoy, where she has an opportunity of exercising her linguistic talents.

We are very pleased to hear that Flossie De Vine on her return from Switzerland is devoting herself to studying Design. She is keenly interested in her training at the Birmingham Art School.

Winifred Thompson is still devoting herself to Elocution. She has made great progress since we had the privilege of hearing her in the Play Room. We are not surprised to hear of her keen interest in amateur theatricals. We have missed her very much in our school plays of late.

Sybil Littledale who has been the pupil of a distinguished musician since she has made London her home, has been very successful. She and her brother have been giving piano recitals for the benefit of some Convent charities. Sybil plays at many concerts and is full of ambition for the future.

Margarita Chamberlayne writes to us from France where she is spending some months in a delightful Château. She is busy studying the language and is very interested in the country life around her.

Through this article, seen in the 1926⁹ edition of *Peeps*, we learn that on the 4th May, 1925 Oonah made history by lodging an application to become a member of the Dublin Stock Exchange. According to *The Irish Times*, 'her application was a cause of heated debate'¹⁰ reflecting the wider discussions about the role of women in society at that time. But, after three weeks of deliberation she *was* accepted. Before Oonah, no stock exchange had ever accepted a woman and the Women's Museum of Ireland explains that she had 'two major factors in her favour'.¹¹ These were that she was extremely capable and her education stood her in such good stead.¹² Oonah joined the Irish Stock Exchange in 1925 and it would take almost 50 years to see that feat repeated in London or New York, or indeed anywhere else.¹³ The first full female member of the New York Stock Exchange was not until 1967, and the first female member of the London Stock Exchange joined in 1973. Considering these dates, Oonah's accomplishments are all the more impressive.¹⁴

⁹ pp. 28 – 29. *Peeps* also tells us that her younger sister, by a year, Genevieve, died in 1926, in a tragic shooting accident at Crofton

¹⁰ *The Irish Times*, *The Irishwoman who was the world's first female stockbroker*, <<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/abroad/the-irishwoman-who-was-the-world-s-first-female-stockbroker-1.4156726>> [accessed 4th January 2023]

¹¹ Womens Museum of Ireland, *Oonah Keogh: The World's first female stockbroker*, <<https://www.womensmuseumofireland.ie/exhibits/oonagh-keogh>> [accessed 4th January 2023]

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

In Oonah, we have here a true pioneer, someone who, according to the Bank of Ireland, 'challenged the notions of what it meant to be masculine and feminine stating 'neither is superior to the other, and each should have equal opportunities of exercising their talents'.¹⁵ In fact it seems that being a woman did not hold Oonah back at all. Although, according to RTE, in an interview given in 1971, Oonah said that the main disadvantage of being the only female stockbroker was that she could not socialise with her colleagues. Even when they attended the races together, when they (the men) went to the bar for a drink, she would have to slip off for afternoon tea.¹⁶ Throughout her career, Oonah proved herself to be the equal of her male counterparts and she should be held up as an inspirational figure for the ambitious women determined to make their mark in male dominated fields across the world.¹⁷ Her story is as relevant today as it was nearly a century ago!

Despite saying herself that she had been 'brought up in a glass case and wrapped in cotton wool'¹⁸, she was a brave, tenacious and ground-breaking woman.

Oonagh Keogh's maxim was 'life takes you at your own valuation'.¹⁹ Maybe that self-belief was nurtured whilst she grew up here at Princethorpe?

¹⁵ Bank of Ireland Think Business, *Oonah Keogh: The World's first female stockbroker*, < <https://www.thinkbusiness.ie/articles/oonah-keogh-the-worlds-first-female-stockbroker/> > [accessed 4th January 2022]

¹⁶ RTE, *Herstory: Oonah Keogh 1903 – 1989 – the first woman stockbroker in the world*, < <https://www.rte.ie/culture/herstory/2020/0127/1111240-herstory-oonah-keogh/> > [accessed 4th January 2023]

¹⁷ Bank of Ireland Think Business, *Oonah Keogh: The World's first female stockbroker*, < <https://www.thinkbusiness.ie/articles/oonah-keogh-the-worlds-first-female-stockbroker/> > [accessed 4th January 2022]

¹⁸ The Irish Stock Exchange, *Oonah Keogh A Celebration*

¹⁹ Ibid.

Images of Oonagh Keogh – A²⁰, B²¹, C²².

A



B



C



²⁰ Womens Museum of Ireland, *Oonagh Keogh: The World's first female stockbroker*, <<https://www.womensmuseumofireland.ie/exhibits/oonagh-keogh>> [accessed 2nd February 2023]

²¹ The Irish Stock Exchange, *Oonagh Keogh A Celebration*

²² RTE, *Herstory: Oonagh Keogh 1903 – 1989 – the first woman stockbroker in the world*, <<https://www.rte.ie/culture/herstory/2020/0127/1111240-herstory-oonagh-keogh/>> [accessed 2nd February 2023]