

Janet Erskine Stuart 1857 -1914

A woman who was to encompass the world with her teachings and devotion, who improved the lives of many women by opening the door to education.



Janet was born in the Rectory at Cottesmore. She was the thirteenth child of Rev the Hon. Andrew Stuart. Her mother, Mary Penelope Noel was his second wife and a close relative of Lord Gainsborough. Sadly she died when Janet was just over a year old. The children had Swiss governesses and grew up bi-lingual. One of Janet's brothers was to become the sixth Earl of Castle Stuart.

Janet enjoyed a country childhood. She was very close to her father whom she accompanied around the farm. A bright articulate child she soon became knowledgeable about livestock and crops. She kept meticulous accounts and often advised the farmers. Later she taught in the school and started a Sunday School in Barrow.

At the age of 21 she became a Roman Catholic. Her decision was courageous at a time when Catholics were still viewed with suspicion in England and even more so because as a Church of England minister her father could not countenance her living in the house, although he always kept in touch with her. Janet could not return to her home so for three years she lived with friends and relatives in London and Ireland before entering the Society of the Sacred Heart Convent in Roehampton in 1882. Her talents for teaching and writing were soon put to good use and many pupils spoke highly of her ability to "Give personal worth to each child". She became Mother Superior at Roehampton in 1894.

In 1911 she became the Superior General of the Society of the Sacred Heart

In this role she travelled all over the world founding schools and convents on every continent. She died in 1914 after escaping from Brussels on the outbreak of war. She is buried at Roehampton.



42 Choristers from The Society of the Sacred Heart School, Greenwich Connecticut USA ,visiting Cottesmore in 2013.