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# Hare, Mary Adelaide

(1865–1945)

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Mary Hare (1865–1945), by unknown photographer

Mary Hare School, Securing the future of deaf children and young people.

**Hare, Mary Adelaide** (1865–1945), teacher of the deaf and campaigner for women's suffrage, was born at 29 Fortess Terrace, Kentish Town, London, on 3 November 1865, daughter of Thomas Matthews Hare (1825/6–1884), an engineering draughtsman, and his wife, Adelaide, *née* Rogers (1831–1904). Mary had five older and four younger siblings, this large family including two sets of twins. Nothing is known of Mary Hare's education other than that her qualifications were such that they enabled her to attend the Ealing Training College for Teachers of the Deaf, which she entered on 3 October 1881. An article, 'Teaching Deaf Mutes', in the *Girls' Own Paper* (31 Jan 1880) appears to have sparked her interest. The policy of the school was that those born deaf should learn to speak, rather than rely on sign language; this was the 'oral method' that Mary Hare promoted throughout her career.

Hare opted to become a resident teacher trainee at the Ealing College, as such received free tuition, and in her second year was able to take classes as a full-time assistant teacher. Her course ended on 31 July 1883 with the awarding of a certificate by the Society for Training Teachers of the Deaf, having passed the examination so meritoriously that she was made an 'Honour Student', the first teacher-trainee to gain such a distinction. She was then offered a full-time teaching post at the Ealing Training College at an annual salary of £70.

She subsequently left Ealing and in January 1885 opened her own school for the deaf in rooms in Cecil House College, Upper Norwood, a private girls' school run by three of her older sisters. A year later she had six pupils, two boys and four girls, four of whom were boarders. Hare was at this time the sole

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teacher and charged £70 a year per pupil, although she did give free tuition to one child from a poor family. In 1889 she moved her school to Belgrave House, 77 Central Hill, Upper Norwood. Her view was that deaf and dumb children required an education, rather than protection in 'asylums'.

From 1885 until 1907 she was one of the examiners for the students of the Ealing Training College and in 1898 was elected as a representative of private schools on the executive committee of the National Association of Teachers of the Deaf. In 1894 she moved her school to Brighton, where she was assisted for a time by her sister Ethel, whom she had taught her 'oral method' and who had subsequently passed the Ealing College examination. The school occupied successive premises in Brighton before in 1916 settling at Dene Hollow, Burgess Hill, where it was known as Dene Hollow Oral School for the Deaf. Hare was one of the dedicatees of a novel, *Silent World*, which includes a description of a school for the deaf, based on Dene Hollow and its teaching methods. The novelist paints an affectionate portrait of 'Miss Deering', the school's headmistress, describing her as 'a tall broadly-built woman of about 50 years old. Her ruddy face had a pair of bright blue eyes that seemed to hold a permanent twinkle ... But her face bore impress of extraordinary strength and kindness, of intelligence and breadth of vision. By no means lovely in feature, it held character surpassing loveliness' (Riddell, 35-36).

After her move to Brighton, Hare was a member of the local Women's Liberal Association and in 1906 subscribed to the Women's Social and Political Union. In February 1907 she took part in the demonstration, known as the 'Mud March', organized by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. However, by 1910 she had left the WSPU and had become honorary secretary of the Brighton branch of the Women's Freedom League, holding many meetings in her own home. Like many members of the WFL, Hare was by now both a theosophist and vegetarian. She was also a member of the Church League for Women's Suffrage. Her interest in the suffrage campaign had clearly been roused by her experience as a woman professional. Years earlier she had taken great exception to a suggestion that women teachers of the deaf did so merely for pocket money. In a letter to *The Messenger*, a popular magazine for the deaf, she had written, 'I think you cannot realise what a number of women of our profession alone have to support themselves entirely out of their earnings, and often not themselves only, but others too. You men have no idea what most women have to do with their salaries; you talk of your responsibilities, of your wives and families that have to be supported; we support or assist as the case may be, mothers, sisters, brothers, or even more distant relatives but as we did not bring the responsibility upon ourselves, we accept it and do not discuss it' (Boyce, 28). In 1911 she followed the WFL call to boycott the census, refusing to give any details about herself, her staff, or her pupils and writing across her census paper 'Women don't count therefore they will not be counted'.

During the First World War Hare was active in running the Brighton branch of the Women Police Volunteers. She was also president of the Brighton Women's Co-operative Guild and in 1919 was elected as the first woman to serve on the Burgess Hill Urban District Council, remaining a member for the next twenty years. In 1928 she was elected chair of the National College of Teachers of the Deaf, the first woman to hold the post. She died of heart disease at her home, Dene Hollow, London Road, Burgess Hill, on 5 November 1945. Her ashes were scattered around a cedar tree outside her drawing room in the grounds of Dene Hollow. By her will she created a trust in order that her school should continue along the lines she had instituted, and in January 1946 the new Mary Hare Grammar School for the Deaf, a special secondary school recognized by the government, took in its first pupils. It subsequently moved to Newbury, Berkshire, where it has continued to develop and expand.

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## Sources

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A. J. Boyce and E. Lavery, *The lady in green: biography of Miss Mary Hare 1865-1945* (1999)

A. J. Boyce and E. Lavery, *Through eyes not ears: a brief history and pictorial record of the Mary Hare Grammar School from 1946 to 1973* (2005)

F. Riddell, *Silent world* (1934)

E. Crawford, *The women's suffrage movement 1866-1928: a reference guide* (1999)

will

census returns, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911

b. cert.

d. cert.

## Likenesses

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photograph, repro. in A. J. Boyce and E. Lavery, *The lady in green* (1999)

photograph, Mary Hare School [see illus.]

## Wealth at Death

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£9141 9s. 5d. 10d.: probate, 18 June 1946, *CGPLA Eng. & Wales*