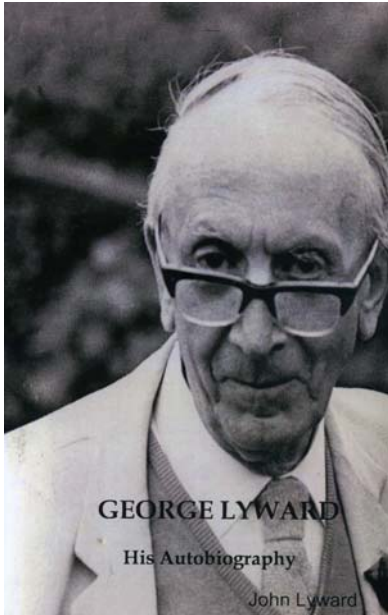


## George Lyward (OE1912-1918) OBE - My Autobiography



Those of you who have copies of The Portcullis from around the time of World War One may recognise the name of George Lyward. He frequently published in the Portcullis and returned to Emanuel as Senior English Master after he graduated from Cambridge. I came across this book by chance, if you Google Lyward you'll find lots of articles about his career, however recently, I was surprised to stumble across information about an autobiography. This was news to me, Lyward was one of the UK's leading educationalists for over 40 years, before dying in 1973. He published a few books, and many papers, but no autobiography. He attended Emanuel as a boy from 1912-1918 and after leaving Cambridge University (he won a Choral Scholarship at St. Johns) returned to teach in the 1920s. He was held in high esteem, and was one of a breed of young new teachers to work at Emanuel in the 1920s, along with the likes of Stafford Hipkins. After leaving Emanuel he attended Bishop's College, Cheshunt, and came within two weeks of becoming ordained as a priest.

So why was this book published in 2009? After all, it was hardly new. After purchasing a copy I realised Lyward's son had published the book. It turned out that, at the time, his publisher had refused to release the book in the 1960s, and when Lyward refused to alter the text, to meet their demands, the book was shelved, and never saw the light of day until now.

It really is a tremendous read. It has a uniqueness of style which, I guess, the publishers didn't like. The book gives insight into his own difficulties, doubts and fears as an educationalist. After a spell at Glenalmond College, in Scotland, the high-point of Lyward's career was to arrive – the founding of a progressive school called Finchdon Manor, of which he was Headmaster. This school specialised in helping boys with behavioural problems through therapy and activities such as woodwork and gardening. His techniques had tremendous success and as a teacher he was revered by both pupils and staff. A website dedicated to his school can be found at <http://www.finchden.com>. Lyward, himself, had a couple of break-downs, which aren't touched in the book, and I think that was another reason the publishers rejected it.

When Tom Robinson from The Times, in 2003, discussed his experience at Finchdon Manor, this is what he had to say: *"George Lyward was the most extraordinary human being I ever met. Certainly he was autocratic, insecure, fallible, prone to favouritism and boasting, and an impossible taskmaster for those who worked with him. Yet his compassionate humanity touched and transformed the lives of many. Even by the crude official measure of recidivism, Finchden had a success rate of just under fifty percent, compared to less than twenty for young offenders' institutions at the time. The emotional prison he released me from was not my sexuality, but one of self-hatred and denial. Quite simply, he gave me back my life when all I had wanted to do was throw it clean away."*

Although he is long dead he seems to have been a remarkable man. His autobiography has a very distinctive style and I think it's fantastic that it has finally been published after so many years stuffed in a drawer.

Can anyone hazard a guess of Lyward's first publication? The Portcullis of course.... He also edited the World War One/OE/Letters From the Front section, of which, he also did an incredible job. He was Emanuel through and through, and as an OE, came back to guest in various musical events and choirs.

Tony Jones