

WOOD, MARY MYFANWY (1882 - 1967), missionary in China, 1908-51

Name: Mary Myfanwy Wood
Date of birth: 1882
Date of death: 1967
Parent: Hannah Wood
Parent: Richard Maldwyn Wood
Gender: Female
Occupation: missionary in China, 1908-51
Area of activity: Religion
Authors: Kenneth Emlyn Jones, Ioan Wyn Gruffydd

Born 16 September 1882 in London. Her father (Richard Maldwyn) was from Machynlleth and her mother (Hannah) from Swansea; they had four children. Her parents became members at the Borough Welsh Congregational chapel in London and she was accepted into full membership there in 1896. She received her early education in Dulwich and then went to St. Mary's College, Cheltenham training to be an elementary-school teacher; she subsequently spent some years teaching in Herne Hill, London. Whilst training to become a schoolteacher, the course of her life was determined; after listening to W.B. Selbie at the 1903 Summer School of the Student Christian Movement, she offered her services to the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.). During her period as a teacher in Herne Hill she followed courses at King's College, London and for a year devoted her free time to assist with the work at the Crossway Central Mission, London. In November 1908 she was in Siao Chang in north China and for seven years worked in the Girls' Residential School, serving there and also in the adjacent areas. She was known by various names: Wu Yingzhen, Wu Ying-chen, and Wu Ying Chun. The principal missionary stations where she worked over the years were Xiaoxhang, Hebei, Beijing, Shanghai, Ji'nan and Shandong.

Her 1915-16 year's leave was spent at Mansfield College Oxford and a London college before returning to Beijing (Peiping), where she was appointed headmistress of the Girls' Middle School. She made a significant contribution to the development in north China of the education of girls and she was co-opted to China's Consultative Council on the training of women. Her letters clearly indicate that she had a significant behind-the-scenes role in the emergence of the independent indigenous church in Beijing. The *Chinese Recorder*, for example, in 1920 reports that a certain Chinese lady had been voted to be Vice-President of the China for Christ Movement. It is obvious from her letters that Myfanwy Wood was the person originally voted for this post, but that she withdrew, claiming that she believed that a Chinese woman should hold the post, and that her role was merely advisory. In 1921 the London Missionary Society released her for a short period to assist C.Y. Cheng and E.C. Lobenstine in organising China's National Christian Conference held in Shanghai in 1922. In 1926 she was appointed a lecturer in the women's religious education department at Yenching University and before returning there in 1928 as Head of Department, she visited New College, London, and Union Seminary and Columbia University, New York, to study methods of religious education and become familiar with developments in theology. She came home on furlough in 1939 and the onset of World War II prevented her return to China. She nursed her elderly parents during 1940-43.

Because of her knowledge of China and its language there were calls from several authorities for her services during World War II. In 1944-45 she was involved in monitoring news broadcasts from China and in lecturing on the country. Between April and November 1945 she was in India with the Y.M.C.A., and before the end of the year she went to northern China to serve the North China Synod of the Church of Christ in China. She arrived to see the plight of those suffering from the riots that had occurred and she was there in the midst of the turmoil and confusion until 1951, a period of heroism that is beyond words. She retired from the work of the L.M.S. in 1948 but continued to lecture at the Yenching Union Bible School for Women. A year later the college was transferred and she followed the staff and students to the School of Theology at Cheloo University at Ji'nan, in the province of Shantung. By 1951, despite her eagerness to stay in a country so dear to her, the safety of her friends was being endangered by her presence. The policy of the new regime was to expel foreigners, but despite this, she welcomed the revolution, although she did not ignore its difficulties and dangers. Against her will, she left China in August 1951, returning home via the United States of America. In July 1962, she was awarded an honorary M.A. by the University of Wales.

For two years she undertook work on behalf of the British Council of Churches. In 1954, at 72 years of age, she was ordained minister of the small Congregational church at Hambleden, near Henley. She worked diligently there for eight years and following retirement at the age of 80 in 1962 she moved to Lomas House, Worthing, a Missionary Society home for missionaries after completion of their service.

Myfanwy Wood died 22 January 1967 in the Southern Hospital, Shoreham, and was cremated at Downs Crematorium, Brighton, 26 January 1967. A memorial service was held at the Borough Chapel, London 2 February 1967.

Authors

Reverend Kenneth Emlyn Jones, (1911 - 1983)

Ioan Wyn Gruffydd

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Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Mary Myfanwy Wood](#)

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