

*Obituaries*



John Macquarrie  
*(Photograph: Natal Witness)*

## *John Wingate Macquarrie 1904 – 1996*

A sturdy Scot, John Macquarrie came to the Cape in 1924 as a teacher at Lovedale Training College, and so from the first saw South Africa from a perspective unfamiliar to most white South Africans of the time – an institution founded by missionaries for Africans, in a markedly poor environment. Apart from war service from 1940–1945 he remained there until 1947 and became Principal in 1933. Meanwhile he found time not only to court and marry Irene Fowler, but also to obtain a series of further qualifications: a BA Hons degree in English through London

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University in 1929, followed by a Higher Education Diploma and a University of South Africa BEd.

John joined the Transvaal Scottish Regiment in 1940 and served during most of the war as an information officer in North Africa. He was a prisoner of war in both Italian and German hands, and this involved organising and conducting prison-camp courses for officers.

Two years after the war John moved from Lovedale to become an inspector in the Cape Education Department, which included in those days responsibility for all types of school in his circuit – ‘Native’, ‘Coloured’ and ‘European’. However, when, at the beginning of 1955 he was transferred without consultation to the Native Affairs Department as part of the change to separate ‘Bantu Education’, he resigned on grounds of conscience – at the age of 52. Fortunately he was able to become staff manager in a firm in Butterworth, and then no less fortunately, he came across a report of an address by Professor R.G. MacMillan of the University of Natal’s Faculty of Education. John wrote asking whether he was the MacMillan who had been on the same army course as he in 1941, and whether there were any openings in his department. The reply was that he was indeed the same MacMillan, and that although there was no immediate permanent post, a temporary appointment was offered. John Macquarrie took it up at the beginning of 1958 in Pietermaritzburg. Two years later he was appointed to the permanent post of senior lecturer, and in 1966 became Associate Professor, retiring at the end of 1969. He and Irene were to remain in Pietermaritzburg until 1981, enriching the lives of a wide range of colleagues, students, friends and fellow-liberals with their humour, courtesy and range of cultured interests.

Within the Faculty of Education John Macquarrie’s field was in the overlapping areas of the philosophy and sociology of education, and to his teaching of these he brought a sharp mind and wide reading. With wit and a healthy scepticism about fashions in educational theory and practice, he encouraged students – in lectures, tutorials, teaching practice and in relaxed conversation – to develop their own understanding of education. A mark of the warm respect and friendship he engendered was the number of past students who – particularly after a period overseas – would make a point of calling on John in the Faculty to renew acquaintance and exchange ideas. With colleagues, too, he enjoyed debate and challenge, but was never aggressive or superior in drawing on experience that was considerably wider than theirs. And through membership of committees and his general sociability he was widely respected in the university at large.

Outside the university, John was – not surprisingly – an active member of the Liberal Party, whose policy was closest to his principled stand on non-racial government, and non-discriminatory provision of state education and welfare. He was provincial treasurer of the party, and drafted its education policy document. For a time he wrote leaders for the *Natal Witness*, was a discriminating reviewer of books, and was not infrequently called on as a public speaker. He was also a member of the Natal Society Council. A less public accomplishment was as a recorder player with small groups.

In 1981 John and Irene moved to Somerset West, where Irene died in 1990. They are survived by two daughters, six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

TONY BARRETT