

Janet Done

Doctor and Champion of Birth Control for all Women

Dr Janet Done became a Soroptimist after moving to Coventry in (we think) the 1960s, and her name is still well remembered at club. She served as President in 1964-65.

Janet originally trained as a doctor in London in the late 1920s; it was a time of appalling poverty, when mothers and children lived in the most dismal of social conditions. After she qualified in 1932, Janet was attracted to working with women and children, which advantageously was an area of medicine not dominated by men. So, she trained in public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

In the 1950s and 1960s, after working in Leicester where she set up one of the first birth-control clinics in the country, Janet moved to Coventry. Here she worked as a Senior Medical Officer for Maternal and Child Welfare. Her main concern was the poor health of married women with large families, most of whom lived in crippling poverty.

Although the National Health Service had been set up in 1948, birth control remained the responsibility of the Public Health Service. Janet was determined to inform and educate married and single women about birth control. It was only by turning a blind eye to the many rules and regulations restricting her that her ambitions were achieved, and hundreds of Coventry women benefitted from the service.

Although a Senior Medical Officer, Janet was still involved with the practical side of medicine; she frequently took clinics, enabling her to be in touch with mothers and families, which was the part of the job that she loved the most. Her life's work had been influenced in the early days of her career and materialised in the positive role she played in promoting the health and wellbeing of so many of Coventry's women and their families.

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