

Catherine “Kitty” Gray

Doctor, Teacher, Magistrate

Kitty joined SI Coventry in 1947, twice holding the position of President, first in 1951-2 and again in 1957-8. Through the club she continued her interest in the United Nations Association.

Kitty Howat was born in Binley Colliery Village near Coventry, the youngest of seven children. Her parents had moved from Scotland for her father to work in the newly opened mine. She attended Binley School until the age of fourteen when, wishing to go on to higher education, she was required to sit an entrance examination to transfer to Stoke Park as a fee-paying pupil. Kitty studied the science subjects as she thought she would like to become a medical missionary.

She was a Sunday school teacher, and being musical, played the harmonium for the children’s services and evensong at the Mission Church in the village. The headmistress encouraged her in her ambition to study medicine, sending for a prospectus and application form for Glasgow University. Kitty was accepted and in 1935 became one of 25 women and 200 men in her year to become medical students. She became the first pupil from Stoke Park to qualify as a doctor.

Her first post was at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, moving on to Glasgow Children’s Hospital the following year. She then became a locum in Torquay. In 1944 Kitty volunteered for the Indian Medical Service, working in the army military hospitals. It was during this time that she met and married Dennis Gray.

Returning to Coventry she was appointed to the Maternity and Child Welfare Section of the Public Health Department, later becoming the Medical Officer for Cheylesmore and Whitley, which involved making pupil assessments for education at special needs schools. By now bringing up three small children, she decided to give up her medical career in favour of a post as a teacher of special needs children at Alice Stevens School, where she had been a medical advisor.

From there she transferred to Whitley Abbey Comprehensive School, where she initiated a Work Experience Programme for older pupils as well as teaching Science and ‘O’ level Biology. She ran a table-tennis club on Monday nights and organised many sponsored walks in aid of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind.

In 1963 she was appointed to the Coventry Bench and was Chairman of the Juvenile Court Panel from 1973-76. She retired from teaching in 1979.

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