

Mary Hobley

Hair Stylist to the Stars

Coventry businesswoman Mary Hobley was hair stylist to the stars and royalty for almost half a century. She was the only woman from the provinces who was a member of Inter Coiffure, the premier international organisation of high-quality hairdressing. Members came from more than 2,000 salons in some 50 countries. You could find them in the world's capitals, Paris, New York, Tokyo, London, and Rome.

Yet Mary Hobley had her highly successful business in the centre of a post-war city recovering from the devastation of the second-world war – Coventry. Her mother had been a court dressmaker, so Mary had grown up to value high class artisanship from an early age.

When she was 23, Mary began her glittering career in the living-room of the family home in Bird street, and in 1933 she set up her first salon in Jesson Street. The 1940 Blitz destroyed both her home and her new business premises, which meant another move; she was lucky to find new premises in Fleet Street.

In 1954 Mary established her salon in the newly opened Broadgate House, where she gained a reputation second to none, making her the natural choice to be hair stylist to the stars. Some of the biggest names in show business became regular customers.

Mary was a member of Soroptimist International of Coventry and served as President in 1954-55.

Apprenticeships with Mary Hobley were much prized, and ten trainees were taken on each year. In 1962, 29 years after a humble beginning in the family home, the woman who once described herself as a terrible taskmaster sold the salon to her one-time apprentice Paul Taylor.

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