

## Dr Kathleen Eleanor Hyde Rutherford MBE, MB, ChB, (1896-1975)

Harrogate and District Soroptimists are very proud of Dr Rutherford MBE, one of our founder members and our first Club President in 1933. She was an impenitent idealist, internationalist and committed Quaker, striving to make a difference through awareness, advocacy and action.

**Early Life** - Kathleen was born in Glasgow, her father a General Practitioner and her mother Dr of Philosophy. She grew up in Harrogate, qualifying as a medical practitioner in 1920 from Glasgow University. After various medical posts Dr Kathleen joined the family practice in Harrogate, establishing a long career in the area.

**SI Harrogate & District** - Founder President 1933-1936, a long-serving and committed Soroptimist, 1937 President of the North Eastern Divisional Union and elected to the SIGBI Federation Governing Board. In 1939 elected Vice President of SIGBI.

**Women's Peace Campaign** - Prior to the 1939 declaration of war and during the war, continued to campaign for peace and in 1940 was a speaker at a public meeting, "Is War the Only Way?". Continued working for the WPC in the aftermath of war, encouraging donations of food, clothing, medical supplies and equipment to Europe.

**Charitable Work** - In 1962 Dr Kathleen was left £42,000 (worth £762,000 in 2020) and made the decision to devote most of the money to charities, Famine Relief, War on Want, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Save the Children and Leprosy. This bequest also enabled Dr Kathleen to carry out her medical expertise internationally.

In 1963 Dr Kathleen sent generous cheques to various needy convents and missionaries abroad. Fr Borrelli's House of Urchins in Naples benefited from Dr Kathleen's medical skills and a large donation, to support caring for unwanted slum children. In 1967 and 1971 she worked in a leper colony in Uganda. In 1969 she travelled with a nursing sister and an eye specialist to Biskra in the Sahara, through War on Want and with the help of the Algerian Red Crescent, and spent 5 months working in eye clinics and general medicine. Although giving her help to all, her priority was women and children. Dr Kathleen's failing health did not curtail her activities and in 1971 she visited Jerusalem to investigate the plight of refugees. In 1972 she was the oldest member of the first group of British doctors to be invited to the Republic of China to share ideas and research.

**National Recognition** - In 1970 she received the MBE for services to medical work in under-developed countries. Her life was also recognised in October that year, when Dr Kathleen featured in a special TV documentary. In 1973, Dr Kathleen's work in the community and elsewhere was so well regarded by the people of Harrogate that she became one of the last Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Harrogate.

**Her legacy** - The Soroptimist Club in Harrogate, chartered in 1933, thrives. We are proud of Dr Kathleen's achievements and these will be recognised with a civic plaque, unveiled on International Women's Day 8th March 2021 in Harrogate at a special ceremony.

