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SI Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead

In the early 1960s shortly after I had been appointed Inspector in charge of the Women Police Department in the Middlesbrough Borough Police Force, I received a call inviting me to visit the local Soroptimist Club with a view to becoming a member. I was aware of the organisation, having met members during my career.

At this time I had not long been promoted to Inspector and had taken on the responsibility of a department of women officers – a new experience, having always worked as part of a team of men and women, but always available to deal with matters relating to women and children and always on call. My new responsibilities were all time-consuming and I certainly did not envisage having time to join an outside organisation – and did not attend the meeting.

My career progressed – I had joined the service at the age of 20 (the minimum age at that time in 1950 was 22), the Chief Constable of the North Riding Constabulary having obtained special Home Office permission for me to join at 20.

I was promoted Sergeant in Northumberland County aged 25 and Inspector in Middlesbrough aged 30, returning to Northumberland in 1967 as Chief Inspector in charge of the women police in the county and stationed in Morpeth. Very soon after my arrival I was approached by the Secretary of SI Morpeth and District, suggesting I invite the President and Secretary to tea, which I did. After a short time I was invited to join the Club, which I did on the understanding that my work would always be my first priority.

I was President of the Club and took an active part in the activities as and when my duties allowed. There were six Clubs in the county at that time and we had a good network between us. My work expanded into Newcastle Gateshead and Tynemouth after an amalgamation of these forces.

After the establishment of the Tyne and Wear Metropolitan County this whole area was within one jurisdiction and became known as Northumbria Police.

Club meetings were a low priority but I retained my membership.

In January 1976 I joined the staff of the Police Inspectorate at the Home Office and visited Police Forces in England and Wales, inspecting women officers and gathering information covering the changes brought about by the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act.

I retained my membership paying subs to SI Morpeth but with a classification “member at large”. This was a great asset, as many of the senior police women were Soroptimists and if there was a meeting during my Inspection visit I could attend.

I retired from the Police Service in 1979 with the rank of Assistant to HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, the highest ranking woman officer in the provinces.



I transferred my membership to SI Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead when I moved to live in Maidenhead and am still a member (active!!!) with a keen interest in club activities.

Being a Soroptimist whilst working very much in a man's world brought some normality into my life, although my first visit to an Annual Conference was in Newcastle in the late sixties when the delegates numbered about 500 – I stood at the top of the steps on the first evening and heard this noise - I nearly went home – I had never encountered a noise of women's voices en masse, it was like standing outside a very large aviary.

I am pleased I stayed!!!