

Barbara Burkey MQR (1942-2020)

Barbara was born in Birkenhead on 6th June 1942. She qualified as a nurse in Birkenhead General Hospital and went on to specialise in midwifery, then later trained as a coronary intensive care nurse. Barbara advanced to tutoring at the School of Nursing in the University of Liverpool. In 1988 she was seconded from Liverpool to the University of Malta to head up the nursing department and set up a nursing degree course. Her initial appointment was for one year but she stayed for seven (until 1995).

Barbara was recruited to Malta at a time when courses in nursing at university level were still a rarity in Europe. On her arrival she immediately organised the launch of the course. During the following years, Barbara worked incessantly to promote the BSc Nursing course and to lay the foundations for other university-based courses such as the Diploma in Nursing, Diploma in Midwifery, Bachelor in Midwifery and Certificate in Nursing Practice. She even contributed to the foundation of the pre-vocational school that was set up to assist prospective students in obtaining the necessary requirements to follow university courses. Barbara achieved her goal of taking nursing in Malta to a higher level and paved the way for the Department of Nursing to reach high academic standards. During her time there she was invited to join Soroptimist International of Malta.



For her great contribution to nursing Barbara was awarded the Midalja Għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika on 13 December, 2001. This is a Medal of the Republic which is awarded to no more than ten Maltese citizens per year for distinguished service to their country. Distinguished citizens of a country other than Malta may be awarded this Medal on an honorary basis.

On returning to England she suffered a period of ill-health but when recovered she became an active volunteer in organisations in her local community in Wirral. This work was enhanced and expanded by her becoming a member of SI Heswall and District and taking an active part in their programme work. Alongside this, Barbara joined a number of healthcare committees as a patient advocate, dealing with cancer care, mental health and end of life care. She was instrumental in the development of the Liverpool Care Pathway for the terminally ill – one of her passions was that everyone should have a 'good death'.

In her role as Soroptimist Club President in 2007 Barbara initiated a motion at that year's conference. This was to support action and lobby the government to regulate sunbeds and tanning salons. She was passionate about this because she was appalled at the increase in melanomas and skin cancers, especially among young girls. The motion was passed, further lobbying proceeded and eventually The Sunbeds (Regulation) Act 2010 came into force on 8 April 2011. This did not cover all the areas that Soroptimists had lobbied for, but it was government recognition of the problem, and a good start.

Barbara passed away on 24 April 2020.