

Gladys Worland (1921 - 2011)

Gladys Worland was a member of Soroptimist International of East London for 29 years, having joined on 12 March 1982.

Gladys is remembered by Soroptimist East London members as a 'doer' and a 'problem solver' – nothing was too much trouble and she embodied Soroptimist values in all parts of her life. Gladys led the way in seeing a better life and opportunities for women and children at home and overseas. She is particularly remembered for her work in Redbridge.

Gladys joined Soroptimist International of East London (or London: East) in 1982. At that time members were categorised into different professional "categories". Gladys' "membership category" was Citizens Advice Bureau. At that time she was the full-time paid organiser of the Ilford Citizens Advice Bureau, a post she held for some 15 years. During the latter part of the 1980's she became Vice Chair of Redbridge Voluntary Services Association, which was the then umbrella organisation for voluntary groups in the borough and, for many years, she organised an annual charity fundraising fair for voluntary organisations.



It is her work to establish a women's refuge in Redbridge that Gladys will be best remembered for. Concerned about the plight of women enduring and fleeing domestic violence, Gladys campaigned relentlessly for 10 years for a safe haven in the borough. Her dogged determination resulted in the acquisition of funds for financing and building purpose-built premises for a women's refuge in Redbridge. When it opened in the late 1980's she was the first Chairperson. Gladys was a director of Redbridge Action Against Domestic Abuse ("RAADA") previously known as Redbridge Women's Refuge until 1996. In April 2013 local paper East London Guardian wrote: "RAADA is a small local charity that aims to put a stop to domestic violence against women and children. They have been supporting women and children who are affected by domestic abuse for over 10 years and are currently the only agency of its kind in the borough. They aim to support women and children who are affected by domestic abuse and those who may experience physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse."

But that wasn't all, Gladys and her late husband helped many lone elderly people - they did weekly shops for many, regular phone calls were made just to 'have a chat', check that they were well and advise on everyday problems. Online records show her as Director of Age UK for Redbridge, Barking & Havering between 2003-2008

Busy as she was, Gladys always found time to attend the twice and sometimes thrice monthly meetings of Soroptimist International of East London, and played an active role in all of the club's activities and representing the club on other local initiatives. She served on all Soroptimist East London's club committees, was Club President in 1992-1993, and convened the clubs Programme Action Committee for many years. Towards the end of her life, she was unable to attend meetings, but she kept up her membership and was always keen to hear about current Soroptimist activities.

Sadly, Gladys died on 5 November 2011 aged 89. The club members remember her as always offering encouragement and assistance in the nicest possible way, whether in Soroptimist business or when wrestling to change a car tyre (she attended car maintenance classes).

Soroptimists in East London, and many others, will remember Gladys Worland 'as always encouraging, always pleasant, always looking for ways in which life could be made that bit better for others. Gladys was one of life's 'good people'.

Photo Credit archives of Soroptimist East London