

Dr Elizabeth Harrison

Elizabeth Harrison was born in East London in 1940, the eldest of three children. The family moved after the war to Bishop's Stortford, where she attended the Herts and Essex High School and obtained one of the 10% of available medical school places open to women at that time.

She qualified in medicine from the Royal Free Hospital in 1964, and in 1969 became the first female GP in Kings Lynn, the youngest partner in a group practice of six serving a disadvantaged area of the town, where she remained until her retirement in 2003.

Always versatile, she helped to introduce a nurse-led family planning service to provide more friendly and accessible services, provided medical services to a residential unit for adults with learning disabilities, and acted as store doctor to the local branch of M&S.

She developed a teaching role, contributing to the training of undergraduate and postgraduate medical students, and acting as GP Tutor for the local Health District. In 1987 she was the first woman to deliver the Faculty's annual James Dundas Simpson memorial lecture for the East Anglian Faculty of the Royal College of General Practitioners – appropriately on the subject of women in medicine.

In 1988 she was awarded the Fellowship of the RCGP – the only woman so honoured that year.

She became a Soroptimist and a founder member of the Kings Lynn club in 1975, serving as club president in 1985 and Regional president in 1991.

From 1991 she was also active at Federation level. She served as Federation Health Adviser from 1991 – 1995, making visits in this capacity during her holidays to clubs in Africa, India and the Caribbean. She worked with UNICEF UK to promote their 'Baby-Friendly Hospitals Initiative' and campaigned against FGM and trafficking.

She became a member of UNIFEM (The United Nations Development Fund for Women), being elected to the UK Executive Board and serving a term as its Vice President.

From 1999 – 2000 she was Federation President of SIGBI, choosing as her motto: "Forward with Optimism".

She remains an active member of the Soroptimist club of Kings Lynn, who awarded her Honorary Membership in 2020 in recognition of 45 years of service to the club.

She has also remained strongly committed to UNICEF UK. She was invited to become a member in 2003 and campaigned against the trafficking of women and children. She set up a local supporters group and was given an outstanding achievement award in 2010.

She has made an enormous contribution to the local community in many and varied other roles. Among other things she has been a school governor and an individual mentor to local school children, managed a £300,000 project to ensure disabled access to the eleven local Methodist churches, helped with the local Talking Newspapers for 25 years and is now their President, and set up a local residents' group.

She is a keen traveller and a talented photographer and has a wonderful pictorial record of her eventful life.

