

Miss Kathrine Mary Fussell MB, ChB, FRCS, BA (1929-2020)

SI Wigan -

Kate was born in Bristol on 13th April 1929, an only child. She attended several schools, finally a Grammar School for Boys, because “the science teaching was better” and she wanted to study Medicine. This she did at Birmingham University, graduating in 1951. She trained in surgery, gaining her FRCS in 1957. She worked for five years in various New York hospitals and later at Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, London.

In 1970 Kate was appointed consultant surgeon in Wigan, one of only six woman surgeons in the country. She was a general surgeon but also a pioneer in research and treatment of Breast Cancer, including reconstructive surgery, saving many lives. She led Wigan Soroptimists' campaign to obtain the Health Authority's first Mammography Unit.

Whilst working in Wigan she chaired Medical Executive and Area Medical Executive Committees and became Chief Executive of the Hospital Trust. She was a key figure in many of the major changes of that time. Kate retired in 1990, later studying at the Open University and gaining a BA in 2000.



Kate became a Soroptimist in 1971, joining SI Wigan, and became a driving force within both the Club and the organisation. She was Club President 1976-1977 and again in 2009. She was Regional President 1979-1980 and Federation President 1986-1987, and during the latter term she visited 14 of the 17 countries within our Federation.

As Federation President Kate focused on Female Genital Mutilation, bringing this practice to the attention of Soroptimists and a greater awareness of it world-wide. As Club President and member, she has raised awareness of the need for gender equality, working tirelessly to break down barriers and stereotypes by inspiring women and girls all over the world. She has made many friends all over the world.

During her time in Wigan, Kate has made many contributions to the community. To celebrate the Millennium, SI Wigan led a borough-wide project to create a “Millennium Map”, involving many local people. Kate was very enthusiastic and skilful in a variety of crafts. The Millennium Map was a great success, received many accolades and was presented to the Council.

Kate also supported a physiotherapist (now a Soroptimist!) who set up an All-Age Bone Health Awareness campaign; since 2011 it has been an Osteoporosis Support Group under the guidance of the Royal Osteoporosis Society.

Kate became interested in the Grange Community Complex and when invited to be a trustee in 2005 accepted willingly. The Managing Director really appreciated her support and advice. Kate volunteered at Wigan Archives, transcribing and preserving valuable documents.

Kate has received many well-deserved awards:

- 1) Woman in the Community Award, SI Wigan 1994
- 2) Freeman of the Borough of Wigan and Leigh 2000 (1 of only 3 women to receive this)
- 3) The Lady of Substance Award, The Lady Magazine, 2015
- 4) Life membership of Liverpool Medical Institute 2016
- 5) A Blue Star on the Walk of Fame, Wigan and Leigh Borough Council 2020