

Tribute – Shirley Roberts

Shirley was born to Christopher and Olive Greenwood in Bradford, Yorkshire on 19th January 1935 and baptized at St John's church on 7th April. She attended Thornton Grammar, with her brother Phillip, where she shone academically, proved an accomplished artist, represented the school at hockey and tennis, and competed for the local Athletic Club. Treasured holidays were often spent with her grandparents in Garthorpe, in rural Lincolnshire.

Next, Shirley studied nursing at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary, quickly embracing student life. She loved weekend jaunts to the coast with her friends and, more so, attending local dances. Around this time, Shirley met her future husband, Bryn.

Their introduction wasn't auspicious. During yet another long night shift, Shirley met a concussed and injured Bryn following a rugby league match. Already disgruntled at the extra paperwork, Shirley endured Bryn's woozy attempts to tease her and make her smile. But she remembered these efforts, and on encountering Bryn again at a dance, allowed him to rescue her from an unwanted admirer. Of course, the rest is history!

During their engagement, Shirley completed her specialist midwifery training in Oxford and London before becoming Staff Midwife at St Luke's Hospital, Bradford, in 1956. Marrying Bryn in 1958, Shirley returned to Huddersfield Royal Infirmary in the midwifery complications unit, where her dedication and compassion helped many expectant mothers and children.

In 1963, Bryn's work brought them to Basildon. Shirley retired her nurses uniform and became mother to Nickie and Carolyn. Now her caring and compassionate nature led her into wide-ranging voluntary activity, including at the local playgroup and primary school. Her local community charitable work was further enhanced when Bryn joined the Lions Club.

Motherhood enabled Shirley to reinvigorate her considerable creative abilities. She and the girls became devotees of Blue Peter-inspired projects to create doll's house furniture, rooms sets and even entire farmsteads(!) despite the limitations of the available toilet roll tubes, lolly sticks, wallpaper cut-offs and ubiquitous sticky-back plastic. Shirley's own passion for art and design was fed by frequent trips to galleries and annual visits to the Ideal Home Exhibition. She made family outfits, grew vegetables, and keenly propagated fuchsias of every colour and variety. Photography became a lifelong passion, with Shirley's patience and skill leading to thousands of stunning images from home and abroad.

In 1973, Shirley started a temporary laboratory technician role at Bryn's firm, but her accuracy and meticulous recording meant she became the laboratory lynchpin for the next 22 years. Simultaneously the couple devoted more energy to Lions charitable work. Shirley strived tirelessly both behind the scenes and beside Bryn as he progressed to District Governor in 1982. After the formalities of Lions International Conventions were concluded, they would enjoy well-earned rests in many of the world's beauty spots, with Penang a favourite. Shirley practiced that love of photography, rarely being seen without a camera around her neck as they represented the Lions and made lifelong friends around the globe.

Shirley became a Lion in her own right, of Basildon and then Ipswich clubs. A prominent member of the International Lions Trading Pin Club, she distinguished herself as the President of the British Pin

Club. Shirley taught herself to use professional design software and became an accomplished designer of many of the best of the thousands of enamel pins created each year, so much so that in 2016 she won the Lions Worldwide award for best pin thanks to an intricate composition, an achievement of which she was rightly delighted. Shirley then moved to designing websites, including writing html code, where that meticulous Greenwood accuracy and tenacity ensured she overcame all technical challenges. After hours in the study she'd often emerge with an Archimedes-style, "I've cracked it!"

Shirley latterly was central in establishing a Ladies Probus Club in Basildon, and helped found the Sudbury Club. She took much pleasure and companionship from these fellowship groups while greatly enjoying organising social events and activities alongside other members. After a decade as Sudbury Club Secretary, Shirley was thrilled to be made Honorary President.

Shirley was also instrumental in developing the Probus Global organisation, an umbrella fellowship group for worldwide members. This was vital during the pandemic; 2020 regularly found Shirley coaching new overseas comrades and local members through Zoom call technicalities, ensuring families and friends stayed connected.

Shirley's life was underpinned by compassion, dependability and service. She desired to "do right and get it right", yet shunned the fanfare and limelight her accomplishments merited. To her last days, Shirley had a twinkle in her eye and a determination to seize every opportunity, something she always encouraged her daughters and grandchildren – Ellie, Cameron and Cady – to do whenever possible. Her dedication and commitment endeared her to many and they will feel her loss keenly.

Shirley, thank you for everything: the joy and laughter, the grace and good humour, the boundless care. We will miss you, all of us.