

Obituary

Katherine Alice Mercer Young – died 31 July 2014, aged 93



Katherine was born in Nantwich. Her father had studied agriculture and plants in Edinburgh, and her mother was from a schoolmaster's family. They met at university, Katherine being their only child. This child's claim to fame came when she graduated in medicine and battled on her own and for other women's interest to become the first female to be appointed as

a house officer in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary (prior to this, only males were so appointed!). She worked for the esteemed Professor of Surgery, Professor Learmonth.

As a child, she was keen on music, singing and piano. At the age of 17, she was sent to Munich to live with a family where she learned to speak German. A year later, she returned to her own home, going to Edinburgh University, but she was uncertain about what she wanted to study and decided on an arts course. This turned out to be not to her liking, so she changed direction with the persuasion of a friend and studied medicine. This she did, graduating in 1946 at the age of 25.

After some confrontation with the authorities, she won the coveted house officer place, which was her contribution to 'women's medical emancipation'. Later, she trained in plastic surgery and acquired a post in Bangor Hospital, where a lot of RAF burns victims were treated. There she met a Dr Douglas Young, who was in due course to become the chest physician

in Lancaster; based in Beaumont Hospital. Douglas and Katherine married on 2 January 1954. They moved to Lancaster in December 1959 and bought a house (Highfield) in Silverdale, where they still lived until Katherine's death.

Into their lives came three children: Helen, Rab and Anna, in that order. With a family to care for, Katherine took part-time work, doing 'baby clinics', blood transfusion sessions, and, lastly, sessions in psychiatry at the Moor Hospital with the Superintendent of the hospital, Dr Stanley Smith.

Her hobbies and passions were many and varied, including gardening, history, fast cars(!), cooking, and, of course, her love of her close-knit family.

To some she appeared haughty and dismissive, but beneath this demeanour lay a warm and loving person, who to a certain extent hid her shyness and was really full of fun, smiling and laughing in the midst of a hearty conversation.

She was a fine, strong lady emotionally, and only retired fully from medical work when persuaded to by her superiors at the unlikely age of 78.

She has now finally retired from life at the grand old age of nearly 94.

John Carne
Retired general practitioner