

# LEGACY OF LOVE . . .

A remarkable life has been remembered by a Shropshire charity after it was left more than £100,000 in the will of an Oswestry woman. Sheila Baird was 101 when she died last year, after devoting much of her life to others as a State Registered Nurse.

As well as working in Oswestry, where she was born in 1915, her nursing career saw her travel the world during the Second World War.

"Having spent a lifetime devoted to the care of others, Sheila was able to leave behind a legacy that will carry on caring for others in future," says Elodie Home, Severn Hospice Legacy and In Memoriam Advisor.

"Here was someone who to all outward appearances was an ordinary person, but who actually led a remarkable life and has now left an extraordinary legacy."

After completing her nursing training in Wrexham, Sheila joined the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps as war broke out and was working in a French hospital as the advancing German army reached Dunkirk and Brittany.

Evacuated to the beach at Brest, she was aboard a troop ship heading home when she was ordered off the vessel because it was overloaded. The ship was bombed and then sunk shortly afterwards.

After supporting the Eighth Army in Egypt and Palestine working on the hospital trains frequently targeted for attack, Sheila returned to France less than a week after D-Day, landed ashore by crane!

From here, she followed the Allied advance across Europe, working in the hospitals clearing casualties. Her war service ended in Holland and the Oswestry town band played at her homecoming. Sheila returned permanently to Oswestry to look after her elderly mother in the 1960s, via the specialist Moorfield Eye Hospital and Sunderland having qualified in ophthalmic nursing.

At retirement in 1977 Sheila was assistant matron at the Orthopaedic Hospital in Gobowen, from where she had travelled to the former USSR to learn more about orthopaedic techniques. In retirement, she continued to support others and the next generation of nurses, working as the allocations officer and placing nurses in departments across the hospital.

Outside of work, Sheila remained active and was an avid walker, baker and knitter. She never married, but was engaged during the war before her fiancé was posted to serve in Burma.

Her goddaughter Hilary Rayner, daughter of Sheila's cousin Dr Cen Humphreys, remembers a



caring, loving person who adored children and always put family first. Sheila's two brothers were killed during the war and it was for her mother that she returned home, taking time out of work to look after her.

Sheila was close to her sister, Irene, also a nurse, and the pair lived together in retirement until Irene's death.

"They shared many adventures together," Hilary recalls. "Sheila was an amazing person who led such a full life and it is just typical of her that she should remember others even after she's gone."

"The family is so pleased her donation will make a difference to the hospice and the people it cares for."

When Sheila made her will in 1987 Severn Hospice had just launched the appeal which helped build its first hospice in Shrewsbury.

It was another two years before the hospice at Bickton Heath welcomed its first patients – and a full 30 years before Sheila's gift was realised.

Today, Severn Hospice has wards on two sites – Bickton Heath and Apley Castle in Telford – and a third centre in Newtown for visiting patients. It has helped almost 30,000 people live with an incurable illness since it was founded, with four out of five patients now being cared for at home.

Elodie adds: "Her gift is overwhelmingly generous. We are so lucky. I think Sheila would approve of how we will use her legacy; supporting our Hospice at Home plans."

"We care for more people in their homes than we do in our wards and her generosity equates to more than 13,000 visits."

Severn Hospice provides care annually for more than 2,000 people in Shropshire and Mid Wales, all free of charge.

