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Thelma Beatrice Cowan BEM

Born 19th February 1937, Died 15th April 2022

Born in Dublin, Thelma Beatrice Robinson assisted her mother in her delicatessen shop. She moved to London, working in ladies' fashions, in general merchandising and window dressing. In 1986, she married Jack Cowan, a doctor, and they lived in Wimbledon for a short time before moving to Bournemouth. She soon became involved in synagogue activities and general welfare work which was to occupy a major part of her life. Her contribution to local Jewish life and to this town is without parallel and an example for us all.

Thelma's generosity and care for others was a theme and her dedication to the Bournemouth Hebrew Congregation was unique. As Chair and Trustee of the Ladies' Guild she worked tirelessly for many years, whether it was welfare, preparing for Kiddushim or Shul functions, each task was performed with total dedication and to perfection.

She was also a dedicated stalwart of the Bournemouth Shul Ladies' Chevra Kadisha and was also deeply committed to raising funds for charities. The League of Jewish Women and Bournemouth Golda Emunah were among those that benefited from her tireless involvement.

Thelma's welfare work was immeasurable. She would spend hours each week, during the days, visiting Shul congregants who were unwell and in need. Then in the evenings, her time would be spent on the telephone, speaking to others, ensuring they were well and also organizing her teams for the various activities and planning ahead with her committee for future events.

In the wider community, the Royal Bournemouth Hospital where she volunteered each week for more than 20 years, was very dear to her. Her weekly rounds in the hospital were renowned and, as Thelma went among the wards, she brought an often needed and much appreciated, cheery, comforting word to those who were unfortunately unwell. She organised several fund raising dinners and events enabling funds to be raised for scanners and other vital equipment which the hospital needed and for the Butterfly Jigsaw Appeal for scanners and wheelchairs for the local Macmillan Unit.



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Devoted to the support, care and well-being of the aged, frail and sick locally and fundraising for local, national and international causes, her efforts have contributed to the care and comfort of many hundreds of children, elderly and disabled people both nationally and internationally. She received numerous awards including the Mayor of Bournemouth's Volunteer Award and a Long Service Award from Bournemouth Hospital. The Mayor of Bournemouth said 'Where would we be without these kind-hearted people who devote their time to caring for others. They are a credit to Bournemouth'.

In 2017, Thelma was deservedly invested with the British Empire Medal in the Queen's New Year Honours List, an award accepted graciously but modestly.

Thelma will be sorely missed by the Bournemouth Hebrew Congregation, her colleagues in the Ladies Guild, the wider local Jewish community, her many friends, family and by others far and wide. She is survived by her brother Stanley, sister-in-law Andrea, nephew Tyrone and niece Hayley.

Max Lopes Dias

This Obituary appeared 3rd June 2022 in the Jewish Chronicle.

A Tribute from Rhona Taylor, Hon Life President of Bournemouth Hebrew Ladies' Guild

Thelma was small in stature but enormous in kindness and welfare. She was Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer of many Bournemouth organizations and of course the Ladies' Guild, being awarded the BEM for her amazing work in the wider community.

Thelma was a constant worker for Bournemouth Hospital and cared for and comforted so many patients over the years.

No one in need in our community was forgotten. As soon as Thelma knew 'she was there arranging care, shopping, anything needed. Sick visiting organised and reported at Ladies' Guild committee meetings with no names mentioned.

Her organization skills are legendary ' so many dinners, lunches, celebrations.



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Kiddushim - her speciality including four for our family alone ' 1 barmitzvah and 2 batmitzvahs and our 60th wedding anniversary.

Unfortunately Thelma suffered very poor health in recent years without complaint. She is now at peace. There are no words to say how Thelma will be missed by this Community.

Hesped, 19th March 2023, by Stanley Mark Robinson

Rabbi and Rebbetzen Jesner, Chairman Simon Lurie, Executive, BOM members, relatives and Thelma's so many friends.

When we all gathered here nearly 12 months ago to lay Thelma Zevronah Levrocha to rest on Chol HaMoed 5th day of Pesach it was probably the worst day of my life as I had not just lost my sister but also my last sibling and best friend. No more would the phone ring on Sunday evening at 18.45 and I'd hear the cheery voice on the other end say 'Hi it's me', no more would we be able to discuss family matters like only siblings do. My whole world changed forever now I was alone. My parents and 3 other children were gone and I wasn't able to say goodbye because there were no Hespeds allowed during Chol HaMoed.

Well today we can all talk and sing her praises and pay tribute to a true Aishes Chayil, a true woman of worth who came from a very humble background to be the lady who gave her very best to help everybody she knew and in particular, the Kehilla of Bournemouth, nowhere was as good as Bournemouth in her eyes and she gave everything she had for as long as she could. I used to say why don't you take it easy, take a break, look after yourself you're not a spring chicken anymore and she would say well I don't do much anymore, the other girls on the Ladies Guild or some committees do most of the work I just help a bit. Meanwhile, she used to come down to me and she was busy planning the food portions and table plans and a million other things planning for all different social events like 'Meet and Munch', speakers, singers, and a lot of other entertainers, all for special events for the Shul.

That was one side then there was her social work and her work in the hospital every week. I really don't know how she found the time to do it all, well into her 80s she used to run around and up and down the stairs in my house as if she was a two-year-old always out walking or running to the wholesalers or



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supermarket. And when in the end she couldn't do it, herself she found that she had such wonderful friends who used to help her she was lucky to have you all I won't name you but you all know who you are and you deserve a Yesher Koach for what you did for her so thank you very much.

Thelma was always a giver, never a taker she would give away her last penny if it would help and if you dared to say don't be silly, she'd look at you with eyes wide open and say those words 'you're not paying I'm paying or I'm dealing with it' and as far as she was concerned that was the end of the matter and most of us would leave it alone and move on because when she made up her mind there was no changing it.

Finally, a bit of history. She was born in 1937 the second child of Cissie and Saul Rubinstein (the name was changed to Robinson in 1943). She went to Zion School Dublin and when she came home daily, she used to help our mother run her delicatessen in Clanbrassil St which was the street that supplied the Jewish Quarter with everything they needed from a street full of Jewish shops to none in a span of 35 years. She had no secondary or university degrees and yet she was educated at the university of life. She moved to London with our sister Phyllis in 1955/56 and the rest is now history - she never lost her Irish accent and she never tried to hide it.

We'll never forget you Thelma Beatrice Cowan (nee Robinson) BEM a true Aishes Chial.