

# Nurses Reunited 60 Years After Meeting as Students

60 years after they met as students at the Western General Hospital, a group of 23 nurses and their partners have been reunited by the City of Edinburgh Council.

The lifelong friends flew in from Australia, Canada and from across the UK to celebrate their Diamond Jubilee Anniversary with a civic reception in the City Chambers.

The event was hosted by Depute Lord Provost, Joan Griffiths, who gave thanks to the organising efforts of Maureen Michie and her fellow planners Heather Moncur, Margaret Paton and Isabel Turnbull.

Maureen Michie was 17 when she began her training at the Western General. Now 77, she explained: "We are so pleased to reunite so many members of our group, who live all over the world, plus some stalwart partners, to celebrate 60 years of knowing one another.

"Unfortunately some colleagues in USA, Canada, Australia, and England have been unable to join us because of family commitments or ill health, but we look forward to sharing photos and news with them after this very special weekend together.

"We are especially disappointed to miss Florence Gittens who is in Barbados, and Maggie and Peter Fioravanti in Canada, who had to cancel their planned participation at a very late date. But it's incredible to see each other again and to catch up on old times. It's like we've never been apart.



The group gathered outside the City Chambers

“The reunion has enabled some friends to meet for the first time since completion of training in 1962! Our first big reunion was held after 25 years, in 1987. Heather Moncur and the late Catherine Linklater organised that one which was held in the Western.

“Subsequently some of the group attended two other previous gatherings in 2009 and 2012 marking 50 years of starting and finishing training. We doubt if we shall be back for another reunion in 2022 though but who knows! In between times some of our number manage to rendezvous with anyone visiting friends or relatives in the City, or visit one another overseas.”

The reunion was an opportunity for friends to see each other for the first time in 10 years with Maureen reciting a poem she wrote to mark the milestone. In it, she said: “Can it be 60 years since we first met? The years pass so quickly, time flies, and yet. It seems only yesterday the legend started, three years completed before we parted.

“To go all our respective ways, to lead our lives in different

ways. But friendships remained and so we stayed, in touch with many a Western maid.”

The Depute Lord Provost, Joan Griffiths, said: “These amazing women were part of a generation who paved the way for a new way of nursing in the aftermath of the Second World War. Between them, they have given at least 500 years of service to the NHS, and many others to hospitals and careers all over the world.

“It has been a real honour to help them celebrate their Diamond Jubilee anniversary and to see friends and hear stories shared. What strikes me is just how many of these ladies still give their time to volunteer, undertake charity work and truly help others, despite being retired and into their eighties.

“In fact, one of the ladies couldn’t be here because she is in Barbados, providing emergency relief during Hurricane Dorian. These women truly represent what it means to be a nurse.”