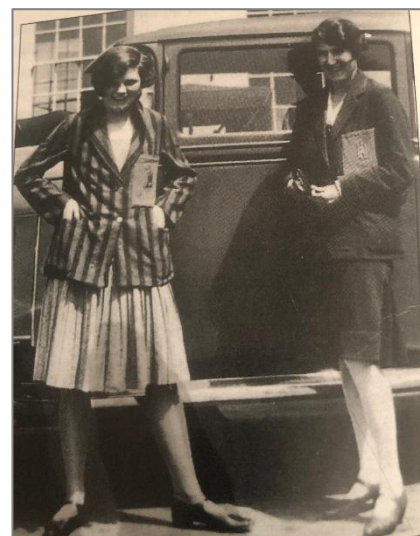


## Mary Agnes Burr OBE 1906-1996 – Pharmacist



Mary was born in Spittal near Chesterfield, the only daughter and eldest child of Percy William Burr, the Commercial Director of a wholesale druggist and Margaret Ann Humphreys from Flintshire, Wales. Mary had five brothers. She was baptised in Wales and seemingly kept in close contact with her grandparents there as in the 1911 census she is visiting them. She was educated at a convent school in Wales, and possibly in Paris. After her schooling, as was the custom at the time, she was expected to stay at home and help with the family and the social life of her village; by 1921 they are living in Small Heath in Birmingham. However, Mary was used to being away from home and longed for the same opportunities as her brothers, two of whom had already begun to train as pharmacists, and she decided that was what she wanted.

Mary started her diploma course at Sheffield University and worked part-time in Nottingham to gain practical experience but stayed living at home then near Chesterfield. In 1928 she came to the University of Nottingham and was one of the first students to live in Florence Boot Hall saving her traveling for many hours every day. She recorded her memories about her time there with Gertrude Watson a later RPS President who worked in the University Pharmacy



Department and was a tutor at FB Hall. She recalled the happy homely atmosphere which many early students also commented on in *The Gong* student magazine.

In 1936 Mary took over the Park Pharmacy (Robsons) on Derby Road, near Canning Circus, which was perfectly located close to the Park and the Ropewalk, the hub of private medical practice in Nottingham. She worked there with her brother Charles, a dispensing optician. She became the second woman to serve as president of the Nottingham branch of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society serving from 1962-1963.

In 1973 she was awarded a Charter Gold Medal for her outstanding pharmacy work, and in 1975 was awarded an OBE for services to pharmacy; she was accompanied to Buckingham Palace to receive the honour by Walter and Betty Burr. She was highly regarded for her work in pharmacy, local hospitals and Nottingham University, the latter of which awarded her an honorary MA in 1985. Mary ensured that the décor of her former pharmacy was preserved by transferring it to the Cookworthy Museum in Plymouth, saving it from demolition.

After retirement, she moved to Bryn Arthur, a cottage in Wales which she had inherited from her mother, who in turn had inherited it from her sister, Aunty Cis. Mary died on 24 October 1996 at Maelor Hospital, Wrexham, aged 90, from renal failure complicating advanced uterine carcinoma.

Story in *The Nottingham Evening Post*, Publication Date: 22 May 1947; and obituary in Oct 25 1996 *Evening Post*

*Florence Boot Hall - A short History to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Helen Meller & Jackie Mills.*

