

ESTHER MARY DAVIS

Lived: Born 27th April 1919 in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford. Eldest in family of 5. Sisters: Eliza, Alice and Helen. Brother; Walter. Father: Norman Samuel Davis Mother: Helena Sinton Reid. Died 15th April 2011 in Portadown, Co Armagh aged almost 92 years. Buried in Moyallon Friends' burial ground, Co Armagh

Best Known For: Work with leprosy patients in Nigeria.

Early Years: Lived in Chestnut Lodge, Enniscorthy and often in childhood returned there with her brother Walter to spend time with her grandmother. Attended Quaker meeting locally with her family.

Hillsborough Years: family moved north so that her father could set up a poultry farm. A small farm of 7 acres was bought at Drumanduff near the filter beds outside Lisburn.

Schooling: Attended Hillsborough Elementary school for a short time, then travelled by bus to Brownlee Memorial School in Lisburn. Secondary education in Belfast at Ashleigh House School for Girls. During that time she lived with her aunt, Winifred Davis, in South Belfast.

Medicine: studied at Queen's University, Belfast. Worked as a GP in a practice in Portadown.

Nigeria: Esther soon felt the call to work in Nigeria as a doctor with the Qua Iboe Mission so went in 1948. Her aunt Hilda had gone there and married Herbert Dickson from Scotland and did pioneering work in Nigeria. She worked at Etinan and Ekpene Obom hospitals in the field of leprosy.

Leprosy Work: Esther became an expert in the treatment of leprosy. She took up WHO study scholarships in India and Ethiopia to extend her knowledge of the disease. For her contribution to the study and control of leprosy she was awarded an OBE. This caused her much soul-searching but she accepted the honour. She spent about 40 years in Nigeria working as a leprosy doctor. She was Medical Superintendent there from 1977 to 1988.



Esther Mary Davis

As A Person: Esther was warm-hearted, full of humour, good company, strong in her faith and commitment to the leprosy patients. She rose early to read the Bible and pray daily and wrote many letters and later emails. It was always a joy for her to have former colleagues to stay in Portadown: Africa was her real home and she thought and lived Africa in retirement. Esther was most hospitable so in her later years friends, nieces, neighbours called with her and supported her as she had more health problems. She could find a way around difficulties and maintained a desire to live independently with local support.

Those Who Knew Her: Esther Davis was held in much affection by all who knew her at home and abroad. At her 90th birthday party many friends and neighbours were present representing the esteem in which she was held. The Davis, Chapman, Cuthbert and Robinson families regret her passing. The Meeting for Worship at her funeral was one of joyful celebration of a life lived in service to others.

PORTADOWN QUAKER MEETING

Esther was a member of Portadown Friends Meeting and maintained a lively interest in the members young and old. She held prayer meetings in her home for the women of the meeting. Esther had a concern to visit members and attenders. Right up to the end she wanted to know about Yearly Meeting, the Moyallon Centre and all Quaker events. Bible study was important to her and she was always encouraging others to trust wholly in God's ways.



Esther (Centre) in Nigeria

Caring For Her Father: In 1965 she returned to Portadown to care for her elderly father until he died. While home she undertook GP work in Lurgan and Portadown. She returned to Nigeria after he died in 1977 to resume her leprosy work.

Retirement: Esther settled in Village Walk in Portadown and lived there alone until she died. She spent much time promoting the work of the leprosy hospital, keeping in touch with former colleagues and friends there and collecting money for the Friends of Ekpene Obom. This was a small charity she set up to meet all sorts of needs of the leprosy patients. When she made several visits to Nigeria in retirement she dispensed this money to patients for many varied needs. On one of these more lengthy visits she was Medical Superintendent from 1995 to 1996. Esther wrote a small book of her memoirs in Ekpene Obom entitled "Quick, Doctor Quick" which was published by Mission Africa in 2007.

