

Mary Duggan 1925 – 1973

Educationalist and Icon of Women's Cricket

Mary qualified from Dartford in 1946 with an outstanding record. She taught in schools for seven years, where, according to one of her Headmasters, she brought 'a new spirit and dignity to physical education'.

In 1953 she joined the Dartford lecturing staff. After six years at Dartford she became an Inspector for the Inner London Education Authority and spent four years with responsibility for the physical education programmes in Greenwich, Hackney and Woolwich. As well as advising in schools, Mary ran very successful evening classes for teachers and assisted in the compilation of physical education books that were used nationally in schools and colleges.

Mary returned to Dartford in 1963 as Deputy Principal. It was a very challenging period. Society was changing and it was necessary to review the course and its ethos to make it more liberal and diverse. Among the changes that were made at this time were the expansion of the time-table to include a second teaching subject and the participation of students teaching on educational cruises.

During her tenure, a Primary Education course was introduced, and Mary, as Deputy Principal, was instrumental in successfully integrating the two courses, both educationally and physically, on the campus. The addition of this course, and with the physical education student numbers increasing at the same time, meant that the student population went from 160 to 600. She solved the inevitable problems with immense skill and tact.

During her time as Deputy Principal, Mary was constantly in demand as a contributor to the wider scene of physical education and sport. In 1966 she was on the planning committee for an international conference that was held in Sweden in 1967 called Sport for Women. In 1968/69 she was involved in the devising of The Luxembourg Conference on 'Methods of Organising Women's Sports Groups'. At both of these conferences she Chaired committees.

She also Chaired the first Physical Education Sub-Committee of the Schools Council. Under her direction the committee produced the film 'Free to Move', a programme of physical education for primary schools, and it was responsible for the seminar which developed into the Schools Council Working Paper No. 37 – 'PE 8-13'. It also produced the statements for a national survey on the objectives of physical education, which was published soon after she died.

Outside the field of education Mary was, and still is, recognised as one of the best players in the history of Women's Cricket. Her illustrious career began whilst she was still at school when she was reported in the local paper for bowling out the opposition – the Wiltshire police! It was also at school that she started coaching and eventually, became one of the first two women to gain an MCC coaching award. The other was Ruth Prideaux.

Mary played in the representative teams of Middlesex and Worcestershire, both of which she captained, and Yorkshire and the South. She became captain of England and President of the Women's Cricket Association.

She represented England in 17 Test Matches. Her debut was in 1949 versus Australia in Adelaide. In her last Test at the Oval in 1963 she made an unbeaten century and took 7 wickets for 72 runs, figures which have not been surpassed today. England won the match and the series. Mary took 77 Test wickets in her career and this record also stands today. (The second most successful bowler took 60 wickets.)

Mary was passionate about educating and had very high standards in everything she did; she was also approachable, empathetic and sympathetic, a person of great integrity who was inspirational; a legend in her lifetime.