



ALISON DOWSON

Honouring 50 years membership in Inner Wheel.

Alison became a Charter member of the IW Club of Christchurch East in 1969, when some enterprising women 'caught the Inner Wheel bug,' gained permission, and blessing of their Rotarian husbands to form an Inner Wheel Club. There were only six other Clubs in the whole of New Zealand at that time, two of them being in Christchurch.

With Alison's new found interest in Inner Wheel, she readily accepted executive roles in her Club, and later, as her enthusiasm continued to grow in Inner Wheel, an emerging International organisation, saw her take on the newly formed District position of Extension Chairman. This covered the whole of the South Island and as a young working woman with a family, she spent hours travelling and speaking to Rotary Clubs and Rotarianne's (wives of Rotarians) about forming new Clubs, and had a great deal of success.

Alison's involvement at District level led her to becoming District Chairman in 1983-84, a year after District NZ298 divided in half, as there were now 37 Clubs in the South Island. She represented NZ on the International Inner Wheel Board for two years from 1984 to 1986.

In 1988-89 Alison became the first New Zealander to be elected International IW President. Her chosen theme: 'Protect Children – They are the future', was truly embraced by members all over the world, and she noted with pleasure the hundreds of innovative ways Inner Wheel members put that theme into action.

The IIW Board Meeting, was held on the island of Rhodes, Greece, where a diverse variety of topics were discussed, ranging from the 25th Anniversary of IIW, representation of IIW to the United Nations NGO Committees, a new format for IIW Executive and Board, and even whether men should be allowed to become IW members. Alison managed a Board of 23 women, from as many different countries with decisiveness and grace.

That year saw also saw a change of Secretary in the London office, and Alison spent considerable time re-organising and setting up new office systems to cater for the ever changing needs of an international organisation.

Living on the opposite side of the world to the IIW Headquarters meant a travel time of 31 hours for an Executive meeting, and as President there were many invitations to visit IW all over the world, but Alison, often with Keith by her side took it all in her stride. A fascinating mix of countries including: Portugal, Morocco, Mexico City, USA, and India, being hosted by IW members, Rotarians and dignitaries.

Alison has continued to serve IW with that well known infectious enthusiasm, and has remarkable recall of the huge number of IW events that have filled her life. We note with pride that Alison has received the honour of M.N.Z.M as a mark of gratitude for services to Inner Wheel.

The IW Club of Riccarton recently honoured Alison to mark her remarkable journey of 50 years as a valued member, recognising her selfless devotion to Inner Wheel at all levels - Club, District, New Zealand and International Inner Wheel.

Cecile Pierce IIW Representative/Board Member 1988-90

Top photo: 1988-89 IIW President Alison Dowson



Recent photo of Alison Dowson



IIW President Alison Dowson & IIW Representative/Board Member Cecile Pierce
1989



Tree planting with International Rotary President Royce Abbey, at Christchurch
Botanical Gardens 1989.