

DR LORNA ROZNER



The University is proud to be honouring Dr Lorna Rozner. Her contribution we are celebrating today is as one of the founding members of the Graduates' Association, an organization which has played such a crucial role in maintaining the University's contact with its former students, both here in the North East, and now, via our Alumni Relations network, across the UK and the rest of the world.

Dr Rozner came from a musical family, which gave her a lifelong love of Classical music, and explains her ownership of – not one - but *two* grand pianos. Her father Hermann was a talented musician, and one-time Musical Director of the Theatre Royal in Newcastle. She has several close family ties with the institution that became Newcastle University. Her uncle Alexander took a Certificate in the Arts at King's College, and graduated top of his year. Her sister was also in the Geography Department as a student. Lorna Rozner, or McLeod as she was then, came up in 1941. Out of 85 students admitted to study medicine that year, she was one of only twenty women, at a time when many of the young men of her generation were away at war. She recalls that she and her fellow-students felt guilty that they were sheltered from front-line duties, since trainee medics were exempt from military service. Dr Rozner recalls that student life continued during the war with some semblance of

normality. Medical students it seems have always had a propensity for high-jinks – there was an incident involving the removal of a Ford motor car from its correct parking place outside and its relocation by some of her fellow-students into a corridor.

She graduated with an MBBS in 1947, and went on to take a Diploma in Public Health in 1951. These were interesting times to be involved in Public Health after the war. Dr Rozner went to BMA house in London to hear Nye Bevan give a lecture, accompanied by a group of other doctors from the North East, some of whom were of a right-wing disposition. On this occasion, Bevan demonstrated such charisma that he persuaded even her most sceptical colleagues that the proposed foundation of the National Health Service was a good idea.

Dr Rozner's career in medicine started in the 1950s working in Public Health in Gateshead. Subsequently, she moved to South Shields General Hospital where she specialised in Psychiatry. Together with her husband Willy, an eminent Cardiologist, she raised a family of three daughters. She retired from St. Nicholas's Hospital in 1978. She now has three granddaughters and continues to enjoy a long and pleasant retirement. Among her many interests, she is an oenophile - a connoisseur in particular of red wine.

This brief sketch of Lorna Rozner's life and career belies the presence in our midst of a dynamic and formidable committee member. A person of natural modesty who is unforthcoming about her personal achievements, Dr Rozner's friends all agree one thing: if there is a committee that needs a dedicated, charming and energetic worker, then this is person for the job. In retirement, she is Secretary of her Resident's Association, and has been an active campaigner for the Liberal Democrat Party. She was also present at the first committee meeting of the Avison Society.

Over the past three decades, she has devoted so many of these qualities as a committee volunteer through her work with Newcastle University alumni. It seems curious to reflect that up until the mid-1970s no formal organization

existed to keep Newcastle University graduates in touch with one another, and with their *alma mater*. Dr Rozner happened to know the sister of Muriel Emsley-Smith, with whom she had been a pre-med student. It was at Muriel's suggestion that they should form a Graduate Association which would hold regular events such as an annual luncheon, and a monthly lecture. Another early collaborator in this venture was Norman McCord, now an Emeritus Professor of History, whom I am delighted to say has escorted Dr. Rozner this evening. During the 1980s, as the Graduate Society grew in numbers, they introduced the offices of Treasurer and Secretary, and a Life Membership scheme. They represented the views of alumni in different areas of University life, such as the re-development of the Quad. There was a particularly contentious episode involving the purchase of a second set of ceremonial robes for the Chancellor of the University, although the reason for the demise of the first set of robes are obscure (possibly due to the appointment of an enormously tall or corpulent Chancellor).

A former Chairman of the North-East branch of the Graduate Society, Nick Richardson, recalls that Dr Rozner has always been a willing and dedicated member of the Committee, who at one time was even willing to host meetings on Saturdays in her own home. The current Chairman, Ian Forster, informs me that their monthly lectures now regularly attract between 100 and 150 people, with a varied programme of outings, luncheons and Christmas events. Dr Rozner is still a Committee member and faithful attender of meetings.

Lorna Rozner's decades of service to this University have been distinguished by the good sense and pragmatism which she has shown in fostering our ongoing relationship with our graduates. The Graduate Society which she helped to found has enriched the lives of those people who have kept in touch long after graduation. As an institution, we owe her an enormous debt of gratitude.

I asked Lorna why she had been willing to give up so much of her time and energy to our alumni, and she responded that she felt it was vitally important

for people from all walks of University life to get to know one another, and to keep in touch. Besides this, she added, 'I just love the place'.

Ladies and gentlemen, please be upstanding for our new Honorary Fellow, Dr Lorna Rozner.