

## **Ann Stansfield: Founder of the Paget's Association**

**by Diana Wilkinson**

It was in 1973 that the Paget's Association was founded directly out of need, by Ann Stansfield. When her husband Alf was diagnosed with Paget's disease, they experienced considerable difficulty obtaining information about the condition.

Ann Stansfield's tireless efforts to combat Paget's disease took her on a global journey, corresponding with hospitals, specialists, and universities worldwide. Her sheer determination and persistence not only led to personal progress in understanding the disease but also enabled her to support numerous individuals affected by Paget's disease. Keeping a meticulously handwritten register of sufferers, Ann maintained regular correspondence and, even while visiting family in Australia, utilised the opportunity to raise awareness on local radio.

To sustain her work, Ann engaged in fundraising activities, crafting, collecting, and selling goods in the local market. Her commitment remained unwavering, and she gradually garnered attention from specialists interested in Paget's disease. Aided by an old-fashioned typewriter she gradually attracted the attention of specialists with a particular interest in Paget's disease. She gained support from Dr Allan St. John Dixon and the Rehabilitation and Medical Research Trust and so in 1973 Dr Dixon helped Ann to establish the Charity, The National Association for the Relief of Paget's Disease or The Paget's Association as we are now known. Dr. Dixon served as the first Chairman and later as Honorary President until 2011.

Ann's determination and tireless fundraising propelled the Association to new heights, providing support to many and facilitating research projects to understand the causes of Paget's disease. In the late 1980s, Professor David Anderson, along with his secretary Tricia Orton, became instrumental in administering the Charity. Professor Anderson established the Salford Paget's Disease Service, at Hope Hospital in Salford (now Salford Royal), marking a significant expansion of the Association's activities.

When Ann's health declined, Tricia took on the administrative responsibilities, and the charity's office moved from Ann's front room to Hope Hospital. In 1983, Ann's remarkable contributions were officially recognized when she was awarded the MBE. The first organised local support group emerged in 1990 in Manchester, providing a platform for patients, caregivers, and family members to share experiences and knowledge, as well as gain support.

Ann's husband, Alf, who battled Paget's disease for at least 27 years, passed away in 1984. In the Association's newsletter, Ann wrote, "It was his wish for 'No flowers but if desired, donations to our cause'. I hope to continue this work in his memory."

Though significant strides have been made in Paget's disease treatment since Ann's passing in 1995 at the age of 85, her legacy lives on. The local newspaper headline, 'Farewell to Mrs. Charity,' reflected the profound impact she had made. In Ann's final letter to members, during the summer of 1991, she wrote, "I would ask you all to continue giving your support whenever and wherever possible so that together we can overcome the problems facing sufferers and ultimately reach the goal towards which we are all working".