

Mary McMaster Blue Plaque Speech: Malcolm Fearn

I must start by thanking the Oxfordshire Blue Plaque Board for giving us the opportunity to have a plaque in memory of the life and work of Mary McMaster.

Mary was born in 1914 and lived to be 90. She trained as a physiotherapist at the Middlesex Hospital and there discovered her passion and vocation for this work. After a spell at Stoke Mandeville, she came to the Wingfield-Morris Orthopaedic Hospital (now the Nuffield) and stayed ten years.

McMaster House and its neighbour, St Luke's Hospital, are the fruits of an inspiration by Mary Neville – later Mary McMaster – in the early 1950s.

Mary brought together a number of like-minded people to create a Christian community with the aim of providing help to those who were “sick, elderly and disabled”.

As you have just heard, the hospital came first, followed by McMaster House in 1984.

By 1982 patients had moved into the newly completed St Luke's Hospital. Hard on the heels of this McMaster House was taking shape, and the first tenants moved in on 22nd June 1984.

Over the years the McMaster House has been updated and modernised to meet the needs and aspirations of our tenants. In 2020 we completed a 6-month building project to add 3 brand new flats, and to combine 2 studio flats into a spacious one-bedroom flat.

We are immensely proud of this extra contribution to meet housing need for the over 55s in Oxford, and we think that Mary would have very much approved.

We and the community at large owe an immense debt of gratitude to Mary McMaster and her vision.