

MURIEL CHALKLEY

Pro-Chancellor,

Muriel Chalkley is an inspirational leader in the nursing and midwifery professions. After a successful career in the UK she spent over 20 years as a missionary nurse in Kenya, pioneering midwifery and nursing services, training local women as midwives, and dramatically reducing maternal and infant mortality rates.

Muriel was born in the Wirral, to an economically poor family of committed Methodists. She left school at the age of 14 and worked first in a Lever Brothers factory at Port Sunlight, then in a Liverpool children's nursery, and later as a shorthand typist in an office. At the outbreak of World War 2, when she was 17, there came an opportunity train as a nurse, first at Morecambe and later at Clatterbridge and Macclesfield. When she had received her SRN, Muriel was told that she was 'a born midwife', so she went on to train as a midwife teacher at Birmingham Maternity Hospital, where she qualified with a Midwife Tutor Diploma. Throughout these busy times she remained an active member and lay preacher in the Methodist Church – as indeed she still is, in her retirement.

In the early 1950s Muriel headed a large and busy as maternity unit in Derby. However, she gave up this secure and established position to become a missionary nurse in Africa: as she says, there many who could do her job in Britain, but the need was far greater elsewhere. So in 1955 she moved to the Maua Methodist Hospital in Kenya, where she immediately found a chronic lack of trained staff and only the most rudimentary medical facilities. In these challenging circumstances she set about developing public health and general nursing services for local communities, building a maternity care infrastructure, and training local Kenyan women to become fully qualified midwives. All this in addition to running the Hospital's maternity ward and taking a personal lead in patient care. Over the years, she delivered hundreds of Kenyan babies and saw many cohorts of her local students becoming qualified midwives. The Maua Methodist Hospital maternity and delivery wards are named after her, and she remained involved with the hospital long after her retirement.

For some time Muriel was the only qualified Midwife Tutor in Kenya, and as a result she played a very significant role in teaching and examining midwifery students across Kenya, and supporting the post-colonial government's development of indigenous medical services. Many of her students are in regular contact with her, and she is warmly remembered in Kenya as an inspirational leader whose work directly paved the way for the development of indigenous models of skilled midwifery.

Muriel Chalkley's immense knowledge and experience of midwifery in the UK and Africa has been greatly influential in our School of Health and Social Care, giving midwifery academics profound insights into the development of the profession, of midwifery education, and the provision of medical services

in majority world countries. So today BU is proud to celebrate and honour Muriel's lifelong professional contribution which remains directly relevant to modern, international concerns.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Muriel Chalkley, and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Education, *honoris causa*.