



On Monday 19 October, you couldn't help but notice the colour pink in Colworth Road. Residents had put out window boxes with pink flowers and pink ribbons adorned the street.

A crowd of over fifty people were present to see the unveiling of a blue plaque to commemorate former resident Betty Westgate. Betty was the founder of the Mastectomy Association, later to become the major charity Breast Cancer Care.

Lyn Simmons, Betty's neighbour for over thirty years, introduced the event and explained her motivation for organising the plaque. The Worshipful the Mayor of Croydon, Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice welcomed everyone, particularly mentioning the Westgate family, the chief executive and staff from Breast Cancer Care and local people from the Addiscombe and Shirley Park Residents Association. The Mayor spoke of her own experience of breast cancer within her family.

Betty's son, Michael, gave a moving speech about the remarkable qualities of his mum, standing beside his younger brother Graham. 'When she discovered a lump she saw a doctor who told her it was a benign tumour. Later that week, she received an urgent phone call to say she had breast cancer. So she took herself off to hospital without even telling our father to have it removed. She had a successful full mastectomy. On her discharge, a timid young nurse thrust a wad of cotton wool into Mum's hand, suggesting she put it in her bra, "as it would make her look more normal." After this experience she was convinced that women needed help, comfort, consideration and information. Thus was born Breast Cancer Care.'

Professor Trevor Powles CBE, a previous Head of Breast Cancer at the Royal Marsden, now Medical Director at the Cancer Centre London and a patron of Breast Cancer Care, was the perfect choice to conduct the unveiling. Having known and worked with Betty, he spoke of her drive in setting up the support helpline from her home in Colworth Road and the absolutely essential work carried out by the charity today. He highlighted the advances and developments in treatment for breast cancer since Betty's diagnosis all those years ago.

There was a celebratory atmosphere after the unveiling, with lots of photographs being taken. Over lunch, Betty's sons reminisced about their younger days at 1 Colworth Road. And Betty's grandchildren remembered being taken round Bingham Park when they visited Addiscombe.

The blue plaque for Betty Westgate is a permanent reminder of a remarkable woman whose legacy continues. As Samia al Qadhi, the CEO of Breast Cancer Care stated, "With over 55,000 people each year receiving a devastating diagnosis, Betty's vision has never been more important and we are committed to continuing her amazing work."

Do come and look at the plaque.