

CITY DRAMA LEGEND 'MISS PAT' DIES, 90



INSPIRATION: Betty Pattison (centre), who has died at the age of 90, pictured last year with her daughter Elizabeth McConnell and pupils to mark Pattison College's 60th anniversary

By Martin Bagot
NEWS REPORTER

A LEGENDARY Coventry dance and drama teacher known affectionately as "Miss Pat" has died.

Betty Pattison, who helped launch the careers of a galaxy of stars after founding Pattison College, in Stoke Green, died in University Hospital on Wednesday at the age of 90 after suffering a stroke.

Staff and former pupils were in mourning yesterday and are preparing a fitting tribute to the woman famous for saying, "There's no such word as can't".

Miss Pat was principal at Pattison College since she founded it 61 years ago and in 1994 her daughter, Elizabeth McConnell, was appointed joint principal.

Mrs McConnell, who taught French at the college from 1982 and was appointed head teacher in 2003, paid tribute to her mother yesterday.

She said: "She was just a remarkable woman. She taught so many people and she was able to inspire everyone. She would just

work non-stop and really enjoyed her work.

"She was just an extremely focused woman and was still teaching into her mid-80s. An incredible woman."

Miss Pat moved to Coventry from Sheffield in the early 1920s with her father and attended Stoke Park School.

An engineer, her father began teaching ballroom dancing at the family home and a young Miss Pat caught the performing bug.

She taught dance for ten years before opening her own school in Binley Road with just 15 pupils and four other teachers in 1949.

Staff said Miss Pat would still visit the school daily right up until her death.

She was awarded an honorary degree from Warwick University and a lifetime achievement award by the International Dance Teachers Association.

FAMOUS PUPIL: Spooks star Richard Armitage

Coventry City Council awarded her the Good Citizen Award last November and the then Lord Mayor, Councillor Jack Harrison, hailed her for "helping shape the city during the last 60 years".

A statement was released on the college's Facebook page yesterday saying: "We shall miss her greatly but in true style she is still in control, having pre-arranged her funeral. Details will follow but the family want the emphasis to be on celebrating her remarkable life and all she achieved in her 90 years."

A host of TV actors, dancers and top performers began their careers under Miss Pat's stewardship, including Spooks and Robin Hood actor Richard Armitage and Kerys Nathan, Michael Jackson's choreographer for 13 years.

Messages of condolences poured in to the school yesterday and former pupils turned up in person upon hearing the sad news.

