

## The Legacy of Lillas Graham

On the 12th anniversary of the death of community worker and philanthropist Lillas Violet Graham, we commemorate her life of "sheer goodness, rooted in practical Christian love".



Lillas was born in London in 1917 to a family with Scottish aristocratic heritage and a strong social

conscience. Following her family's tradition, she volunteered in the Docklands of East London among people living in the poverty of the 1930s.

Her experience with the Auxiliary Territorial Service led to work with the United Nations Refugee and Relief Agency in Egypt, Palestine, Greece and Austria.

She returned to Britain in 1948, suffering from a brain tumour, which was successfully operated on. After completing a training course, aimed at making Christianity relevant to the social needs of the country—in 1952 she wrote to John How, the then Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, offering herself for work among the poor in Glasgow.

Lilias was appointed as a lay worker by the Scottish Episcopal Church, but the Church initially resisted her desire to live in the Gorbals, then a notorious slum in Western Europe, because it was considered far too risky for a single woman. She got her way, however, and her flat on Abbotsford Place, in the heart of the Gorbals, became a drop-in centre with a playroom, a nursery and a room where local women, the Old Hens' Club, could meet and talk. The women also ran a second-hand clothing store, known as the Hen House, in nearby Bedford Street.

When the Gorbals days ended, she moved into Braendam, a house she had inherited in Perthshire and had set up as a holiday and respite centre, and which she later signed over to a charity trust, which continues the work that was so close to her heart.

Through the work of Lilias Graham and a myriad of others working alongside, two charities continue the legacy of care—[The Lilias Graham Trust](#) and the [Glasgow Children's Holiday Scheme](#).

We give thanks for the witness of Lilias Graham and the perseverance of those following in her steps to care for others.