Belinda Petty was an amazing lady – smart, funny, articulate, caring, insightful and one of the leaders in refereeing. She was one of the judoka who trained at the Budokwai in the early 70s when ladies were only allowed to practice in the downstairs dojo. Belinda’s trademark was her false eyelashes which stayed on in spite of the fierce training sessions.

In 1975 the Budokwai ladies attended a referees’ course and, along with many others, Belinda passed.... and the dye was cast for her to become one of the UK’s leading female referees. She worked for many years at numerous Area opens and national events. She taught sports to teenagers some of whom had challenging backgrounds and behaviours … she treated all with fairness and respect.

She trained and examined referees and was a highly competent senior examiner who passed candidates only if their judo skills met the required standards. In the 70s - 80s there was active reluctance to select female referees to officiate at national senior men’s events – one of the reasons being that they would be unable to separate male players if the need arose. Belinda questioned this for 3 years until finally it was agreed that women could referee men at national events. This legal decision had an impact on the progression of ladies in refereeing worldwide.

So Belinda – on behalf of all female judoka, thank you for your inner strength, passion and determination about judo and fairness.

Marion Woodard