

Darby & Joan Clubs

“The purpose of the clubs is to provide companionship in comfortable, cheerful and warm surroundings, to help members to continue to play a role in the life of the community, to keep up or awaken their interests and to give them the opportunity to put to account their aptitudes and skills.”¹



Darby and Joan Clubs were established in 1946, the first was opened in Lincoln on 26th July. By 1948 WVS ran over 200 Darby and Joan Clubs which grew to 1,700 in 1959 and there were over 2,000 by the end of 1960s.²

Clubs were run by a club leader and a committee made up of volunteers and club members. WRVS usually used a church or village hall to house the Darby and Joan's. Some clubs were formed in Geriatric Wards and Psychiatric Hospitals. Funding came from membership fees, some club members would raise funds by selling items they made in Working Parties.³

Early clubs provided tea, hot meals and activities including cards. Over the years, particularly the 1960s and 70s, clubs took older people on holidays and day trips. They also looked after their health and wellbeing, offering chiropody clinics and hairdressing. Some clubs also ran competitions with other clubs in their district or county which included Handicrafts and singing.

Darby and Joan was the general name for old peoples clubs run by WVS in 1950s which could be open 4-5 days per week or 1-2 days a week. By the late 1960s/70s Darby and Joan Clubs were more commonly referred to as afternoon clubs which were open once a week or once a fortnight. Since the 1970s Darby and Joan clubs have remained largely the same in the way they are run and the activities they provide.⁴

There are a number of Darby and Joan clubs still run by volunteers though they vary in name including: Autumn Club, Silver Threads, Social Club there are also Community and Activity Clubs.

¹ RVS A&HC, 807, WRVS Clubs for the Elderly Notes of the Guidance of Club Organisers, 1970

² RVS A&HC, Matthew McMurray, WVS welfare work for old people and the origins of Darby & Joan Clubs, 2008

³ RVS A&HC, 807, Old People

⁴ RVS A&HC, 807, Old People