

TRANSCRIPTIONS

HOW DOES VOLUNTEERING ENHANCE YOUR
LIFE AS A VOLUNTEER?



ROYAL
VOLUNTARY
SERVICE

Together for older people

PAT CLARKE AND ENA MILES: DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD

SLIDE 8

[EM] I don't know what, you know, how the, the future's going to develop but you just don't get people coming along to offer to volunteer anymore do you?

[PC]: I mean I know we were sort of, we weren't retiring age when we volunteered because we were both working full-time, but we did have a lot of people then who were round, round about our age and younger.

[PC]: Because we were in the coffee shop once and there was a little supermarket the other side and they had quite a variety of ages working there, you know.

[EM]: A lot of ages.

[PC]: But it doesn't seem to happen now.

[JH]: No. Because you've said that you used to supervise Duke of Edinburgh Awards?

[PC]: Yes we did.

[EM]: Yes, yes.

[JH]: Do you remember any of those people?

[PC]: Well we remember some of the boys were wonderful. I mean they really were, they, I mean they were from the most elite schools in Bristol, they were from Clifton College and the Cathedral School, I know other schools took part in it but the ones that came to, to us...

[EM]: Because they came to us on a Sunday.

[PC]: On a Sunday, the ones...

[EM]: But I can't speak to what happened during the week really.

[PC]: No, but the ones that came to us on a Sunday were very well educated.

[EM]: Yes.

[PC]: Very much, mm, eager. You know, very much in their sort of eager capacity to help and do what they could. And there were some wonderful lads that we had.

[EM]: Yes.

[PC]: I mean we were mentoring them and, and helping them, but we got as much pleasure out of it I'm sure as they did, you know.

[EM]: Yes we did. I mean generally because of their, the background, their background, they were used to, if you like, stepping forward and saying, you know, 'Hello, can I help you', weren't they? We only had the one lad, we had to encourage.

[PC]: Encourage...

[EM]: To do that.

[PC]: To do that, because most of them were very confident.

[EM]: Yes.

[PC]: Coming from Public Schools they, you know, it was built into them I think.

[EM]: But that was also a little bit of an eye-opener because I remember the shock we had with the one lad...

[PC]: When the till broke down?

[EM]: I was thinking more of his five barred gates for adding up.

[PC]: Yes we didn't have a, the till wouldn't work one day.

[EM]: So we had to make the notes and I suddenly saw we, we had these five barred gates and I thought 'What's he doing'? [Laughing]

[PC]: What's he doing?

[EM]: And he said 'Oh well I, that's the way I do my figures'. 'Right, okay', you know, 'what are you going to do', you know, 'when you, what's your ambition' sort of thing, but then 'Oh I'm going to be an accountant'. I had visions of, you

know, billions of five barred gates for the... He was, but he was lovely wasn't he that lad.

[PC]: Yes he was lovely, yes. But you see the day the till broke down we couldn't use it, we just had to transfer the money to a dish at the back and as we did it we made notes as we went and we, we were absolutely accurate to a penny at the end.

[EM]: Yes.

[PC]: And we were adding it up in our heads and he said, I said 'Would you like to check this?' and he said 'Well I can't I haven't got my computer'. And then, and then - 'my calculator' sorry, 'my calculator'. And then Ena said to him 'I'll just, what's he going to do when he leaves?' and he says 'I'm going to be an accountant'.

[EM]: An accountant.

[PC]: I mean...

[EM]: But as an individual he was lovely.

[PC]: And they were, they were good for us because we enjoyed it.

[EM]: Yes.

[PC]: It was another dimension, you know, something else we could do.

[EM]: But there was, that course then, you said about the fire attenders, one of the things that was, that regularly happened when we were working on Sundays the fire alarm.

[PC]: Oh yes the fire alarm.

[EM]: So you'd, you'd lock up, you know, troop outside. On this particular day we got in and the fridge or the, you know, the chiller cabinets had leaked.

[PC]: We had water all over.

[EM]: So there was water everywhere. So we started clearing, and this lad, well it was another lad but he'd come in, we started clearing this up, fire alarm went, so we had to leave our flood and go outside and the heavens opened.

[PC]: Opened, we were standing outside, you know, it was...

[EM]: And we got back in and...

[PC]: And I said...

[EM]: And you jov..., you jokingly said to me 'Well we've had the lot today haven't we'?

[PC]: 'Flood, fire and tempest'.

[EM]: 'Fire, flood and tempest'. 'What's tempest'? Wasn't it, 'What's tempest'?

[PC]: And he didn't have a clue, we said 'You know, from the Bible there's always fire and flood and tempest', and he didn't have a clue. But he was lovely, they were all lovely.

SLIDE 9

[EM]: I mean in fact, yes in fact the very last session we did, which was shortly before they closed down permanently the hospital chaplain came in and...

[PC]: And he's the hos...

[EM]: The hospital chaplain came in regularly on a Sunday and he apparently didn't know that it was closing and what he said to us was he said 'Who is going to hold the hands of the customers'?

[PC]: If they're in a commercial enterprise. I don't know, he didn't even know it was going to, that they'd lost the franchise. I think at that point we didn't now we'd lost the franchise, we just knew the coffee shop was closing for a while.

[EM]: And that was it.

[PC]: And that was it. We thought, you know, closing for refurbishment because they were moving the whole commercial bit outside and making a new entrance and we didn't realise at the time that it was going to be put out to tender and we were very surprised when it was a:- put out to tender and b:- that we didn't get it. I mean after all the years, I mean we did twenty-five but it had been going a lot longer than that hadn't it?

[EM]: Well when you look back we must have started pretty much near the beginning.

[PC]: Yes. I don't quite know when they started. But it was also, it was also very useful for the staff because, mm, there was...

[EM]: Well there was nothing open.

[PC]: Nothing open for the staff and they used have to just come in and buy sandwiches or something to take upstairs for later on in the day because their own bistros that they had, and they had two, closed at two o'clock on a Sunday so, you know, it was a good hub to meet the staff as well as the, as the patients. We found it quite, you know, quite an enlightening experience.

[EM]: Yes.

[PC]: We enjoyed it.

[EM]: We enjoyed it and we're still working towards thirty years aren't we?

[PC]: Yes, I've got a few more to go yet. What is it, twenty-seven now is it?

BARBARA STATHAM: HOSPITALS

SLIDE 10

I had all the hospitals in the county, all the, even the little ones, we had a trolley service. And I had all the big ones, Luton and Dunstable, Bedford. I had two, Fairfield for people with mental health problems, and Bromham for people with learning disabilities. Now Bromham unfortunately, in 1989 we had a, the most disastrous fire. I had a phone call one Friday morning, just before Christmas, from the, mm, chief, one of the, one of the managers. She said 'It's Sue, Barbara, are you sitting down'? I said 'No, why'? She said 'You're going to need to', she said 'your canteen and shop have gone'. I said 'Sue, what do you mean, they've gone'? She said 'They've been on fire and the whole lot's gone'. Well I was so shocked I could, absolutely shocked. So I got in the car and I drove out to Bromham only to find the loss adjuster already there and he was stomping around. 'Oh well, this is the end for this', he said 'you can't, can't do anything with this', he said 'sorry you, that, that's it'. He was really unpleasant. I said 'we've, we've got to, to, to rebuild'. 'Oh you can't do that' he said, 'you can't do that', he was horrible. So we took over the rec hall, the hospital's rec hall, and we got cups and saucers and tea urns and things from the hospital canteen and we started to use that. And after about three or four weeks we heard that the parents and friends would let us have their hut, which was quite big, if we could furnish it. And RAF Cardington were just finishing and they were getting rid of all their equipment so we got it. All their, a lot of their things, tables and chairs and all those things, and we re-equipped and we, we used the parents and friends hut for about fourteen months while we were rebuilding. The residents watched the building, they gave two of them hard hats because they, Dougie and Keith, because they loved to watch. And we built that lovely, lovely place, it really was beautiful. Mary Corsar came and opened it. And that was there for five years and then of course, the hospital went and they rebuilt on the site, which was sad because it was, it was a pleasure to work there and a lovely new building, the residents loved it and we had a, we had a great time.

ANON: FIRST AND LAST DAY AS A VOLUNTEER

SLIDE 11

[Interviewer] And what are your earliest memories of being a member of WVS?

Thrown in to setting up Meals-on-Wheels scheme full stop. But I realised it had a very, very good official base, structure. Whether that had been taken on by Lady Reading from the Army and the Guides I really don't know. But the actual basic organisation and structure was excellent and I grew to actually appreciate it and respect it more and more. And what was good about it the basic structure was there but we were all able to fill in, upholster it or add to it to suit local conditions. There was only one proviso, it was if you go under the next bus syndrome. But however you organised it for local conditions if anything happened to you somebody could walk in, pick it up and continue the service because it was obvious how you ran it.

[Interviewer] How did you feel about leaving, when you finished being County Organiser?

I knew my County appointment was coming up because I had been appointed ten to eleven years and I'd already said the year before to the Regional, or Area I think he was called by then, Organiser, you know, because I was appointed younger and I'd been here ten years, which is enough for anybody. So I said, you know, 'I can't stay here for ever', but I would have liked to have done something else. Anyway I was just told blatantly my appointment wouldn't be renewed. And being me and an Irish background I picked up my handbag and said 'Right I'll leave now'. Some people did join the WRVS Association, I didn't want anything more to do with it really, I was very, very hurt I would have liked to have done something else, I'd obviously a lot of knowledge, a lot of experience, I did go on to do a lot of other sorts of things but I was just told 'Your appointment won't be renewed'.

MAUREEN JONES: MEALS-ON-WHEELS ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

SLIDE 12

We moved from Guernsey, mm, to Guernsey from, from Epping and I was there about seven years. We did Meals-on-Wheels, I again, went on Meals-on-Wheels. And we used to start at about ten o'clock, which was quite amazing to me. But you used to stop for a cup of tea, tea or coffee, at some shop while doing your Meals-on-Wheels round. And it all had to be finished before twelve o'clock because the members went home to feed their husbands, because it was such a small island that any, all the husbands, I discovered, came home for lunch. But that again was, that was where the old woman with the revolver was. In Guernsey, there was a woman who was, used to, she, it was really a hovel she lived in and she used to sit over her fire, if we were very lucky it would, her fire would smoke and the smell of the room was taken up by smoke, that was really our lucky day. Mm, and, oh, Mrs 'B' was, she, she was rather like a witch really [laughing] sitting over her fire, and her face was filthy, her hands were filthy. And when she died they found she had a thousand pounds in old black and white five pound notes under her bed. She also had a revolver and she also had twenty rounds of ammunition for the revolver, so I'm glad we didn't fall out with her.

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