

TRANSCRIPTS

ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE: ITS FUTURE IN YOUR HANDS



ROYAL
VOLUNTARY
SERVICE

Together for older people

GILLIAN HIGHLEY

This one old lady, when we got there, she's sitting there and she said 'I can't eat my dinner I've lost my false teeth'. So we did a hunt for these false teeth and we didn't find them, but we did leave her with two dinners and make a, we said we would arrange for somebody to come and take her to the dentists. When the person went a few days later to take this old lady to the dentists she's sitting there with a set of shining false teeth. And she was obviously asked where she'd got them from, 'Nice to see you've found your false teeth', 'Oh no', she said, 'these aren't my false teeth, my home help had a spare pair, we've filed a bit off and they fit me a treat'. That was really good I've never forgotten that.

KATHLEEN POYNTER

Yes, we were in a chapel up at Chiseldon Chapel, Methodist chapel, a room at the back and the meals used to get brought in. And then that stopped and then we decided to cook it ourselves and there were about eight of us and we did it once a week. My, my meal was, I used to cook plaice with parsley sauce and mashed, creamed potatoes and peas and then I would do lemon meringue pie with cream, and they loved it, I used to make eight lemon meringue pies every time and I used to do it and I used to, my husband used to take me to Swindon early in the morning and I used to get the fish fresh and I used to get them to bone it for me and so there wasn't a bone in it and I used to get that for them. And I always got the white backed, but I never had no black back plaice so it was nice for them and I could roll it and they loved it, they loved it. And I would make sure the, the mash never had no lumps in it for them. And I loved cooking it, I just loved cooking it. And we'd get it dead, there dead on half past twelve and it was nice and hot and it was lovely. And I used to get all these lemon meringue pies and then somebody else would cook a different meal. Every eight week, every week they had a different meal. And then all of a sudden Health and Hygiene came in and said no, we could not no longer cook in our own homes so we had to put it to the school to do it, which was a shame because we did enjoy doing it, you know. And then they stopped that and so now we have it up at Chiseldon House. But I still do it under the banner of The WRVS.

ELIZABETH KAY

I also did, while I was in the WRVS I decided because I was a, had trained to be a keep fit teacher I actually used to teach keep fit and, mm, I thought these old people sitting all day in chairs not talking to anybody, long before local authority had started, which they do now, movement classes. ... I went to our local care home and, mm, asked the matron there if she'd like me to go in and, and do some musical movement. And so, and I used all the old songs that they knew. Some of them I had to learn, I didn't know there was a song called *He Played His Ukulele As The Ship Went Down*, and I got the songs from these old, I say 'old people', I mean heavens some of them are younger than I am now. But, but they were and they sat all day and they did nothing, and so I felt that this was a really good idea. And so I, I went and we used these songs that they knew and we did actions to the songs. Now it's done, local authorities are doing this all over, but at that time it was quite revolutionary and nobody had done that. ... That was actually breaking new ground because it hadn't been done until then. And then after that I then went to, I had a woman who played the piano for me and I went to Age UK and I went to all kinds of old people's clubs and she played the piano and I did the movements, mm, and it was, that was then sponsored by the local authority. ... It was so satisfying because I felt that the, they just loved having somebody to be with them and do these and think about how it used to be when they were young, the songs that they could sing. And we used some wartime songs as well. And before, as I say, I never knew there was a song entitled *Three Pots a Shilling* which is about a gypsy selling honey from door to door. And I learnt these, I actually looked them up. I went to, I went to Charing Cross Road to the, the archive shop there and looked up all these songs and bought the music so that my pianist could play them for me. And, mm, it was great. And then sadly Greta, who was much older, was not able to do the playing anymore and so another, another lady took over and she didn't need music at all, and it was lovely because she used to play for my keep fit classes.

PHYSICAL WELLBEING

GILLIAN HIGHLEY

I have enjoyed helping people, it's never been a chore to me. I'm thinking about one old lady, we had a call at WRVS one afternoon, a Friday, I know it was a Friday afternoon, I'd got a beautiful pink Grazia suit on because I must have been in town, and the police rang in and our secretary said to me can you go to this house. So I went to this house, I'd never been up this little back street before, and it was in a really poor part of town. This lady answered the door to me, she was dressed alright but the house was an absolute tip. The best thing that I always remember about her was she wore glasses and her glasses were always clean and shiny, Miss McCabe she was called. And I said the police had said, asked me to call and see if she was alright because she'd had a window broken. So she asked me in, there was no electric light. There was gas light. She slept on the settee, on a set of rags as it appeared to me, and she had umpteen cats, and these cats jumped all over me in my nice pink suit, it was on my shoulder, it was everywhere these cats. And she said no there wasn't really anything we could do for her, she was alright, she was a very independent old lady. She must have been eighty plus at least. And shortly after that we had the years of the power cuts, and I can remember going before I went to work in the morning pushing a candle through her door. I don't know why, oh ah, because candles were in short supply when everybody had no electricity they'd bought up all the candles and I'd got some spare ones, so I can remember pushing these candles through her door before I went to work in the morning. Mm, the cats, I said to her 'Are you sure you want all these cats'? She said 'No', they were a nuisance. So in the end the RSPCA went and took several of them away. And then she would have Meals-on-Wheels. And then, I used to visit her and she belonged to the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church opened four sort of flatlets near to the church, and they gave her one of those. And so for years I visited her down there, eventually she became bedridden she just lived in bed. And I used to go and see her, I used to bring her sheets home and wash them for her. I ended up doing her finances, collecting her pension and paying

her rent, and finally she was found collapsed when they went with some dinners, and they took her to hospital and they said she was suffering from hypothermia. She just lived in a cold house, she'd always lived in a cold house all her life, it was not that I'm quite certain. And I went to see her in hospital, and instead of being a perky old lady sitting up in bed she was slumped in a chair and she didn't live long after that.

KATHLEEN ASHBURNER

I had to book the programme for the year, bring your entertainers. They played at bingo some weeks, dominoes. We were very lucky that a friend who was the mayoress one year gave us a donation and we bought some lovely new sets of dominoes, which we're still using. We used to use the whole set of ten boxes and now we use two. [Laughing] I had to arrange outings and getting we, a lot of businesses opened their businesses, let you go round, we went to the potteries one trip. A favourite trip was to the Lake District. We went to, had lunch in the Priory. Two of our members entered an over 60s talent competition which was held in Morecambe. Mr Sunderland, our professional organist or pianist, and Mr Taylor, who was a baritone and they represented Baxenden's Autumn Club at the talent competition. They didn't win but we all supported them and had a good day out. Skipton, another favourite trip. We went to Grassington one summer for tea. K's Shoes in Kendal. The, went to the Palace Theatre in Manchester. Hornsea Pottery in Morecambe, that was a favourite visit. Nearly everybody came home with some Hornsea Pottery.

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING/INTELLECTUAL STIMULUS

CYRIL BARNES

[CB]: All the elderly people, all, all, they're all elderly people that, it just, it's just another thing like Meals-on-Wheels, they, they still relied on their library books because sometimes I think some of them didn't read the library books sometimes. I don't, I don't know, I wouldn't like to say but some of them, I think what they, they liked about it, I could sit down in a chair and talk to them for a lot longer doing library books than I could doing the meals, because the meals would start to get cold. So that was another good thing about it, you could, and they'd tell you, oh, the stories I've heard, you know, it's with them. And, and that, that's, I, that's a good thing about it. That was a good, you know, they pour their heart out to you sometimes and they'd say, you know, different things, and that, that's another good thing about doing the library service, yes.

Most of them used to like love stories I think they used to... A lot of them though it was all... And then you'd get one or two people who'd got murders and things like that but mostly they were love stories and, you know, but most of them was large print because they were all... Some, some, I used to take one or two out with the blind people, who were blind, and I used to take talking books out for them, yes. And, it, it was, there wasn't many, I don't think there was that many. Mm, I did use to take many men, out to many men, but most of the men that used to be either cowboys or it would be a murder, do you know what I mean?

But most of the women, you know, there'd always be, you know, all these love stories and that

JILL WALDEN-JONES

At the beginning it was quite difficult to establish the criteria for it. Because it was publicly funded, mm, obviously there had to be criteria and we hadn't to carry anyone who could be carried by any other form of transport. In other words if they had a car available at home and could drive it, which wasn't always the case with some people, mm, they would have to use it. And similarly they couldn't use it to go to hospital for treatment because there was already a hospital car service paid for by The Health Service. So, you know, there were, there were criteria were being set up for it. But of course, there were anomalies right from the start and I well remember being asked to Dyfed County Council had taken over, this nice young fellow who was still in charge of it rang up and said 'What's going on', he said 'I see a dog has used our, the Country Car Service'. And I, I'd noticed this because it, I was still very much in touch and had looked through all the claims and I said 'Well, yes, it was an essential, he's an essential user'. You had to be an essential user, which could, it could even, essential use could be perhaps going, if you were completely housebound being taken to see a friend or being taken even to the hairdresser if you've no other means of getting there, but it had to be a use. The fact was that this was a fat old dog that could no longer walk properly and his dear old mistress couldn't get him to the bus stop or, or indeed on to the bus but it was essential that he was taken to the vet. It was her need really, I mean she had an essential need of a car and they, they agreed it, but we always used to laugh about the dog that used it because it established part of what it was about, it was the person's need for transport.

BARBARA STATHAM

Later on when we moved from Kimbolton Road to the little, little office in Bedford, in the middle of Bedford, Rush Court, we were there for four years, that was really just, just an office. And, mm, we were still doing social transport. Mm, when that finished no one was going to do that. And we had a lot of people, and we had a lot of drivers, we had about seven drivers and a lot of people who used our social transport. And that gradually diminished as my drivers, some, two of them went, had to leave because they, they had eye problems, one went to live in Devon. And I ended up with only two drivers, but we still, I was always there if they, I had an answer phone and I used to ring back, they'd ring through and say they were going to Social, doctors or, we did medical things, doctors or the hospital or wherever. And, mm, I used to ring them back, having rung the, the driver and then tell them what time the driver was coming and, and then ask them, I didn't know, I didn't know them, it was just on, a voice on the phone. Just occasionally I met them in places like the hospital when I was doing the trolley, that's another thing I did in, the hospital trolley. Occasionally I'd meet them in the, in the hospital. And they'd say 'Oh', I'd say 'Yes, I know you don't I'? 'Do you, who are you'? I'd say 'Well you talk to me on the phone'. 'Oh it's Barbara'. [Laughing] so many, quite a lot of times and I did that, social transport for thirteen years till a year last December.

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