



## Flossie Catering Volunteer

I'm 81 years old. I worked at the hospital for about thirty or forty years, and then since I've retired I've volunteered here for thirteen years! Here in the kitchen, and serving teas in the day unit, two days a week, and three days a week I work at

Betty's. I couldn't do with no work. Maybe it's because I'm used to it - I've worked all my life - and also because of the socialising, being with people. If I see someone with a walking stick, or struggling, I help them to their table, get them what

they need. In October I got an award for my service to the hospital - out of 25 people nominated, I was picked. There was an award ceremony at the Barbican.

I've never seen my family. I was brought up in a home in Portsmouth, run by nuns. I lived at the convent till I was 22, until the nuns found me my first job at the hospital in Guildford. My life in the convent was awful really - when I think what we went through...they used to hit us, make us work on our knees scrubbing floors at night, we never got paid for it. If you behaved badly, they'd lock you in the church alone at night.

I lived in at the job. I came with just the clothes I had on, no money or anything. I'd never had money in my hand before, I didn't know how to buy clothes, how to go about with people. We didn't know the outside world. A girl at the hospital was my helper, and she helped me learn all of that. And I got there in the end!

I still see the girls I was in the home with - we get together for holidays. They all found their families eventually, but I never did. My husband and I went to Somerset House to try to trace them - they gave me my birth certificate, with my mother's name on it. But when we went to the place she was from, the

houses were all knocked down and there was no trace.

*"I was out doing karaoke on Sunday night! And pole dancing, I've done a bit of that too for a laugh!"*

I met my husband when I worked at the isolation hospital in Winchester. I worked on nights serving meals, and he came in for a drink every night. The hospital manager paid for me to go and stay with his family over Christmas - and that's how we got together. My husband was in the Army, so we were in Malta, Germany, lots of places.

I love going out celebrating, dressing up, singing, acting the fool - where's there fun, I'll be there. I'll sing whatever I know the words to. I was out doing karaoke on Sunday night! And pole dancing, I've done a bit of that too for a laugh! After that, the owner at Betty's sees me ironing there, and he says, "Hey, there's a pole over there, Betty, do you fancy it?"

I've got no regrets: I'm here, that's it!

