

Shirley S, born 1936

An edited version of an interview made on 6 June 2008

Interviewer: Christine Wilson

To start off, we were collecting money. We'd have jumble sales in Eaton Parish Hall, before we had a community centre, then we wanted to start a junior club and Eaton Hall School let us have their hall on a Friday evening for the children. Then they got up a bingo session on Monday evening at Eaton Parish Hall, and I used to make cakes for them to sell with cups of tea and coffee. Two other people, Sam and Joyce, used to help with the bingo. Dennis B was a great help and of course my husband, Frank, used to do a lot in the community. He would go round on Sunday morning getting 50ps to start the actual community centre so people could go in when it was open. But they had to have a membership card. Frank used go all round South Park and North Park on Sunday morning collecting 50ps.

*So was that money for the community centre?* Yes, I can't remember how much that actually was but they had to raise so much money so they could prove that they could run a community centre. I think the Council still helps a bit with decorating and outside work, electricity, that sort of thing. We all mucked in together to raise that money.

*Do you remember when the community centre was built?* Yes, that started in the end part of '81 and that was all finished by about March '82. It was officially opened on 14 May 1982. We used to run the junior club on a Friday night. The children used to pay 10p to come in. There would be all sorts of games and painting and this and that - activities, they had football teams and then the girls wanted us to do something for them. Boys always got everything then! *[laughs]* So they came to me one day and said, we'd like to be majorettes. *[laughs]* I didn't know anything about majorettes so I bought a book and read all about baton-twirling. Dennis, who used to help us said, tell you what we'll do, we'll buy some copper piping and I'll paint it silver and we'll get some knobs to put on the end. That was what we started off with, and because we didn't have anywhere to practise we'd do that on the Park, weather permitting. Once we got the centre going that was lovely. We used to go there on a Monday and a Wednesday evening. I used to run that with another lady Christine C. The girls won several trophies. We used to do displays which earned money. If you went to an old people's home you'd only get about £10. We went to the Desert Rats reunion in Sheringham one time and they gave us about £50 or £60. We bought all the majorettes' clothes, the fur hats, we paid for everything. When we had proper batons, their mums had to pay something towards them. Two pounds something they had to pay for the baton.

*Was there a drum?* No I don't think so. We had music. We bought a big amplifier which we would take with us. We had a drum major with the big baton-twirler right in front of the procession. We used to do the Lord Mayor's procession on the Saturday night. That was a long long walk. *[laughs]* I should think seven or eight years I did that. I used to do all the washing for the majorettes' clothes. *[laughs]* Once or twice kids would go home in their socks like when we'd been to a display and they'd come back and they'd look grey. And I thought we can't have our kids going out looking like that, so I took everything home and washed it so they were clean and all right for the next time.

*What about the junior club? When did that meet and how often?* Every Friday evening that was, right from when we started the community centre till about 16/17 years ago. People don't want to carry these things on.

*I think you told me you organised summer playgroups.* There are some pictures of that as well. I had several letters from different mums, which I thought was lovely, at the end of play schemes, saying how well that was run, how confident they were to bring their children and leave them. I had lots of cards of thanks, letters of appreciation, for having the children, how well that was run and how we took good care of the children and to thank all the helpers. I used to have so many mums come and so many teenagers so that you could have a mum and a teenager with, say, ten children, so if you went on an outing that way you got sensible people to keep that group together. That was every day for a month apart from Saturday and Sunday. That was tiring! That would be '83 the first summer after we had a community centre. City Hall used to give you so much money to start with, to buy things, paint and paper and different toys and things. I finished doing that, I should say, about 1990. I used to enjoy it. We used to do a week at Easter, another week at Whitsun, and four weeks in the long summer holidays in August.

*Were you working as well?* Oh yes, I worked in the fish shop on Parmenter Road. *[laughs]* I used to do that three evenings a week because that way there was always a grown-up at my house for my daughter. I had four children and my husband would be there.

*So you did all this in your spare time?* Spare time, yes. *[laughs]* We always had a party on the last day.

*Were you involved with other groups in the community centre?* No, only the junior club, the majorettes and the play scheme in the summer. I'm treasurer of Senior Citizens Club and I arrange all the outings and Christmas and everything like that.

*Can you remember anything about Eaton Park?* I can remember coming to Eaton Park as a five-six year old when my mum used to bring me and my two sisters to the park on a weekend. That used to have a big jazz thing where two stood up and worked it and all little seats with a handle in front to hold on to, and another roundabout, a rocking-horse, a huge big slide and then a medium slide and a small slide. There used to be three slides in the park. Of course the swings and the baby swings were there.

*Thank you very much, Shirley.*