

“Points of View”

Interview 1

I was greeted by Janet's bright smiling face, "come in, take a seat, and how do you like your coffee?" she asked.

I know Janet reasonably well; she organizes Coach Holidays, for a very appreciative band of aging individuals, of which I am one! We have some very good times together.

We talked for some time, Janet explaining how she had lived in the area, really, all her life. Having lived in Preston, her Father farmed there for many years. It reminded me of a story she had told me: As a little girl of eight years, she and her best friend decided to see what smoking was like, men seemed to enjoy it, so it must be something special, they thought. they plucked up courage and took one of Father's cigars, they carefully cut it in half and off they went to the Village Hall toilets, lit up and sucked in the smoke, neither wanted to admit that it was not nice, so stoically they carried on, probably thinking it must get better - it didn't. Before long they were both heaving their lungs up, being sick all over their clothes, shoes and socks. That was only the start of their troubles that day.

They went home, hoping to get sympathy from Janet's mother, but instead got a good thrashing for taking the cigar. They ran off to Janet's friend's mother, who in turn gave them another good thrashing for being sick all over their clean clothes. Janet received yet another good hiding from Father when he returned from work! Janet tells me she has never had any inclination to smoke - I wonder why!

Janet was married at an early age, she moved to Uppingham where her husband was cabinet maker at the Uppingham Public School. Sadly he died quite suddenly, twenty years ago.

Janet has lived an extraordinary active life, as well as bringing up her children she has been involved in 'The Rainbows' 'Brownies' and 'Girl Guides, progressing up to Uppingham District Commissioner for many years.

Janet worked at Aberdeen House Residential Home for 23 years, followed 12 years at Gerard Court, as Warden for 12 years. She now lives in a ground floor flat at Gerard Court.

Janet is now 'retired'. However, she is Secretary for Age Concern Line Dancing Club, is a founder member of 'Stepping Out' a local

walking club, organizes 'Drop In' coffee mornings for Age Concern is Chair Person for the Gerard and Dolphin Court Community Room, and still finds time to organize our Coach Tours!

Having received information regarding the possible transfer of Housing Stock from RCC to Spire Homes, Janet thought she should find out more.

Realizing that there was an opportunity to influence decisions, and improve conditions for Rutland Tenants, Janet joined the Steering Group Committee, who's function it is to steer negotiations in the right direction, as far as we, the tenants, are concerned.

I asked what her reaction was when she realized there could be a possible transfer " Thank God for that" was the answer, " you can't print that" she said - I didn't tell her I intended to.

Janet went on to tell me why she was so keen to see change. " I have been involved with the Council for many years, when Spire came on the scene, taking over the management of the housing service, early in 2006 there was an instant marked change in both attitude and efficiency, in fact, I would say, the difference was quite dramatic".

She continued "For instance, I had a new boiler and central heating system fitted, two men and an apprentice turned up, they refused my offer of coffee or tea, saying, no thanks, we like to get straight on and get the job done, sure enough, they did just that, they worked solid throughout the day, they did not stop until the lad had vacuumed through, they did a super job, I was really pleased"

"I have nothing but praise and appreciation for what Spire has done and the way they treat the tenants since they have taken over the management, I don't know what other tenants think, but I am sure it would be to everyones advantage if Spire became our new landlord"

Janet continues to take an active part, as a member of the Steering Group, making sure that the final draft of the Offer Document includes all the benefits we have discussed during our meetings.

Denis Owens
RTLTP
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