

BOROUGHBRIDGE & DISTRICT COMMUNITY CARE

In 1974 the doctors operating in Boroughbridge and Helperby moved from Dr Hazel's Ladywell home surgery into some buildings that had been erected on the site in Church Lane previously occupied by Cliff Wilson's transport company (originally the Parochial Hall).

1968 saw the re-formation of the Boroughbridge & District Chamber of Trade, which resulted from a number of traders in the town contributing towards the cost of installing two signs on the A1 by-pass to persuade motorists to call. I was the first Secretary of the Chamber for fourteen years.

Earlier in that decade Dr Hazel had formed a small committee to raise funds for a Village Hall in Boroughbridge and the upper floor of what is now the library was rented to be used as a Hall until sufficient funds had been raised to build a "proper" one. I was the second Secretary of the committee taking over from Barbara Topham.

A small group of retired people met in the Youth Club rooms within Boroughbridge Primary School on York Road every Wednesday evening to play cards and dominoes and have a chat over a cup of tea and biscuits. The group was run by a small number of volunteers and was called "The Good Companions".

Around 1976 Dr Hazel asked me if some of the Chamber members would be willing to collect people from the outlying parts of the town and bring them to The Good Companions, returning them to their homes afterwards. I recruited a small number of "volunteers" and every Wednesday evening we chauffeured people in as requested. Some people living in retirement homes in Skelton found out about this "service" and asked if they could be included in our scheme.

In the meantime Dr Hazel asked if we could expand the number of drivers and provide transport for people needing to visit the relatively new Health Centre, Harrogate Hospital, or the Chiropodist and we decided to set up a small committee, consisting of Mrs Ann Collin (Roeclyffe), me (Kirby Hill) and himself. We used to meet in one of the rooms in the original Health Centre in Church Lane and organise the rota of the increasing number of volunteers.

It soon became obvious that we needed something better than a fleet of cars to bring the increasing number of people wanting to attend The Good Companions and Dr Hazel found out that a number of redundant ambulances were available for sale in Thirsk. Together with a local garage owner, Tommy Kemp, we went to the Ambulance Station at Thirsk and agreed to purchase a Bedford, which had a bench seat down one side and a stretcher on the other, for £250, which we did not at that time have. We quickly opened a bank account at Barclays, collected donations from a variety of sources to buy the vehicle, tax and insure it and formed a small, informal, fund raising committee, calling ourselves Boroughbridge Communicare. Dr Hazel acted as Chairman, Ann Collin as Secretary and I as Treasurer. John Dodsworth, the coach proprietor, kindly agreed to let us park our "new" vehicle in a corner of his site on Wetherby Road and a team of people willing to drive it was soon put together. From then onwards a programme of fund raising events was implemented every year and many of the local organisations also contributed to our cause with donations from events that they ran.

Of course the vehicle was well past its best but served the purpose of shipping people in to The Good Companions every Wednesday evening, reducing the need for a fleet of cars. One of these appreciative people died a couple of years later and left us £4,000 in his will "to but a proper minibus" and we soon became the proud owners of a sparkling new Renault. We were now able to expand a little more and began arranging trips to Garden Centres, the seaside,

and other attractive venues, providing visits for retired people normally without access to transport.

After almost twenty years it became obvious that a “proper”, more formal, organisation was needed to cope with the ever expanding requirements and it was decided to employ staff with David Allon taking on the main operational role and, eventually, Heather Horner looking after the leg work of the finances. Boroughbridge Communicare became a Registered Charity under the name of Boroughbridge and District Community Care (BCC) to recognise the larger area it covered.

The “old” Health Centre was replaced by a very impressive new building at the rear of the site and BCC was given the use of a small room to provide a working area for David but in 1998 Dr Hazel sadly passed away and Keith Trott took over as Chairman. Originally the room was provided free of charge but, following the death of Dr Hazel and advent of the new organisation in the Health Centre, it was decided that rent should be paid for this facility, increasing the amount needed to be raised every year.

In 2003 Boroughbridge Town Council purchased their new Council Office in Hall Square and eventually it was agreed that BCC could utilise a small area there as an “office”. With the advent of employed staff fund raising had really begun to take off and, instead of living “hand to mouth” the balance in the bank started to increase. Over the years new replacement minibuses had been purchased with the help of substantial donations (e.g. Keith Boardall) and more recently it was decided to increase the fleet to two.

2013 saw the sad passing of Keith Trott and Liz Vose kindly assumed the reins.

After many years enjoying the hospitality of the Town Council an opportunity arose to have a “proper” office in part of the Jubilee Room in St James Square and, at long last, after forty four years, “Communicare” now had a recognisable “home”.

Over many, many, years this little voluntary organisation has provided an increasing range of services to the local community, particularly those who have retired from full time employment but also those in all age groups and it is to be hoped that it continues to do so for many more.

Ian Hick. 2020.