

Welcome! Come on in and meet everyone

Jill Burton

As a teacher I suppose it was inevitable that I would become involved with the training aspect of PPA, with the Foundation Course as Tutor and as a member of the Wales Regional Training Committee and later its Chairman.

But it was not always so.

In 1976 I gave up teaching to have my first baby and at the same time my husband moved his job from the Midlands to North Wales. So there I was alone in North Wales, a new house, a new village and a new baby, and very lonely. There was a playgroup in the village but they did not take children below three years of age, which was a long way off in the future.

I was fortunate that I could drive and after many months I saw a notice in another village about Mother & Toddler Groups. By now confidence was at rock bottom and it took three Friday mornings watching mums going in before I could put together enough courage to follow them with my push chair. I was lucky! The group was run by the Vicar's wife who caught sight of me and ran towards me with arms outstretched saying, 'Welcome. Come on in and meet everyone'.

The rest was inevitable and went on stage by stage over the years, making friends, joining the local playgroup and later the playgroup committee, starting a mother & toddler group in my own village, asking PPA for advice on how to do it, going to Branch meetings and committee, working as Area Organiser, the County Association meetings, the Wales Region meetings, the National Conferences, etc, etc, etc.

Each stage was a boost in confidence and in developing and using skills of organisation. So many people found PPA just that, a way of developing

confidence in their own child-rearing skills and in their abilities in organisation, financial control, committee procedure, the workings of local government. How many times did we complain that mums on committees and courses resigned to 'move on' but they were using that new found confidence to make new careers and life choices. Many used the enthusiasm they had gained from attending PPA courses to sign up for further education. In my job today I meet hundreds of teachers every year and many times we recognise each other from the old Playgroup days and I hear, 'I went on a playgroup course and thought I would like to carry on and go to college.'

I am grateful for the PPA years and what it gave me and my children but I still remember that I was fortunate in that first welcome, the first step on the ladder and am grateful to the Vicar's wife.