

# What did PPA do for me (and my family)?

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Away back in 1974 I arrived in Cwmbran Gwent, with my husband Richard, as a young (well fairly young) mother of two daughters, then aged 4 years and 2 years. Jennifer had been in playgroup in Cornwall. All that I had been required to do was to take her to and from playgroup. I thought that was the way things were! I had never heard of Mother and Toddler Groups, so Rachel had had no experience of socialising, other than with close friends and their children.

How wrong I was! Now over thirty years later I am sitting at my computer and reflecting on how moving to South Wales and becoming involved in PPA helped me.

Of course, over the years the chronology may have become a bit blurred but this is briefly what evolved. I suspect that there are many others with similar tales to tell. This is my story!

In 1974 playgroups largely relied on a Mothers' Rota for assistance. This was in the days before it was the norm for mothers to go out to work. It was probably on my first experience of the Rota that the Chairman of the Playgroup (another Mum) asked me if I would be willing to become a member of the Committee, which was responsible for running the Playgroup. 'It will not involve much' was what she told me! Well, within six months, I am not quite sure how it happened, I was Chairman of the Committee.

I met Marjorie Morris, the then local Development Officer. She told me about a new Mother and Toddler Group that had been set up locally – these were a new phenomenon in those days. Soon Marjorie was back telling me that a Mother and Toddler Working Party was being set up by PPA in

London and would I be willing to become a member of that Group. I did. That was certainly the take off point. Looking back I think that I must have been very easy to persuade, but certainly doing the best for my children was a consideration. ‘Learning through play’ became my mantra.

Over the next decade or so and beyond the independence of Wales PPA in 1987 I stayed involved in various guises. Here is a brief run down of that involvement. Member of Cwmbran Nursery Playgroups Committee, Gwent PPA Chairman, member of the South Wales Association of PPA (I have a vague recollection of being Treasurer of this, but I may be wrong), member of the National PPA Executive Committee for three years and one time Vice Chairman of that Committee, member of Wales PPA Regional Council, member of the Group which organised the National PPA AGM in Llandudno in 1983 and member of the Resource Centre (in Newport) Management Committee. All these roles were in a voluntary capacity and there are probably others that have been lost in the mists of time. Finally, in 1985 I became Development Officer for Gwent – a paid post – where I stayed until 1988.

My children were now at or nearing school leaving age, the number of meetings that one had to attend was increasing and more and more of these were outside Gwent. The vast number of meetings was perhaps the one downside of life with PPA and I needed a new challenge – it was time to move on to other things, but it was the confidence that I had gained during the past fourteen years or so that enabled me to do so. The experiences that had taught me how to fill in an application form, how to approach interviews, how to communicate with other people, how to speak in public, how to take minutes, etc, etc now helped me to gain the post of Clerk to Croesyceiliog and Llanyrafon Community Council in Gwent. Here the skills I had learnt were to prove invaluable.

Not only did PPA help me, it helped my family. The help and support of Richard was vital. He became more and more proficient in looking after the children, although we had to be careful that the scales did not swing too far in his direction as that would have been unfair to someone who had a very responsible full time job. On one occasion in 1982, famous in the folklore of Wales PPA, he had to look after the girls for four days when I became

marooned with others in a snowdrift (well almost) at Preston Montford Field Centre, near Shrewsbury.

Jennifer and Rachel, as young children, benefited from the ethos of 'learning through play'. Now Rachel and her husband have twins, just a year old. The wheel has turned full circle and Rachel attends a Mother and Toddler Group with James and Kathryn.

Now in 2006 I am no longer Clerk to the Community Council. I have retired, now being beyond retiring age and drawing my pension! However, I now take the Minutes for the Executive Committee of the Gwent Family History Society. So thirty years on from my first involvement with PPA I can say, 'Thank you PPA'. Without that experience I am sure that I would not be the person that I am today nor, I think, would my family be the people that they are.