

# Edna meets Brenda – my first County AGM

Edna Kirby

*A bright summer's morning in the early 1980s: a very new Area Organiser far from her home county of Essex is watching, 11 miles south of Aberystwyth, for the 'lift' that will take her to her first Dyfed PPA Annual General Meeting .....*

... I had no idea, as I waited that day, what a County Annual General Meeting would be like. I knew, of course, that there would first be business to go through and then – I was told as we headed towards Carmarthen – there was a guest speaker who was travelling from Chelmsford to entertain us. She was Brenda Crowe, who had been the first National Adviser for PPA. After the reports and resignations and appointments came lunch and it was then that I found myself sitting next to the guest of honour. Much of that day is a hazy memory but I clearly remember asking Brenda about the long journey from Chelmsford to Dyfed and saying that I was born and brought up in Essex.

'Whereabouts?' came the reply, to which I answered, 'A small village sort of between Colchester and Chelmsford.'

Brenda then followed with, 'I lived for a time in that area – near Braintree and my children were born in the hospital there.'

And so it transpired that Brenda's home 'near Braintree' had been at the bottom of the village green in Wethersfield where I grew up, and she went on to recount how happy she had been in the early days of her marriage 'pushing the pram up the hill in Wethersfield'.

Although I do not myself remember her and her family as occupants of the house in question, she had memories of my father. This was particularly significant for me as he had died just a few years previously, and that

lunchtime we shared many recollections and much appreciation of English rural life in the immediately post-war years.

Her own and other Playgroup people's memories were to be the topic of her talk. The sharing of early memories has a particular significance for Brenda and I was delighted when she presented me with a copy of her book *Play is a Feeling* which also deals with this subject and was delighted when she inscribed it 'How lovely to meet Fred's daughter.' Since then I have taken it to many courses and read her words to many childcare workers ....

*'..... the feeling that accompanies the word 'play' had never left me. There are days when cooking a meal interrupts what I am doing and I resent the time taken .... But there are others when I play in the kitchen all day long ...'*

I later came to know Brenda a little better and visited her at her home in Chelmsford where she contributed material for our Aberystwyth Branch newsletter. The passage of time and two house moves mean that sadly I no longer have a copy of that Newsletter. I wonder if anyone out there does?

Certainly that first County Annual General Meeting was for me a most memorable PPA day. And I learnt then that, even if it's the chores that have to be done, so long as it's what you **want** to do, doing anything can be fun. And now, in another century this PPA grandmother remembers that, when she shares in children's play.