

## Carol's Memorial Tapestries

By its very nature, a Memorial Message is brief and to the point. It cannot tell how Carol became "A pioneer in establishing Community Groups", nor can it tell the types of group that she established and whether they were in Luton or in Aylesbury.

**In loving memory of  
Carol Rogers  
A pioneer in establishing  
Community Groups**



Carol graduated from Chiltern Nursery & Training College as a trained Nanny (NNEB) in 1962. Rather than travel the world in the company of a rich family, Carol decided to work for the community as a Nursery School Assistant in Eastcote Nursery School prior to our marriage and in Tottenham Nursery School after our marriage.

It was in 1968 when we moved to Luton with its No Nursery Schools Policy that Carol's community role flourished. No longer could Sarah (3 years) and Andrew (10 months) go to work with mummy. Carol quickly converted the downstairs of our house and its garden into a small Nursery School so as to be able to advertise her services as a Registered Child Minder. The school membership was limited to five children that included our own two.

When Sarah was 5 years old, she went to Sunday School at St. Margaret's Methodist Church at the top of St. Margaret's Avenue where we lived. Carol was horrified at the facilities available to

Andrew. The Church suddenly obtained a new crèche manager with her husband responsible for transporting play equipment between school and church.

Carol joined the Young Wives Club and encouraged some of her friends to become Registered Child Minders. Child Minding was very much a Cottage Industry. The maximum number of children permissible in a house was usually four or five. The Local Authority also set the maximum fee that could be charged for an 8-hour day (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) More or less time could be charged as pro-rata of the daily fee. No extra at weekends! A garden was also necessary so young wives living in flats could not join the scheme.

There were no electronic games in those days! In order to keep the children quiet and busy, Child Minders would need a large stock of colouring-books. Such books would contain various pictures in them covering life at the seaside; in the countryside and down on the farm.



In the mid-1970s, a representative from the National Playgroup Association gave a talk to the Young Wives Group. Basically, she was

saying that it made more economic sense for three or four Registered Child Minders to bond together and set up in business. The required assets of a playgroup already existed by combining the play equipment available in each house. All that was required was to find suitable premises for hire.

Carol and two of her friends were very enthusiastic about this idea. The three of them, together with their respective husbands, processed the idea further. St. Andrew's Church had a larger hall than St. Margaret's Methodist Church and were prepared to hire it out at a cheaper rent. In addition, there was plenty of storage space in the basement room underneath the stage for the play equipment. This basement room was reached by stairs behind the stage whilst loading and unloading took place through threshold doors at the front of the stage. There was quite a drop between the hall floor and the basement floor. Children, at the end of the day, were amazed to see equipment disappear under the stage to the sound of voices beneath it.

The six of us agreed that St. Andrew's Playgroup was a viable business proposition providing the three leaders acquired a group of volunteers and gave them basic training. All three leaders held the NNEB qualification. Guess which leader became the Treasurer and whose husband audited her handwritten accounts for the group?

Once St. Andrew's Playgroup had become established, Carol's two friends decided that Luton needed its own Playgroup Association and set about organising it. At first Carol did not want to become an officer. She preferred to be a backroom girl at their events particularly in the refreshment department. Her attitude changed when in 1980, the management of the Arndale Shopping Centre were so impressed by the Association's advertising of playgroup benefits that the management wanted to extend a playgroup's services to their customers. Thus, the first Drop-In Playgroup in the world was born. Carol joined the Project Team.

The Arndale Centre would provide the premises, equipment and admin staff at no cost to the Association. It would, also, install a

computerised booking system with cash registers to be used by Arndale staff only. The Association would supply the voluntary playgroup staff for a monthly fee. It would supervise the design of plans by Arndale Centre architects; the installation of play equipment; the painting of walls and their decoration with murals. Such murals allow the painting of life-size images of exotic animals kept in zoos, or, the telling of stories like Noah's Ark where the animals went in two-by-two.



During shopping hours at the Arndale Centre, customers would bring their children to reception at the playgroup where the computer would be consulted to ascertain if there was still room in the playgroup for the children. If the result was positive, the receptionist would summon a playgroup staff member to take the children into the main play area whilst the receptionist completed the booking for one, two or three hours. Customers would immediately pay for the booking and be given a receipt stating the time to return for their

children. If the result was negative, the customers would be told the time to return for the next available slot. Carol and her husband became well known to Arndale Security and were often summoned by Tannoy to go to the playgroup in order to resolve problems when we were out shopping.

Carol had to give up both St. Andrew's Playgroup and the Drop-In Playgroup when we moved to Aylesbury in 1987. After a short time as a Leader at Mandeville School Playgroup, Carol moved into Community Social Care – first at the Monday Club in 1989 and then the Wednesday Club, when it was founded in 1994 for clients in the Early Stages of Senile Dementia. Whilst her family are proud of Carol's achievement in receiving a Queen's Golden Jubilee Award for the Wednesday Club in 2002, we thought a memorial to reflect recognition of her previous playgroup work was more appropriate. Carol was definitely a family orientated person who loved children. We would like to thank the Banner Group for the two magnificent Tapestries ('Road to Noah's Ark' & 'Down on the Farm') hanging in the Welcome Space crèche.

Dave Rogers