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Hospital volunteer still going strong at 90

Dorothy Robertson became a hospital volunteer in South Tyneside more than 70 years ago and, as she celebrates her 90th birthday (March 12th), she is still volunteering.

She is one of the band of greeters in South Tyneside District Hospital's Outpatients department, welcoming patients and their families and carers and helping them with enquiries, and she has every intention of continuing in the role.

As a girl during the Second World War, she had ambitions to be a nurse but, at just 17, she was too young. However, the matron at the Ingham Infirmary in South Shields agreed to take her on as a volunteer in Outpatients and she became so trusted that she was allowed to dress wounds.

"I was a general dogsbody but I loved it so much that I used to go in on my days off from my office job," she recalled.

She married at the age of 22 and has two sons, a grand-daughter and three great-grandchildren. Her husband, Frank Robertson, who died 34 years ago, was a funeral director in South Shields. Mrs Robertson worked as a chaperone for child actors in the North East and, in this capacity, she got to know the young Anthony McPartlin and Declan Donnelly – Ant and Dec.

"I met them at a Byker Grove reunion and they hadn't changed: they were still the same, lovely lads," she said.

Mrs Robertson, of South Shields, has a long history of service to her home town. She maintained her links to her local hospital over the years through her involvement in health bodies, such as the Community Health Council, of which she was vice chairman, and the Alzheimer's Society in South Tyneside, of which she was chairman. She was a magistrate for more than 20 years and trained as a counsellor for Relate.

She said: "I'm very proud to still be associated with South Tyneside District Hospital which, as well as providing a great service, offers patients and visitors a friendly, personal touch. I love the contact with the public which I get as a greeter. Sometimes, people just want to chat and the staff don't always have time for that but we volunteers are more than happy to talk to them."



Trust Chairman Peter Davidson said: "Dorothy is an inspiration. Her record of service to her community, including her local hospital, is wonderful. At our regular meetings of the voluntary organisations who support the Trust, she is always there to steer me in the right direction and support our drive to improve hospital visiting for patients and their families. We're very glad that she is continuing as a volunteer with us – we're lucky to have her."
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Pictured above: Dorothy Robertson, centre, with greeters co-ordinator Debra Hepburn, second from right, and fellow greeters, left to right, Margaret Stewart, Ann Thompson, Dorothy Rogers, Joyce Murdoch and Win Patterson

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan
For press enquiries on this release, contact 0191 404 1128 or email kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk