

### The first for a carnival crew virgin!

Relocating is never easy, knowing few people and giving up your life in one place to build it up again in another.

April 2018 saw our family move to Norfolk from Nottinghamshire. I needed to find a way to get to know people and integrate into the local community. I contacted Wells Carnival via their facebook page. Having visited the carnival in the past, I knew this was one avenue I could investigate in becoming involved. I got a positive, welcoming message from Fran inviting me a long to their meeting.

Arriving at the Edinburgh pub for the first meeting was scary. I've never entered a pub on my own, but I braved it and didn't really know where I was going in the pub, I met a friendly face who pointed me in the right direction and welcomed me to the committee, I was greeted like someone they had known years. During the meeting I felt 'out the loop' but there was always somebody to explain or ask at the end. Informal fun and motivational especially the stores tidy ups!

An exciting moment was to don the fuchsia pink carnival crew t shirts / hoodies.

The build up to carnival week was exciting and the adrenaline I'm sure was boosted during this time and kept the momentum going.

**Friday.** Hurrah it had arrived and I headed off to assist in setting up the trailer and marquee, from putting up backdrops to hoovering marquee carpets. It soon became obvious that if I wanted to be busy there was no shortage of jobs, no matter whether your name was down for an event or not – you were genuinely welcomed with open arms, whether you wanted to play a big or small part.

We then headed off to The Maltings, with some friends we had staying to watch the fabulous Jay Foreman and his disgusting songs for children.

**Saturday** The day started calmly by visiting the church for a unusual visit, to the tower and the bells to be ringing in the official start of carnival. Off to the merchandise tent I went, ready for the Ruby Rollers, raffle and merchandise. At the end of the evening all hands on deck for the grand tidy up, litter picking then off home!

**Sunday** fete day, up and out early to be an extra set of hands – despite having no idea what I was doing being a carnival virgin, this didn't matter, I was soon set to work – home for a short stop gap, to put the tired feet up but I couldn't settle as I was too excited, to get out ready for the evening entertainment. The hubby got his first lifeboat trip, ready for the service on the quay since starting as a crew member.

**Monday** early start once again to set up for 100+ children to take part in the painting competition. Learning the ropes from the crew who have been part of the committee for over 30 years, and like things just so in their own quirky ways – each committee member an individual – 'not too much paint per plate' the children thoroughly enjoyed the experience – quick lunch and off to head up the photo booth, a bit of camouflage netting a rail and a giant cuddly toy hippo and two



carnival crew kids and we were ready to be budding photographers getting the crowds into the mood for jungle book. The evening was spent with a different generation doing the bar for the carnival quiz – good fun to sit at the back between serving trying to answer the questions!

**Tuesday** .Again off out early, this time to lend a hand for tea tent set up followed by, artistically creating the funky pink booze barrow. With newspaper, ribbon, a table cloth and lots of alcohol, the balloon lady even kindly created a balloon flower to match the barrow. A fabulous thing to spend the day selling tickets for, with help on and off from my son and his friends with the pushing of the barrow around the crowds! A great thing to do if wanting more interaction with visitors. Tuesday evening with no events I found myself lost, not knowing what to do!

**Wednesday** Later start than previous mornings, but off I went to assist with the puppet show. The highlight of Wednesday was the excitement of the evening when it was off to the beach cafe for the beach party. Setting up the merchandise tent, selling many items of merchandise, including lots of leis and raffle tickets.

**Thursday** A day with the family and then back off to the marquee for the evening to once again have a barmaid head on! Also enjoyed some wonderful music and a tad of waitressing – took me back to my university days, who would have thought as the years went on I would do that in a voluntary capacity but great fun to have a committee wind down drink once all the guests had gone.

**Friday** Back on the early wagon again, off to tidy and set up, then home to don the black and white and be a waitress for the afternoon hide tide, high tea. Great fun. The sadness looming though that it was the penultimate



night on the buttlands, magic glasses that kept being filled with prosecco helped!

Merchandise pushing was go! Flashing bunny ears, spaghetti

hair. Dancing the night away, even whilst mass litter picking!



**Saturday** The finale, how sad – the week went so quickly and I could do it all again for another week so much fun – not feeling tired as raring to go – bubbly and full of life – carnival day was finally here – off again early ready to set up then for a fabulous glitter face by the talented Sarah – dancing around the streets of wells, shaking buckets, ensuring the stilt walkers had water and their buckets emptied so they didn't get too heavy for them – the crowds round ever corner cheering and clapping joining in with the



samba band. I then tried my hand at assisting with vehicle movement off the buttlands – tricky job –

when there are masses of people everywhere! Fabulous Abba tribute, merchandise tent was full of life bopping, singing and selling – then off we headed to the stage for a bop and selfies with Abba such amazing fun the night went so quickly. As a family we had a ball!



**Sunday** – Wet fun by the quay, ducks, rafts and lots of jeering going on. Again the crowds gathered, it's unbelievable where all the people come from. Off to the buttlands for the last time to sell raffle tickets for the classical tea party – success! The crew celebrating and relaxing together with families – a lovely time by all – then the carnival blues kicked in sad it's all over ;-(

Most days during carnival I arrived on the buttlands at 8am, to help set up or carry. The congregational church, lovely Abi, Sue and Rev looked after us with breakfast rolls and cups of tea. On the long days when events went over lunch the lovely Hele provided a fabulous picnic style lunch.



From selling raffle tickets to merchandise, the evening events had such an amazing atmosphere. It was so rewarding to be able to head to the stage for a dance and to meet the bands, even my 11 yr old son loved the atmosphere and taking selfies with the very approachable bands and carnival queen!

The comments that were received by members of the public, visitors and locals of varying ages were generally on the whole fantastic. Said with so much gratitude, whilst wearing the pink t shirt most people greeted me like I was there long lost friend!

It became quite a joke during meetings that Jo would volunteer for anything if it had a bar involved! I love nothing more than socialising with a drink but also being behind the bar quickly took me back to my university days!



My husband and son enjoyed taking part in events, then headed back to find me to see if there was anything they could help with. Moving furniture, looking after unwell people, selling merchandise, making posters, decorating floating ducks, judging floats! There was really no end to what they did during this week.



Sleep was a slight issue during the week, as I spent the whole week buzzing!

Spending time with different generations mixing and having fun was rewarding

We moved to Wells as a family, not knowing many people but we needn't have been worried. By being part of carnival crew has made us feel like we are part of an extended family I am so proud of the achievements of crew and friends this year. I have made some truly amazing friends for life, of all different ages and feel so much happier with our new life. The debrief meeting all be it long was exciting to be starting the 2019 adventure and I shall be just as involved next year if not more – (well that's if they will have me!)