



## **Recording Work Memories: the 60 Voices Project Interviewee: Terry Watson**

Terry Watson always wanted to work in a lab and was trying to find a job in a lab coming out of the war in 1945. However, there was not a lot of jobs on the market. He eventually found a job for an American Aluminium company in the radiology department but was made redundant after a week. Eventually, Terry found a job with the West Midlands Forensic Laboratory, without realising it was part of the civil service.

He worked for the laboratory in Birmingham for 30 years, within the forensics department, later transferring to Nottingham for 7 years and then later transferring again to Huntingdon. Working in forensics for over 30 years meant that Terry saw a vast number of changes in technology, as well as the growth of the forensics department. When Terry originally joined in 1945, there was about 8 scientists in the lab, and by the time he left there was around 70 in the lab. Terry's official title was analytical chemist.

Working within the forensics department for a long time meant that Terry had been a part of many interesting cases. One interesting case Terry recalls is how they had found a body without a head, whilst later finding the head separately in a canal. His team had to prove the head belonged to the body, by matching the bones together.

Another interesting case that Terry worked on was when a family moved into a house and found a skeleton in a cupboard that was built into the back of a wardrobe. The whole entire body had decomposed apart from one foot which was very well preserved for reasons unknown. His team was able to match the foot with some shoes that were worn and were left behind. The previous family living there had moved to Bangladesh. The body was identified and belonged to a woman who was an outpatient in a nearby mental home. Terry almost had to visit Bangladesh to provide evidence but was eventually not needed. In the very early days of his civil service career, Terry was involved in a case in which someone was constantly stealing railway sleepers with a wheelbarrow. The sleepers were worth five shillings, and the thief was selling them off. The wheelbarrow used was custom made so Terry and his team was able to track down the thief thanks to its unique characteristic tire mark.

Despite dealing with a lot of macabre crimes and investigations, Terry still has some funny stories and memories from working in the civil service. At one point, he was involved in filming a training video, which happened to be filmed at the Assistant Chief Constable's house. For the contents of the video, they essentially had to break into the house and break his window. This involved a lengthy process of putting a temporary window in place of the original window, so they didn't cause actual damage to his house. Because of this some of the training video has snow on the ground outside, whilst some portions of the video are full of sun and green grass.

After over 40 years of work, Terry decided to retire, and became an independent consultant. He consulted for insurance companies regarding road traffic incidents, mostly as a defence

expert, doing this for around 5 years to supplement his pension. After this, Terry became a unions rep for the Institution of Professional Civil Servants as branch secretary for the head branch, frequently attending conferences as the union rep.

Terry found out about the CSRF after retirement in 1987, being made aware of the fellowship after picking up a magazine in the library that was the newsletter for the Leicestershire branch.

Terry never knew about the fellowship but got in touch with the branch chairman and started work in restarting the Coalville retirement group. He contacted local retirees for a meeting and started the group as the founding chairman and is still the chairman of the group to this day. He would produce and manage the newsletters and became the editor. Furthermore, he would also become the branch secretary for the Leicestershire area alongside the Rutland and the South Lincolnshire area, covering 10 groups that would meet as a branch roughly 1-2 times a year. Terry would also organise annual holiday for his group.

Terry also became the chairman of the local retirement fellowship in Coalville, covering those who retired from all types of careers. The fellowship unfortunately recently closed due to not being able to find places to meet that logistically worked for a majority of the group. The advice Terry gives regarding retirement is to get involved in groups, mix with people, and become a part of the lives of others. He states how important it is to get involved in these things, to keep loneliness at bay.