

Rita Baines - life after flying



Chris and Rita in 1960

Rita and Chris Johnson

After the untimely death of her husband in early 1948, Rita moved back to Trentham with her baby daughter to live with her parents. She was introduced to Chris Johnson, a director of ceramics firm Johnson Brothers.

They were married on 15th August 1949 and later set up home for their family in Washdale, Oulton Heath. Their daughter Sarah was born in 1951 and their son Nicholas in 1953. His stepdaughter Caroline remembers that Chris always treated all three children equally with kindness and generosity. Chris Johnson supported many charities, was a member of Trentham Golf Club and, after Johnson's merger with Wedgwoods in 1966, he became a director at Wedgwood.



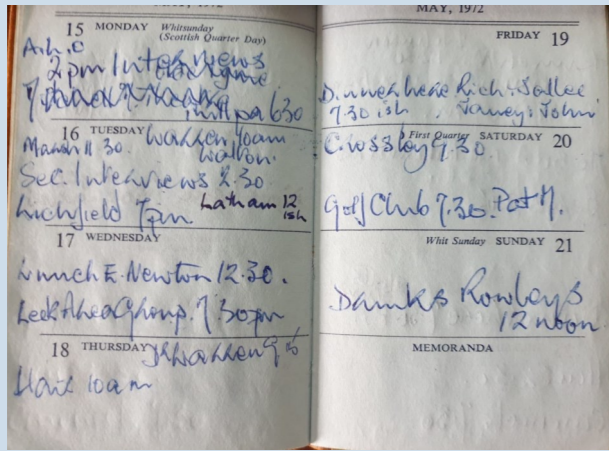
Chris with Nicholas, Sarah and Caroline in 1961



Rita and Chris in 1972

Rita's Charity Work and MBE

Once the children started school Rita helped in many charities, becoming well known for her great organising skills and persuasiveness when a fundraising event was needed. Always busy, this page from her 1972 diary shows how many events and meetings she was required at in a usual week.



In 1971 Alfred Johnson, a cousin of Chris's, asked Rita to set up a charitable foundation to benefit men and women over the age of 60 in memory of his wife Beth, who had recently died. The Beth Johnson Foundation flourished and, in 1975, the Beth Johnson Housing Association was set up, building social housing at 17 locations in Staffordshire and beyond. Rita was Chair of both BJB and BJHA as well as the Stamer House Nursing Home and the Staffordshire Old People's Welfare Committee. She was also the WRVS hospital welfare organiser for Staffordshire, looking after hundreds of volunteers in 26 hospitals in the County. All this hard work was recognised in 1979 with the award of an MBE.

Announcement of MBE

Rita Johnson, of Washdale, Oulton Heath, Stone, has worked with the physically handicapped and elderly for many years. She is chairman of the Beth Johnson Housing Association, a registered organisation which provides housing for men and women over the age of 60.

Its first scheme at Stafford, in Lichfield Road, is due for completion next month.

"Most of my work recently has focused on elderly people and I have had tremendous support throughout the county for many years," she said.

Mrs Johnson and her husband, Christopher Johnson, a director of the pottery firm Johnson Brothers, have three children, Nicholas, Caroline and Sarah.

Mrs Johnson is also chairman of the Stamer House Nursing Home at Hartshill, and chairman of the Staffordshire Old People's Welfare Committee. She is the WRVS hospital welfare organiser for Staffordshire, looking after hundreds of volunteers in 26 hospitals in the county.



Rita in 1990 at the laying of the foundation stone for the Beth Johnson Housing Association Offices on Festival Park

Rita and Hugh Tetlow

Hugh Tetlow was a distant cousin of Rita's and someone she knew well as a teenager, but lost touch with when war broke out. During WW2 Hugh trained RAF pilots in Canada. A talented linguist, he later worked at GCHQ where his fluent Russian was invaluable.

In 1978 they met up again at a party. They were married in 1981 and moved to Eccleshall. The socialising and charity work continued with Hugh using his Russian to help pupils at Yarlet school and Rita continuing her work as Chair of the Beth Johnson Housing Association until retirement in 1990.

Once Hugh retired he volunteered at Drake Hall prison and the Citizens Advice Bureau. A keen gardener and fly fisherman, lepidopterist and builder of model railways, he became a published novelist in his 70s.



Rita and Hugh

Rita Tetlow — formerly Johnson — is well known in North Staffordshire for her charity work.

In the New Years Honours in 1979 she was awarded the M.B.E. for her voluntary social work for elderly and physically handicapped people.

She has been Hospital Organiser for the W.R.V.S. in Staffordshire; Chairman of Stamer House Nursing Home and Chairman of the Old People's Welfare Committee in Stafford.

She had an exciting life during the Second World War when she was an Air Transport Auxiliary (A.T.A) pilot. During the 18 months up to September 1945 she flew 20 different types of aircraft including the Spitfire, Hurricane, Lynsander, Mustang, Oxford, Anson, Firefly, and Tiger Moth.

The Beth Johnson Foundation, of which she was a founder member, has improved the quality of life for thousands of elderly people in the area. A thriving organisation it caters mainly for leisure and recreational activities with emphasis on the living of a

Rita is well known for her charity work



Article from the Beth Johnson newsletter marking Rita's retirement in 1990

healthy and full life.

The Housing Association has rescued many from living in damp, unmodernised houses. The sheltered schemes have brought peace of mind to the elderly who are sick or living alone; and other schemes have made it possible for others to buy their own homes.

"I need to take a breath now", said Rita. "But I should like to take this opportunity of saying how much I value the constant support and involvement of everyone on the committee, of members of staff

and many people who have voluntarily given up precious free time.

"I have experienced only warmth and generosity and I am grateful to all those who over the years, have made a contribution to the Beth Johnson organisations.

"Beth would have been most impressed with the work done in her memory. I wish the Group and the Foundation every success in the future and will watch their progress with interest."

Two quotes sum up Rita's outstanding and action-packed life: A friend of Rita's said "She was full of fun, very capable but also modest, never speaking of her many achievements."

At Rita's funeral in 2007 her daughter Caroline's eulogy included the sentence: "We shall remember her for her determination as well as her beauty, her intelligence, and that lovely laugh that could light up a room."