

LIFE STORY - Douglas Brown MBE (1922-2013)

THE FOUNDER OF TEDDINGTON & HAMPTON WICK VOLUNTARY CARE GROUP.

In 1975, Douglas Brown was recovering from flu at home and reflected on how helpful his neighbours had been during his illness. He'd been unable to go out to get medicine or grocery shopping. So his neighbours ran those errands for him.

He realised how important that kindness and help had been, and how important it would be to others in the same predicament. A simple, yet vital, helping hand.

So he set up a small group called "Help a Neighbour Harrowdene", on the Teddington estate where he lived.

Within a year, the group grew and covered much of Teddington, and soon included Hampton Wick. It was renamed the Teddington & Hampton Wick Voluntary Care Group. Now, the group's 30 volunteers help about 300 elderly and disabled people in the local community, running errands, shopping trips and regular outings.

In June 2025, the group celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Douglas was made an MBE in 2008 for services to the local community and received a lifetime achievement award from Richmond Council. He continued to volunteer for the Care Group until he was well into his eighties.

He was also a volunteer with the Samaritans for more than 30 years, where he worked on emergency helplines, and was one of the original supporters of the London Lighthouse and the Terrence Higgins Trust at the outset of AIDS in the 1980s.

He was a keen theatre goer, and a self-taught expert on Shakespeare. He became the London Correspondent for the Bristol Old Vic and was well known in London's operatic circles at the Coliseum and Covent Garden.

One of his friends Paul Richards said: "He was an incredible person. He loved all the arts, and also had an encyclopaedic memory. He enthused everybody."

Long serving Care Group volunteer Miriam Andrews remembers him getting dressed very smartly for his many visits to the London operas or theatres. "He was a wonderful man. And he would be delighted that his brainchild, the Voluntary Care Group, is still going strong 50 years later."

Douglas described himself as an ordinary person who liked to help others. "It gives me a glow knowing that I've been able to help somebody. I believe that volunteers get a lot more back than they put in".

Douglas died in 2013, aged 91.



Douglas shows off his MBE, awarded for services to the community. 2008.



A delighted Douglas Brown with his award

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Douglas rewarded for voluntary work

A TEDDINGTON man has been rewarded for a lifetime of helping others. Douglas Brown has been presented with the Outstanding Older Person Award 2005 by Richmond Housing Partnership for dedicating all of his spare time over for the past 30 years to voluntary work.

In 1975 he set up a scheme called 'help your neighbour' in Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington. The scheme co-ordinated voluntary aid for people without friends and family to lend a hand and eventually evolved into Teddington and Hampton

Wick Voluntary Care Group, which still offers a valuable service for local people today.

Now in his eighties, Mr Brown still volunteers with the group on a regular basis.

He said: "I'm just an ordinary person who happens to have the time to get involved in charity work. I enjoy the social side of volunteering and believe that volunteers get a lot more back than they put in. It gives me a little glow knowing that I have helped somebody. I feel very

honoured indeed for being rewarded for what has been a kind of hobby since my retirement."

Mr Brown, who has lived in the borough since 1967, has helped people with HIV and AIDS since 1986.

He first volunteered with the London Lighthouse charity and then with the Terrence Higgins Trust.

He has manned information hotlines, comforted people in hospices and assisted with administration. He has also been a Samaritan for many years.

A local newspaper article celebrating Douglas's awards. 2008.