

Sandy Clifford

a special PC

MARIE-CHRISTINE O'CALLAGHAN

PC Sandy Clifford started as a special constable, that is a volunteer police officer who, after receiving training, wears the same uniform and has the same powers and responsibilities as a regular police constable; although

she could claim expenses she received no salary.

After doing this for two and a half years she decided that it was the right job for her and after attending an 18 week training course took the oath of allegiance. Sandy told me she wanted to be a police officer

because policing is about "saving lives, protecting property and maintaining the Queen's peace."

Sandy's first posting was at Golders Green police station and it involved a lot of walking and a lot of steep learning. When dealing with shoplifters, for example, most of them were drug users and taking them into custody meant having to deal with their drug dependency. Understanding the causes behind the crimes was a true eye-opener for her.

Her job also meant she became involved with the local community ; one of the hardest things she had to do was to deliver a 'death message' to someone who was deaf. Sandy did not know sign language so decided to write it down. She had to think very carefully about how to phrase it because she knew that it would become part of that person's story – a compassionate side to policing which is rarely talked about.



PC Sandy Clifford outside Golders Green Police Station

I asked her what her scariest moment was. She told me that shortly after joining the police she found herself chasing a suspect at night on her own. He disappeared between two houses so, after sending a call for reinforcements, armed only with 'a little wooden stick' and despite being very scared, she went after him. She said that "adrenaline does kick in and gets you through." In case you were wondering, the suspect was eventually flushed out and arrested.

Sandy has had a varied career with the police. She was an instructor at a police training school and also worked at TFL ensuring journeys across London are safe. She has enjoyed working with Barnet Police Cadets and watching the cadets grow and mature in the four years they spent together. She is now part of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT) for the Suburb and you may have seen her patrolling the streets.

I asked her how the pandemic had changed things. She replied that during the first lockdown the streets were very quiet which made it very easy to spot the

criminals. It also meant telling people what they could and could not do under the lockdown restrictions which did, occasionally, lead to confrontations. Despite this, Sandy remains very philosophical "Not everybody likes us and it can get nasty – but I don't take it personally they are reacting to the uniform, and what I represent."

Looking back at her career Sandy reflected: "The best thing for me is to be able to pass my knowledge down, pass my experience, passion and enthusiasm for the ward. It has made me a better person, and a better police officer. I have met fabulous people. This job is very unique, and it fitted me like a glove, it was a privilege to do it."

By the time you read this, Sandy will have just retired and, although she would like to do something entirely different, she acknowledges it will be difficult to find anything as rewarding as her police work. She does hope to spend more time on her boat and fulfill her ambition to sail to Oxford – a six day round trip.



Photo: Colin Gregory

Jean Neal

awarded Defence Medal

COLIN GREGORY

On 29th April 2021 Jean Neal, an Honorary Life Member of the RA, celebrated her 100th birthday. A small party was held out-of-doors so as to comply with Covid restrictions – at which friends and neighbours were able to toast her health and celebrate the occasion with her.

After finishing her studies at Cambridge during the War Jean went straight to Bletchley Park where she worked in 'Hut 6' on the famous Enigma codes, helping to transcribe thousands of messages before they were passed for analysis to the mathematicians, including Alan Turing.

In 2019 The French Government made her a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur in recognition of her role in the liberation of France. The British Government have now also recognised Jean's contribution to the War and have awarded her the Defence Medal (pictured above). An amazing achievement indeed.



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Photo: Emma Howard

A SHOUT OUT FOR... Adrian Hodgson, resplendent with his lockdown beard, is finally stepping down from taking over the distribution of Suburb News which he has been doing since last June. The Suburb News distribution volunteers, headed by Lorna Page, are now back on the job given the lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions. A huge thank you to Adrian and his family for doing such a fantastic job during these difficult times.