

## **An Unlock Worker Remembers . . . .**

Brenda Glaves retired as an Unlock Worker in December 2005. She worked in Sheffield for 7 years alongside Maureen Hudson. Brenda chatted recently with the Chief Officer about those times . . . .



## **What I learned . . .**

Brenda says that the most important thing she learned as an Unlock Worker was that *she* could write bible studies. She developed her skills over time, with some training and the creative support of other unlock staff, and discovered that she could do it! She says it was exciting to see people using materials that she had written. She shared what she had learned and encouraged others to believe that, if she could learn to do it, they could too. She reminisces about when the film, the Full Monty was made; a correspondent in the Baptist Times slated it, based on the final scene, condemning the low moral culture of Sheffield. Brenda wrote to them in no uncertain terms about the real desperation and hardships that Sheffield people experienced when the steelworks closed and that people should not be condemned for trying to make something of their lives. Brenda was involved, at the time, in the production of the 'Go For It' Unlock pack based on the film, now available free on our website.

## **Health Warning?**

Some people are concerned about Unlock resources based on films such as Billy Elliot and the Full Monty because of the strong language in the films. The clips used in Unlock resources do not, themselves, contain any strong language.

### **The affects of the material on others . . . .**

Brenda tells how she has seen people touched by Unlock approaches and resources. She ran an Unlock taster session for inner city ministers, at a Jesus in the City conference. They used material based on a scene from The Full Monty where Lompur, who had just been prevented from committing suicide, declares that he has no mates. Brenda asked those in the room who their 'mates' were and one professional man broke down in tears, saying, 'I have no mates!' It was a painful moment but the beginning of a process of healing for him, as well as a challenging moment which has stayed in the mind of an Unlock worker! Unlock material engages people's real life experiences and emotions which are powerful triggers for personal growth and learning.

### **What's different about it?**

Brenda feels that all kinds of everyday people can learn to use Unlock approaches to the bible, to help others to explore their faith and to learn and grow. It's not rocket science! The pack 'Unlock More than You Think', available free on the website, outlines the basic principles of the Unlock approach. Unlock's approach believes in the learner, honours what the learner has to bring to the process. Traditional approaches to education focus on the teacher but Unlock's approach puts the emphasis on the learner's contribution and let's them speak first. At Unlock we don't 'tell people lots of stuff', but enable them to discover what they already know, and the potential they have within themselves.

### **Testing our responses . . .**

On one occasion Brenda was asked to challenge a Church, who were running a community café. She arranged for a friend of hers to turn up in the middle of a workshop she was running for the church, to see how they would respond. Her friend was disguised as someone who lives on the streets. The first thing they did was try to give her all the relevant bits of paper! Kindly meant, but not that helpful really. They all laughed about it once the 'trick' was revealed but lessons had been learned. Café customers were later surprised to discover that they didn't need to know anything about the bible, or even be able to use one, to join in with an informal Unlock Bible study.

### **A very scary Deanery Synod . . . .**

Brenda is a Baptist, so a Deanery Synod is a strange creature to her from the outset. One cold dark winter night she found herself filling in for a co-worker, who had gone down with flu, and going to a strange church in an area she didn't know. She felt very intimidated by the unfamiliar environment. But in no time at all she had the Deanery Synod acting out sections of the script from the Full Monty (not including the final scene she assures me!). Sounds much more fun than the average Deanery Synod meeting!

### **Qualifications for an Unlock worker?**

Brenda had a background in administration and community work, when she started as an Unlock Worker, she had also been on a 3 year 'Faith into Action' course which had inspired her, and confirmed her sense that she wanted to be doing something for God's people 'out there, where people are at', rather than within church structures. She developed most of her Unlock skills 'on the job', but she brought with her all the right instincts for Unlock work.

### **Not on your own . . .**

From her experience Brenda affirms the value of working in Unlock as part of a local team, and the need for each Unlock worker to have an effective local support group to bounce ideas around with and keep them earthed and prayed for.

**Is the church 'missing the mark'?**

Brenda's motivation for her Unlock work was that she felt, at some level, that the Church was missing the mark, it was catering for the church community, but not the wider communities within which it was set, particularly in the working class, deprived, city and estate environments that Unlock is most concerned with. Brenda felt Unlock would give her an opportunity to encourage and enable Churches with ways of reaching those who are often left out in the cold by the way that churchy things are done.