

I first met Elaine with the opening of Walton High School in 1967. Peter Palmer the new deputy head was keen to start orienteering as a sport in the school and with Cannock Chase on the doorstep this was an ideal area. School games afternoons were quickly established and with the help of an enthusiastic young team of teachers and a new parents association a club soon came into being.

Almost as soon as the club was formed it became obvious that more helpers would be needed.

Elaine (like myself with a young family) taught maths and science and was soon persuaded to help with the complicated results compilations along with other colleagues. As the events got bigger, husbands and friends coming from GEC and the Nelson labs also joined in and enjoyed the new exciting activity. Sitting in a cold draughty tent checking soggy and torn control cards was made easier by having a go at the activity. It also became socially good to all work together - something that was later missed when electronic timing replaced their jobs.

Elaine also drove many young people in her VW van and weekend camping was enjoyed by all who took part. We travelled further and further in search of events and I have fond memories of particular trips to forests in the Lake District, the Forest of Dean and Elaine's homeland of Wales. It was on such a trip that I learned where her love of music came from and the fact that she also spoke Welsh.

One trip abroad was to the French 3 day orienteering event with a visit to the Louvre to see the Mona Lisa thrown in for free. Elaine and I were able to take the group into the Louvre for free as our passports had our professions of teachers on them. An orienteering trip had suddenly changed into a cultural trip.

Later I also remember organising a Midlands orienteering adult trip to Sweden with Elaine which turned into a cross country skiing trip when snow fell unexpectedly. Much to my surprise Elaine and Elizabeth later went on several ski trips. Both cross country and downhill.

Elaine was a good teacher ever willing to listen and try new experiences. With Brenda and Henry Morgan she was very involved with the organisation of the Staffordshire Schools cross country and orienteering events. From these events many Staffordshire youngsters learnt to understand and take part in orienteering. Not all of them joined clubs but like many things learned at school many of them still remember these events as very special experiences.

To me and my family she was a good friend even though we sometimes seemed to be the exact opposites. Elaine was as precise and exacting as I was woolly headed.

I only now know I shall miss her more than I can say.

MarlenePalmer