

Interview notes on Chris Foster (born 1951) Friday 16 June

Born London (St Pancras). Mother at home Father worked in a London Electricity Board showroom

Early Holidays: Were spent in boarding houses which were dark, inhospitable places. He found Scouts Summer Camps in the countryside were much more fun and felt they made him more resilient. His parents didn't go on holidays as they were paying for the family flat.

Holiday Camps: Chris went on his first holiday camps when he was 15. They were organised by NALGO (National Association of Local Government Officers). He went to Caton Bay (near Scarborough) and Croyde Bay in N. Devon which had a spectacular surfing beach. He went there for several years with his parents and younger brother. He remembers body surfing and watching the 1966 World Cup final there. He later went there with his girlfriend and later still they took their own children there. When he went in the 1970s with his kids there were more staff.

The routine: 4 meals a day. Most meals were pretty much the same with communal dining and shared tables. There was a lot of keeping fit and active. The journey in those pre-motorway days was very long. Big noisy dining rooms with metal tables. Basic food – 'foreign food hadn't yet been invented'. Meat and 2 veg with plenty of carbs. It was fodder. There were forfeits for latecomers. After tea there were rehearsals for the Campers' Concerts and there were some lovely talented performers at those. Very regimented mealtimes.

First Impressions: Lots of people having fun. The chalets were fairly spartan but he felt like they were his little home in the camp. They had showers and bathrooms. They had chalet parties to see how many people they could cram into a chalet. Strong smell of polish in the ballroom always brings back memories.

Activities: It all centred on fitness with outdoor bowling, tennis, running and contests for prizes which were vouchers to spend in the canteen. The entertainments consisted of line dancing, ballroom, yodelling with a film on the Sunday night.

Best Things: Wonderful friendships with other kids in the camp. Great sense of fun and adventure. No worries about spending money as the holiday was all-in but it was always sad having to say good bye at the end of the week. Enjoyed the sense of freedom and space. Best memories of the beach and surfing. His most special memory is his first view of the wide sweeping bay at Croyde. He felt a great sense of freedom like a dog off his lead. The weeks just flew by.

Social Life: Enjoyed meeting people of his own age who came from other parts of the country and their parents and discovering girls. He became friendly with a girl who worked in the camp shop. Competitions: Miss and Mr NALGO contests. The winners wore a sash. He remembers some songs from the Beatles and the Beach Boys and saying grace at dinner. There is still a Facebook group for exchanging holiday camp memories. He feels that his experiences at camp have shaped his life and taught him resilience.

Later holidays: Feels that his early holiday camp experiences set the standard for travel in later life. He took the children camping in France to help them see the world and has travelled widely in recent years and is planning a special trip to NZ to celebrate his golden wedding anniversary. Chris has organised many scouts' camping trips in recent years staying in tents. His children still go on all-inclusive holidays but abroad. He once won a darts competition at Potters Holiday camp on the east coast and ended up representing the Metropolitan Police in darts.