

Olive Belfield is one of the founder members of the South Manchester NHS Retirement Fellowship. Since its inception in 1987 she has held every position on the committee and is currently president. In the article below she recounts her experiences last year in 2018, regarding her involvement in the 70/40 celebrations.

“In 2018 I went to an NHS conference in Nottingham where the audience were asked if anyone had been nursing or qualified pre NHS. I said I would be willing to help. Some months later I received a phone call asking if a TV crew could come and interview me for a podcast on the BBC. This was duly broadcast in May 2018.



As a result of this I was then asked if I would talk ‘ad lib’ at the Manchester confederation- along with a retired male surgeon, a retired female doctor - and other current NHS employees. I spoke about what life was like as a young newly qualified nurse before the NHS came to fruition in 1948. I was surprised and delighted to receive a standing ovation after my talk!

From both the podcast and the ‘ad lib’ talk I was amazed to be asked to make a three minute speech at Westminster Abbey! This was a great honour - not just for me - but to be able to talk about the NHS fellowship. My speech was the first of several others - as part of a 90 minute service at the Abbey-to honour seventy years of the NHS. The 2500 strong audience enjoyed the service very much and at the end I was lucky enough to process along the enormous aisle where so many

famous people had gone before - to be introduced to various dignitaries including the delightful Sophie, Countess of Wessex.

On the morning of the speech at Westminster Abbey I was on radio 4 - being interviewed by John Humphries. Then at the end of the service I spoke to journalists from several newspapers making sure that the NHS retirement fellowship was brought to people’s attention.”