

## Thank you Colin!

We recently said goodbye to Colin May who faithfully served as a Soup Run volunteer for 7 years,



primarily on Sunday evenings at Shekinah. Colin was the oldest serving volunteer who, at 82, has

contributed his vast experience, wisdom and willingness in supporting many folks over the years. Colin kindly agreed to share a bit about his varied and interesting life experiences...

Both Colin's parents were from Plymouth, and his father spent many years away with the navy. The family lived with his grandparents and during the war were evacuated to Dousland. They lived through the 1941 blitz which saw much of Plymouth bombed. After the war, the family were reunited for a few years in Wolverhampton and Argyllshire before returning to Plymouth when Colin was 8. He won a scholarship to Plymouth College

where he enjoyed school as a boarder. Colin was a Boy Seaman in the Naval Reserves from the age of 15, and after attaining 'A' level Maths and Economics joined the RN for National Service. Afterwards he hitch-hiked to Malta where his future wife was temporarily living. In Italy all his belongings were stolen so he held up a sign saying "Young Englishman everything stolen, anything appreciated". He was directed to a Soup Kitchen where he queued for bowls of spaghetti. Amongst his varied jobs he worked at farming, door-to-door selling, piloting, and as a seaman. He crewed a fishing boat planned to go from Scotland to New Zealand but the owner dismissed all the crew in Jamaica. Without money, he wrote about his travels for the Western Morning News and initially worked for just his keep, then as a seaman, before hitch-hiking around Jamaica and working his passage to the Cayman Islands. After his first night sleeping in a mosquito infested school hut, he was put up in the yacht club in return for writing an article about

it for an American yachting magazine. Onward to Tampa, Florida where he hoped to work in the fish-canning factories, but discovered on arrival his visa was transit only and he had to be out of the country in three weeks. He hitched across the South to Mexico, then down to Mexico City and on to Acapulco where he was unwell with dysentery. Still weak he made his way back to the US. The only person he knew in North America was in Kingston Ontario but he couldn't face hitching diagonally across the States so headed East to the Pacific coast, North to Canada then all the way across to Kingston, arriving with 15 cents remaining from the ten or so dollars he'd had on leaving Mexico. En route there were many more adventures; among them travelling across

... cont'd on page 2

## Proposed Winter Provision (SWEP)

'SWEP' (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) is declared if there's a forecast of severe weather (when the temperature is expected to fall below zero for three or more consecutive nights, or when there's heavy rain and/or strong winds). Independently of severe weather and of SWEP being called, it is hoped to provide at least another 12 spaces to bring rough sleepers indoors throughout the winter months. A decision on the venue and pattern of provision is being made as we write. Many thanks to all who have offered to host or volunteer. Further offers to volunteer will be very welcome. Please contact Rachel, the Winter Provision Coordinator at: [Rachel.O'Nyons@pathdevon.org](mailto:Rachel.O'Nyons@pathdevon.org).

## Donations welcome!

If you can donate any of the following please contact Hilary on 01752-404134 who can arrange to meet you at Shekinah, or you can drop-off at Chameleon Hairdresser, Church St, Plymstock. Thank you!

- **Sleeping bags (not pillows/duvets)**
- **Disposable cardboard cups with lids (for hot drinks)**
- **Hot chocolate powder, coffee and sugar**
- **Hats and gloves**
- **Men's socks/boxers (new)**
- **Sandwich bags**
- **Combs**

For **monetary donations** please contact Maddie on 0773-4007617.

## Colin May (cont'd)

segregated America with a black truck driver and being flagged down by a destitute family with three children under five in a pitiful condition. Then, having crossed from Canada into North Dakota he was dropped miles from anywhere and, after nightfall, was arrested for hitching (illegal in most States) and 'vagrancy'. Taken back to the border the Canadians refused to take him back! Eventually released, he reached his friend Bill in Kingston and got a job selling door-to-door.

Deciding to go home for Christmas, they travelled to New York but, unable to work their passage, got a car delivery job to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. They were almost there when a minor car accident lost them their deposit, so back to Canada via a car delivery to Rhode Island. In Ottawa they did casual work for the pre-Christmas week but, discovering they wouldn't be paid until the New Year, set out singly on Boxing Day to hitch North to the Uranium mines in the Elliott Lake area where there was work. Despite it being -20°, Colin was

taken on a few days later and worked a thousand feet under a lake for the next nine months.

He did make it home the following Christmas where he married Jill in 1959 in Plymouth. (They now have 4 children and 12 grandchildren).



He then re-joined the Royal Navy as an AB, and was later promoted via the Upper Yardsman scheme. Colin served on warships of the

US and Malaysian navies as well as the RN. But perhaps his most exciting times were four and a half years in the Far East, much of the time on anti-piracy patrols and, during and after confrontation with Indonesia, visiting isolated islands off the Borneo coast, and up rivers inland, often by longboat calling on remote long-houses to gain intelligence and reassure locals.

On leaving the Navy he trained as a Social Worker and was involved in a variety of voluntary groups including 10 years with Relate, 2 as a Voluntary Associate with the Probation service at Dartmoor,

and Chairman of Friends of Drake's Island. He continued in this vein when he retired at 60, as well as fitting in 40 walking holidays! He's done a further 10 years volunteering at Dartmoor and has now completed his Sunday evenings at Shekinah.

Hearing Colin's story it's clear that his rich experiences and insight have enabled him to relate to Soup Run users, to empathise and support others in a very real and special way. A Humanist, he has enjoyed meeting folk of all beliefs and of none, on both sides of the Soup Kitchen counter, and is full of praise for all the volunteers who perform wonders with Hilary's inspired leadership. Colin will no doubt be very affectionately and sorely missed as he relinquishes his Soup Run duties to be a full-time carer for his wife Jill, who has Alzheimer's. As a keen walker he will hopefully continue to enjoy many walks on Dartmoor. On behalf of everyone connected with the Soup Run, a very big **THANK YOU** for your fearless commitment, compassion, and your simple willingness to get alongside folks and be involved.

## Thrive Plymouth

'Thrive' is the Plymouth Public Health initiative, this year focusing on connecting people through food. October's event was at Plymouth University. Lyndsey Withers was congratulated on the Soup Run display, highlighting our contribution to the initiative. It's hoped to convert the display into other formats or a booklet. For more information visit [www.plymouth.gov.uk/publichealth/thriveplymouth](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/publichealth/thriveplymouth).



## Increase in Numbers

The Soup Run serves over 22,000 meals a year. Analysis of the figures for 2017 and 2018 showed that average numbers have increased by 20% in August,

23% in September, 36% in October and 27% in November. Sundays continue to be the busiest nights: up by 21% in August, 25% in September, 56% in October and 69% in November.

## Dear God...

*Thank you that whatever our life's journey we can all show compassion and offer hope to others. Please help us to do just that. Amen.*