

NIGEL PARRY
SIZE 9

Audio Producer: Rob Eagle

You go around, literally, to every department in the hospital and all the secretaries drop mail off, in all the offices, all the departments, and pick mail up. Path labs, you drop bloods and stuff off, so you're quite often in the labs, picking up stuff, delivering stuff from there. Notes, we get called a lot for notes. There's an office down in Casualty, whenever a patient comes in, the secretary says "It's only me." You know. So she says that, "Could you get me notes from records," or, mainly records. But then sometimes you have to get them from offices - that's a lot of walking and there is a lot of notes. As you can imagine, with all the patients coming in. Porters literally do go everywhere. I don't think there's many places that we don't go.

My name's Nigel Thomas Parry. I'm a porter driver at Bronglais hospital. I work primarily out of the portering department in the hospital, but I do occasionally drive vans and a minibus, staff minibus. Portering around the hospital is three shifts - there's a seven - three shift, a three - eleven shift, and there's eleven - seven shift. There's two main porters on every shift. We work, obviously, a lot with casualty, because we take a lot of patients from cas, so there's a lot of nurses that are there, and they'll phone you and say "Oh, we got a patient to go to CT or we have a patient for X-ray or there's a patient to go to a ward. That's the main three phone calls you get. Usually you don't have any interaction with the patients, because if they're ill you don't know if they want to talk about stuff, so you don't get into that kind of - it's a general conversation "Oh, you know, it's a nice day." "Yeah it's lovely today, the weather's good, yeah yeah yeah." Or "You been anywhere lately?" "Oh yeah, been on holiday" all things, like, you know it's a small thing, because you don't want to, and I don't think they generally want to and if they do they'll, they'll open up to you anyway, so you can't push that.

If you come in and you're fully staffed, the day can be good because you have your main porters who have beeps and phones. They'll go around and do the answer phones and do the main jobs, then you have a spare porter then to do the mail, to do the rubbish, and generally do other jobs, and that is always jobs that come up - and the boss will come in and "Oh yeah we've got offices to move," you know, or "We need to help records," - get them, unload their records into a van that takes them away to a storage facility. Easy when you've got plenty in. If there's only two of you in, which does happen, unfortunately, quite often. And not through anyone's fault, just through staffing. Then it's hard, because then you've got to do all your portering, answering the phones and the mail and the rubbish and these extra jobs and then at the end of the day you think, well why am I here?

Some of the boys have measured it and we literally do walk miles and miles and miles, because it's on a hill, it's quite long and it's, you know, it's fun. Most of the time. And you enjoy, kind of, the banter with other staff and most people laugh. Most people are pretty good, they get on with you and then, a lot of them in the same situation. They're all kind of busy, but you find most of them smiling and most of them would be OK with you, you get one or two grumpy ones but you still talk to them.

If you're doing the minibus, you're going to come in in the morning. You're going to start about - half past six is the start time, start up and then you basically get, right jump in the minibus, drive up the hill to the car park. If there's staff there, you bring 'em, in. If they're not, not you wait till some staff come in. Sometimes you sit there, because some of them walk in, if it's a nice day, and I stick the radio on, listen to the radio, it's not taxing, it's not a very busy job. The main problem with it, actually, is it's sometimes a bit boring. It is literally up and down the hill, up and down the hill, and it's OK, you know, to sit around, but it's an easy job.

There's quite a lot, quite a good mix of porters who work in the hospital, and most of them are quite fun. We have a good chat, a good laugh. Good talk in the tea room and everything. I do occasionally go out as well outside work, usually on payday, have a night out now and again and have fun and that is a good thing, I think that makes it easier. If you were in a department where you weren't getting on with the other people, I think it would be quite hard, but, you do release a lot of tension and things there, for some of the things you have to do it and work with... I'm quite, I think I generally get on with it. I do what I've got to do. I don't need to be told what I need to do. There are some porters which are good workers but need encouraging sometimes to do it, as I suppose in all walks of life, you know. Some people need just a bit of guidance. They say I've got a big mouth and I'm always telling people what to do - and I say "Well if you did it, I wouldn't need to tell you."

Patients - You're always asking patients if they need help because they wander around looking lost - even then you always get the ones that say "No, I'm fine," even when you know they're not. Me, personally, I like helping people. I like being able to show people where they're meant to go when they don't know, because our hospital is quite confusing and on a hill, and is up and down, and it's all, you know, you can quite easily get lost, quite easily get lost, even if you know where you're going, but quite easily, if you've just come in here and you're under a bit of stress because you're not well or you're visiting someone that's not well, you're not thinking straight. You're not concentrating and you're trying to get somewhere, and I think just being able to tell someone "Just go down there at those steps, along the corridor - you're there, fine." And they're grateful you know - I personally get a lot of inner glow from that, because that's an easy bit to do, so easy to do. And they really appreciate it.

For eight years I worked as a night porter. Security. You're supposed to wander around the inside of the hospital, check that all that external doors are closed, there's no obvious windows left open that someone could come in. I remember a few years ago, I was just walking around and I checked everywhere, and everywhere was shut. And, you know, you won't find much inside, it's usually all locked and shut. And I just went to open this one door internally, which is an access door to another couple of doors, and as I opened it, it wouldn't open, so I went to push it, and as I went to push it, there was someone sleeping. On the floor. Made me jump out of my skin. It was just someone who'd come in, got drunk and fallen asleep. You know, it was just that I had to ask them to leave and move on. "Sorry, you can't stay there." Which they did, a bit grumpily, but...

They don't pay you enough to work nights, because nights is a killer. I'm glad I don't do it anymore and I wouldn't go back to it. Some people say they love it and everything, but if you don't sleep, it's hard. But you get slightly more pay for doing it - not enough I wouldn't say, I wouldn't do it again, but some people still do it. One of the jobs you do do, which you do on nights and you also do in day is occasionally you have to bring deceased down from the wards, and that's never a nice job but it's a job that has to be done. At night it's done by two porters. You have to bring them off the ward, take them down, write them in the book, put them into the chapel. And then, they get sorted in the day. But, er, it's one of the harder jobs, I think, in the hospital, but it's something, it's part of the running of a hospital - it happens, you have to deal with it.

I've lived in Aberystwyth, went to school in Aberystwyth, met my wife in Aberystwyth, and I have my wife and three kids and live just outside Aberystwyth. It's a lovely little town. It's a great place to live Aberystwyth. It's nice town centre, lovely prom, nice beaches, lovely countryside all around. Two of the kids are away now in university. The youngest is fourteen, he's still in school. A dog, two cats. They'll get to walk the dog, the dog needs a lot of walking, so - a lot of walking.

I started here in 1988. So I've been here quite a few years and seen a few changes. Hospital's still the same, a lot of the functions it does are still the same. Most of the people when I started, a lot have left or are leaving. There's still a few around. I dunno, I'm fifty four. So I've got another at least ten years to do although they've raised the retirement age now. So I'd like to, I'd like to retire, my plan would be to retire at sixty. But I'll have to see where I am financially at sixty. It's a fairly physical job, portering, and hopefully I'll still be physically fit. But I've got other things I'd like to do and I'll have done them in a few years, I hope by then, to be in retirement. I've got three kids so might have some other things pop up or occur you never know but we'll see. But I'd like to do a bit of travelling with my wife and see some parts of Britain, Scotland and other parts of the world. I love travelling, I do like travelling and taking the dog, walking the dog. Simple things.