



Voices from the Village of Hope

Mr Ken Dench (born 1927)

Mr Ken Dench received life-saving treatment at Papworth Hospital when he underwent four coronary bypasses. He became an active member of the Zipper Club.

Thump

“Then I got stopped with this very big thump in the chest, pain in chest, terrific pain. That happened a couple of times, saw the doctor, and he said yeah he thought, referred me back to Addenbrookes. And I saw Dr Petch for the first time there. Went to Papworth for angiogram, that time. That was an experience, because I knew a friend, I was also on the committee for the RAF Association at Milton then, and the Treasurer of that had had an angiogram and described it as one of the terrible things he’d had. Couldn’t get the needle up through his groin, couldn’t get it up through his arm, and the pain was wicked and awful. So I went to Papworth that time dreading the angiogram, and it was all over before I realised it had started. No problems at all. Since then I’ve had eight angiograms and they don’t hurt at all. In fact the hot flush is very enjoyable.”

Finished

“I thought my life had finished, because at 58 at that time, everybody thought heart problems and that operation, terrible. But the consultant was Petch, Dr Petch, the surgeon was John Wallwork. Fantastic. And I remember going up to, when I went to the angiogram I was in the old part of the hospital, with the little tiny rooms, which overlooked the duck pond with the balconies. Can’t remember much about that, just remember that room there. When I went up for the night before the operation was going to be held, you went into a ward, and I can’t remember the name of the ward. But sitting up round the ward, were elderly gentleman bouncing around with medicine balls, you know, the big things on their chest, exercising up and down, and I wondered who they were. These were the people who had just had heart transplants, a few days before or earlier, sitting up in their beds, sitting up in their chairs, doing these exercises. Goodness gracious me, now if they’ve had that, what’s it going to be like for this little thing I’m going to get. And the hospital staff were fantastic. They describe exactly what was going to happen, take a graft out your leg, and

what was going to happen and so forth. And put you really at ease, had no worries whatsoever.”

Breathe

“When I woke up, it was in intensive care, well, Ruby was there when I woke up. And the first thing they gave me was a sip of water, and that was the best thing you’ve ever had, like nectar! And I can remember waking up, when I did wake up conscious, I could breathe. And that was the difference. Before, I had difficulty in breathing. After the operation I could breathe. And then it was just a question of getting better.”

Strength

“I think it will go on from strength to strength. I know there is a lot of sentimentality about the duck pond, and the beginnings of Papworth Hospital, but that was the beginnings, and I think the future it will be bright, it will be great. There is so much technology coming on in what can happen, and I think it’s fine. And the same with the NHS, I think the NHS is wonderful. You hear so many complaints, and moans and groans about it. I don’t think they’re really moans and groans at all, because when you need them, they’re there. That’s been my experience anyway. When you have needed them, they have certainly been there.”