

Sheila Nicholson 'Calls Time' After 41 Years of Cleaning Service

Wednesday 16 January, 2013

Sheila Nicholson, cleaner at the Red Lion on Front Street in Chester-le-Street, will polish the pub's bar for the last time on Wednesday 16th January when she retires after working at the pub for 41 years.

What makes Sheila's story even more remarkable is that for the first time in 72 years, there won't be a member of her family working at the pub. Sheila's mum cleaned the pub for twenty five years previous to Sheila's employment.

Starting her first shift in 1972 when Edward Heath was British Prime Minister, Sheila originally started employment at the Red Lion in the kitchen helping to prepare for service. She then moved to the front of house, learning silver service and serving customers before becoming the pub's cleaner.

Working six days a week from 6am until midday, Sheila, who is 71, says the thing she'll miss most about working at the Red Lion is the people.

Jill Harkness, who manages the Red Lion with her husband Stuart said: "Sheila is one of the best people I know. She's such a lovely person and the team and I will be so sad to see her go. It's always a pleasure to come down in the morning and see Sheila. She's an important part of the success of the pub and with her passion to making sure the pub is spotless; she leaves some very big shoes to fill. There's no smudge, smear or dust that she can't spot.

"We wrote to the Queen on Sheila's behalf, telling her of the fantastic work and dedication that Sheila has put into her job over the years. We received a reply back from Sandringham saying that the Queen was touched by her story, so we've framed the letter and will present it to Sheila when she leaves.

"We have also organised a celebratory retirement party for Sheila's friends, family and some of the pub's regulars. We'll also have a representative from Bramwell Pub Company, the company that own and operate the Red Lion, coming to the celebration who will officially present Sheila's retirement gift to her and thank her for all the hard work and commitment she has shown over the years.

"At a time when a job for life is becoming increasingly rare, Sheila's dedication to her work at the Red Lion is even more of an achievement and we wish her lots of luck and happiness in the future."

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