

## A demonstrators Journey – Carron White

Putting the phone down and entering the date in the diary and not forgetting the calendar! That's the start of a demonstrator's journey! Waiting for the blue form to arrive and checking the details, some of which have tbc [to be confirmed] - well it is 2022 and the booking can be up to two / three years in advance and who knows what can happen in that time! Hopefully nothing as drastic as the last two years. The blue form arrives and having been checked, one part is kept by the demonstrator and the rest returned to the programme secretary. I place this in a file kept in date order, on a pink sheet for night time demonstrations and green for a day time demonstrations - this just helps me to know instantly when the demonstration is for. When the third part of the blue form arrives back it joins the first in the relevant pouch.

But before this demonstration there are bookings for next week and the first decision for me is where do I order my flowers? An online company delivers to me and I have to trust in their judgement and quality, or could I travel and select the flowers myself from the wholesaler on the day? To save on travel costs incurred I usually use a company that delivers charging me £16.95 but if any are missing or not of a good standard this still means travelling to source more. Ordering in itself can take up to **45 minutes**, not long but sourcing the best price, quality, number of stems etc does need consideration.

Order Done! Now the day of delivery is here and my boxes arrive, each of the flowers stems needs to be conditioned and this takes time, removing the leaves, thorns and re-cutting stems, buckets have been thoroughly cleaned beforehand and flower food added, some roses from abroad need to soak overnight before this process, however let's say **one and a half hours** for this part of my journey.



Flowers at the ready! Now for the preparation and mechanics of the designs to be used for the demonstration, maybe extenders used on a vase, cutting and moulding of the chicken wire, soaking of foam and attaching to trays, for this shall we allow an hour! If test tubes are used and wood and drill it could be even more time consuming but we will run with just **one and a half hour**.

So flowers and mechanics all ready, now for my demonstrators boxes. Luckily when I first covered these with black material it was a strong material and they have lasted three years so far, plus 2 years just stored in the attic. So now it's dividing the flowers into the individual arrangements and placing in the boxes and adding the extra elements of the design, the cones, the berries, ribbon, straw etc., (**1 hour**) and then we are on to the CAR. Packing the car is an art form all of its own! Moving seats, jamming in a vase so it doesn't move, loading boxes and trays of foam (making sure it's not being dented or the water seeping into the seats, Grandson does complain about a soggy bottom!). This job alone shall we say **another hour**.

Wow, and now for the face! Well may be we don't include this but depending on the bags under my eyes this can take anything from 30 mins to? Saying that, some days when there has been no auctions in Holland then that means no deliveries which makes a Monday demonstration hard, those are the days I have to travel to Stoke on Trent two hours away to pick up flowers, usually calling at my daughters to mess her back kitchen up whilst I prepare the flowers and boxes, good job she loves me! For this to happen my day usually starts at 5am and if the demonstration is the same day that could mean arriving home at 1-2am the next morning... but we love what we do or we would not do it.

Let's see flowers, mechanics, car packed, me looking reasonable (don't forget the holdall with makeup and change of clothes and shoes in again!), coffee for on the way, call for petrol on route, look around the house for where left my glasses oh and then look around for where I have put the keys down to pick glasses up! Ready, oh no go back and pick up blue form, need the address.



Entering the address, my heart jumps erratic, I'm sure when I checked the times and route when accepting the booking it said "you will arrive at your destination in 2 hours 35 minutes, now it's more like 4hrs? WHAT!! Turn car off, start engine up again and "oh thank mercy", my lady sat nav who has attitude has now decided 2 hours 35minutes is correct. Be calm my beating heart....and so the road trip begins.

Leaving early is always a plus as with traffic jams, accidents and generally hitting congestion spots at busy home times can easily add another 30 minutes upwards on to the trip.

Arriving an hour before the demonstration starts, for the unloading of car, preparation of foliage [which these days many demonstrators ask to be provided by the club, as it is expensive to buy and taken from our own garden takes time and depletes our supply}, changing attire etc.

It's lovely to see the club members and share not only our talk that accompanies the demonstration but also finding out what everyone has been up to.

Demonstration complete, now the RAFFLE! Well the stories demonstrators could tell about the raffle, that's for a future newsletter!



The last part of the demonstrators journey is the repacking of the car, which can be slightly quicker,(no flowers to worry about) and the journey home. So while some members are tucked up cosy at home your demonstrator may be still be travelling. Leaving at 9.45 or 10pm it can be a two hour journey so arriving home at midnight is not unusual. Emptying the car, clearing out boxes and the backseat can be left to the morning.

So you see one demonstration can take up hours of up to three days, granted not the full three days but considerable time and effort. Passionate about: flower arranging, meeting people and the promotion of NAFAS and your club, that's the main reason why our demonstrators demonstrate.

The number of hours spent on most demonstrations can be anything from 12 to 17 hours, the one described above was 17 hours and for this the payment was less than the national minimum wage. This article is not a complaint or a moan. Helping to keep the Area's clubs putting on an exciting and interesting programme for members is what we do and we do what we can to keep costs down. But we also have to cover the work and time spent. I hope this demonstrator's journey has given a small insight into the work that goes on to help educate, inspire and entertain you, and I do look forward to seeing you all again at another club meeting soon.