

Video shows 'surprise' royal visit to Somerset¹

Local hero and community stalwarts honoured

BY

MAX BAKER

13:41, 30 JAN 2019

The Duchess of Cornwall stopped by for a 'surprise' visit in **Frome** today, meeting people from charitable organisations at the Frome Medical Centre.

Camilla arrived on Wednesday morning (January 30) to hand out an award to a local hero and chat to people who run clubs that help with loneliness in Frome.

Speaking afterwards, they said they had been told a VIP was coming but did not know the identity of the royal visitor until shortly beforehand.

She spoke to several dignitaries upon her arrival, including the High Sheriff of Somerset Denis Burn and the mayor of Frome Rich Ackroyd.

The Duchess then handed 87-year-old Gerald Franks an award for setting up the Frome and District Day Centre Lunch Club in 2000.



Camilla presents Gerald Franks with an award after he set up a club that gives lonely people a hot meal (Image: Paul Gillis)

She was filmed handing him a glass trophy and congratulating him for the fine work he does in the community.

DUCHESS OF CORNWALL PRESENTS AWARD TO LOCAL HERO IN FROME

¹ <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/duchess-of-cornwall-frome-visit-2486756>

The club offers a hot meal and friendship to older people who are unable to cook and take care of themselves.

Gerald set up the club to help those who suffer from loneliness but had no idea that he would be accepting the award from the Duchess.

He said: "I didn't know about the award. I knew I was meeting someone VIP but I didn't know about this.

"She was very nice and very down to earth really. I told her to give my regards to Charles."

He also explained a little bit about the day centre he started.



The Duchess of Cornwall sits down for a coffee with the Talking Cafe in Frome (Image: Paul Gillis)

He said: "We're based in the assembly rooms and there's not a lot of other places for us in Frome because we need to cater for people that can walk.

"For some people it's the only hot meal they get a week.

"It's marvellous (to collect the award). She said well done on the good work. It was such a surprise."

Heather Noton, who takes attends the Talking Cafe in Frome, was very surprised.

She said: We were at talking cafe on Monday and were asked if we could like to come to the Frome Medical Centre and it was kept very quiet as to who it was.

"We were told that it was a VIP and we found out this morning who it was."

"It's always nice to get a bit of recognition of the things that are going on. There's a lot going on in Frome. It's really nice to get a bit of acknowledgment."

She also explained what the talking cafe is and said: "It's a weekly meeting of about 20-25 people that takes place at the Cheese and Grain. All the people there seem to have some sort long-term health condition, but that's not what we talk about.

"We chat, gossip and complain! But it's a good forum for a social occasion."

The Duchess also spoke to members of the couch to 5k walking club, aimed at getting people off their sofas and getting involved in exercise.

After the trip to Medical Centre, she is headed to the Mens Shed, which offers a workspace for people to work on carpentry and joinery projects. The project is also aimed at combating loneliness.



The Duchess of Cornwall at the Men's Shed (Image: Paul Gillis)

She then went to the Hauser & Wirth Gallery to meet students from Bruton Primary school.