

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Transcript

Title Page

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Interviewee's Surname: Curtis

Title: Mrs

Interviewee's Forenames: Mary

Gender: F

Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:

Volunteer 1964-2008, Ebley, Gloucestershire

Gloucester Ebley Silver Threads Club

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Interviewer's Notes:

Mary Curtis (MC) talks about her time as a WVS and WRVS volunteer from 1964 to 2008 she was Club Leader of the Ebley Silver Threads Over Sixties Club in Ebley Gloucestershire for 45 years. MC talks about how the club was setup, run/managed and closed down. She also discusses the holidays they took club members on, the members themselves and the volunteers she had on the club's committee. MC concludes with a story about a trip to Bridlington.

[Jennifer Hunt]: This is Jennifer Hunt with Mary Curtis on the 9th of September 2015 at her home in Gloucestershire. Mary, would you just like to introduce yourself?

[Mary Curtis]: I am Mary Curtis, yes, living in Elm Terrace in Foxmoor Lane, yes, any more do you want?

[JH]: When did you join WRVS?

[MC]: Oh, years ago, 1964 I think it were. But I was, I went to a meeting prior to that, several years before that just to become a member of the WRVS.

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: But actually leader of the club it wasn't until 1964 I think it was that I actually became leader of the club. But yes, and I've enjoyed every minute.

[JH]: And why did you join?

[MC]: Why did we join? We were young wives, and there were about seven of us and we used to meet in the vestry in our local chapel. And we weren't doing a lot and the minister, minister's wife was in charge and she said 'Could we not do something for the older people in the village'? And yes we did, we decided that we would and different ones of us went round to different clubs that were already associated and gleaned quite a lot of information. And so in turn, because we had no cash and so she said 'Now how can we start without any finances really'? And so we decided that we would, it was her anyway, our minister's wife, Mrs Reader said 'Should we not join the WRVS'? And that's how it come about. Well she did all that, she became, she affiliated, you know, she sorted that

out. And then in turn she was leader of the club for a while, for two years. And then in turn I took it on after a committee meeting, and a Mrs Senior was then County Organiser, Gloucester County Organiser, and she felt that yes, I would be suitable to take it on and I did and continued to do it for forty-six years.

[JH]: That's a long time for leading a, a club.

[MC]: A long time.

[JH]: And what was the club called?

[MC]: Ebley Silver Threads Over Six..., WRVS Over Sixties Club. Yes, it was, and I enjoyed every moment, every moment, never lost a, a meeting other than, the odd one which was very few thank goodness. Holidays and club holidays, that was all, never ever missed a Wednesday. It was a commitment, and it came to the end at our last meeting where I told them at the AGM in the January that I was standing down, I couldn't continue anymore, and would someone be prepared to take it on? And no one was, not even the deputy, she said 'No, I can't take on the commitment that you've done Mary all these years, no I can't'. And we wanted a treasurer, we wanted an entertainments secretary, we wanted quite a lot on our committee. The entertainments secretary was finding it very difficult to find someone every week to entertain. But we filled in, we filled in, with bingo and different things. We had day trips out and, oh just holidays, I did thirty-six holidays to different places all over England I was going to say, yes. Isle of Wight, Scotland, all over. And yes, we, I, I really enjoyed it. And so therefore at the next annual general meeting, well general meeting, in the April I said 'This is it, I, I can't do it any more now', and so no one was prepared to take any of it on so it just, just packed up, we just packed it in. And the finances that we had we, didn't give WRVS a lot, but I forget who the cou..., organiser was Mrs Whitehead and Mrs Lane, if it was later than them, came to club and said that to give just a small amount to WRVS and the rest to dispose of to our liking who... So what we did was organise a day trip out, and we went to a garden centre and then back to a local pub, The Red Lion, and they welcomed us, we had a lovely time, a lovely time,

and presentations of course, to one and another. And it really was good, and I did think it was going to be a sad time but it wasn't, no it wasn't. And our driver, he'd taken us out many, many times and he had already while we were on the coach travelling to this place, to the garden centre, he had already taken our names and what we wanted to eat, he'd got the menu, and he rang it through so when we got there they were waiting for us at the door and gave us a lovely welcome, and nobody, they didn't know us at all. And we had a lovely meal, a lovely meal and our photographs taken of course, all of us as we left. And presentations, and I thought 'This is going to be a very sad day', but no, not, it wasn't, I, I wouldn't allow it, not really. So on the way back we sang and enjoyed the old songs and, and I told all sorts of stories and they were good as gold bless 'em, good as gold.

[00:06:24]

And when they all got off I thought 'Oh, this is going to be tears saying "goodbye"', but no, no. No, I said 'Now look, when you get off now just think that we are going to have a holiday, we're going on holiday now so just think that, think that we shall be back after so long and we shall be going back so not to get upset', and they didn't, they didn't. No, and they left. And that was, our last meeting at the club room itself was, funnily enough, on my birthday, second of April, yes, it was. And what we decided was, as I say, we spend the money that was in the funds, those that couldn't come we would give them a little gift and the cost of what it would have cost. Well we paid, the club paid for the coach and everything but we gave them what it would have cost them individually, so that all the money got spent over that time. Yes, and it was good and they all left in good spirits really, yes, they really did. So that was on the 9th of April, I've got the date here somewhere that we actually finished.
[Pause - rustling of papers]

[JH]: Is it about 2012 that you...?

[MC]: No, it was... Oh, I've got loads of pieces here I think. [Pause - rustling of papers] That's us as we...

[JH]: On the coach?

[MC]: Yes, that's, yes, as we were about to leave the pub. This is us at our last meeting and I was presented with flowers, and so was the treasurer. And I can't remember who the lady was there, of course we've got it here all on the literature. All in the paper. There I am receiving...

[JH]: Yes. Oh, that's got 2008 written on it on that article.

[MC]: That's it that was our last meeting, so that's when it finished. So that's what? Seven years ago now.

[JH]: Erm.

[MC]: Erm. Seven years. I do miss it. Every Wednesday afternoon from half past one till half past four for all those years, more or less, as I say, except for holidays and the illness, which was very little thank goodness, Mrs Curtis was not at home on a Wednesday, no. And did, yes, so I, I really enjoyed it and I am in favour of anyone that's got a few minutes, young or old, to take up the voluntary work. Yes, because I, I feel that if it's only sitting with someone to talk for a while the older people like to hear what the younger people are doing today and vice-versa, even if they go into a home and speak to someone. I, I do, I'm all for it myself, yes I am, I really enjoyed it, I really did. Yes, you, I learned a lot really through... And it was funny when they used to call me 'Mrs Curtis', you know, and I was the younger of them, the youngest there. But I did, I really did.

[00:10:49]

[JH]: And where did you used to have your meetings?

[MC]: At... [Coughs] Excuse me, at a clubroom in Cainscross it was, it was the Horse [ph 00:11:00] Club we used to meet there. Well, we met in several different places at different times over the years you see, but that's where we finally ended up. Yes, I, I think it says on the literature there, you know, where we ended up, yes. That's, yes, it was, it was good, it was good and my goodness I've done, oh dear, some travelling in my time and loved it, loved it. And I always got on with the drivers of the coaches and wherever we went they always said 'Oh, what a lovely party you've been', well, I've got a, a letter here now from Janice Whitehead and Mrs Lane thanking me and the club for giving them such a welcome and what a lovely club it was, and they always used to say 'It rested with the leader as to how the club went'. And yes, yes, I, it was good. And my goodness I've travelled to some places. Thirty-six holidays.

[JH]: And where would you take them on the holidays?

[MC]: Where would I take them? Well, goodness me. Scotland, Bournemouth, I've got to read them out, each year I've got it all done. Is all this ratting going on or are you...?

[JH]: I can edit it out.

[MC]: Oh dear! I left this book here with it all in. I thought I was organised at one time. Yes, it should be it's a little old grey book. There it is look. That little old book has got all sorts in there, well it's dated... The first holiday I took them on was to Bournemouth in 1970. And after that it was every year after.

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: Sandown, the Isle of Wight. Margate in May and Sandown in September the next year. '73 to Weymouth, '74 to Llandudno in May. '75 to Great Yarmouth in June, and again in October to Sandown on the Isle of Wight. Isle of Wight in October the next year. Dawlish the next year. Llandudno the next year. Torquay in May in Nineteen... Margate in 1980. Morecambe in '81. Paington in '82. Sandown again in Sept..., in September '84. And Bridlington the next holiday. Southport, Skegness, Clacton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Llandudno, Newquay, Scotland, Bridlington, Eastbourne, Ayr in Scotland, Morecambe, Folkestone, Ilfracombe, Bridlington, Skegness, Clacton-on-Sea, St Annes - Lytham St Annes, Shanklin on the Isle of Wight, Tenby, and the last one in 8..., 2005 to Bridlington.

[JH]: So lots of different places all over the country?

[MC]: Oh yes. I loved it, and they did. I actually was presented to Princess Anne oh, way, way back, through WRVS, there were a rally. And she then was associated with Save the Children and Mrs Whitehead introduced me to her and she said, well Mrs Whitehead said 'Mrs Curtis is taking her club to Bridlington'. And so Princess Anne stood there and she said 'Bridlington?' And I said 'Yes'. She goes 'That's a long way from Stroud'. And I said 'Yes, I know'. She said 'Well I'm living near Stroud? and she says 'it's a long, long way'. I said 'Yes I know but', I said 'they'll enjoy, they'll enjoy every moment because I would make it'. A little cabaret, we would sing and talk, over the microphone I would to them. And yes, they would make that day part and parcel of their holiday.

[00:15:14]

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: It was lovely, lovely, yes it was. And then we had, I used to take, well in the beginning, fifty, a coach full. And everyone was as good as gold, and never did I have to ask for their money. Once I'd announced the price and where we were going then it was all, always there, always there, never. And also I had a deaf and dumb gentleman was, and he was never late to get back to a coach, never late to get on it, nor to come to club he was always there. And he used to say, others couldn't understand him but I, I could understand more or less what he wanted and what he was saying. And as he got off the coach always I would have announced to be back at a certain point at, let's say, four o'clock. And he would have not, perhaps read my lips, but he wouldn't have exactly known quite. So he would put his hand out and I would write on his hand to be back at the coach for so and so and so and so and he never ever was late, never.

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: He was one of the first always back, yes he was. But yes, they used to say well, wherever I went, if I said I was taking a party to the Moon they would say 'Well, you'll be coming' and I'd say 'Oh yes I'll be there' and they would have come, they would. And yes, it was a very happy club, very, very happy club, yes they were. And then for birthdays, if they celebrated, well always for birthdays we always sang a favourite hymn, their favourite hymn, and ended with a hymn and a prayer. But, now where was I, I was saying? Yes, and on their ninetieth birthdays a cake, made a cake for them. Yes, we've had a lovely, lovely time, yes I really had, enjoyed every minute.

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: So, I won't tell you some of the things that, funny stories that have happened. [Laughing] Do you want hear?

[JH]: Yes please.

[MC]: [Laughing] Oh dear. Oh for, on one occasion our coach skidded off the road and went into a ditch and I went down into the well, I was in the front seat, of the well of the coach. And the driver went forward, there's two people sitting behind went forward as well and we were on our way to the Isle of Wight. But it all got settled and nobody panicked. One lady had just a thermos, a small thermos. But we had to get them all out because the coach was all tipped up. Got them off steadily through the emergency exit, me feeling like goodness knows what. Bruised leg and eye and everything. The driver was struck off and, but no one panicked, no one panicked, it was a foggy morning. My daughter was with me on the coach and she went to the nearest of a, it was a lonely road, the nearest farmhouse and rang to the coach proprietor to say that what had happened, could he come out with another coach? Which he did, and we went on from there to the Isle of Wight very late, missing lots of ferries. But in the end they did get in touch, and the people that met us, the two drivers with a coach when we got to... I'm trying to remember where we, where we got, went to from the Isle of Wight, to Cowes I think it was and they were waiting, there was another coach with two drivers waiting for us and it was the last ferry but it was a lovely holiday. Because the drivers that were over there, they booked that coach for the, stayed with us for the week.

[JH]: Uhhh.

[MC]: And took us around the Isle of Wight, which we wouldn't have possibly seen had own driver had been able to take us, but he couldn't he was too shook up he, he couldn't do that in the end so. But nevertheless we had a lovely time then. And other things that have happened, oh, my goodness me. One lady, bless her heart, she was, erm, she was a friend of someone, she wasn't actually a member of the club. Now she came on the outing, it was...? Yes, a day trip, yes, it was a day trip and we was holidaying in Eastbourne and we were spending the day at Brighton and we got on, and we wanted to go into the Royal Pavilion, which of course was a palace. So we went in, very nice, about eight of us, a little party of us went in. Went all around these beautiful rooms, all absolutely beautiful. And the treasurer of the club and I were in the dining room looking at a beautiful chandelier, and the table was laid, it was absolutely beautiful. And the others, a little party, as I say, of about eight, they'd got on into what I presume was the Green Drawing Room. And then I heard a

call 'Mary, Mary you're wanted'. So I'd always got everything with me, everything except the kitchen sink, and I went in and this lady was sitting in a very, very ornate chair just inside. And someone said 'Oh, Amy's feeling sick'. And so I said 'Don't worry', so I got Amy's hand. Of course, as I say, I had everything, polythene bags and goodness knows what else. And so I immediately of course, got the bag and held it under her face. She was, she was sick, bless her.

[00:21:27]

So in the end one of the guides came, a very nice gentleman, he said 'Can I help in any way?' And I said 'Oh, yes please' I said, do you mind disposing of this please sir?' And he said 'Certainly. And I'll go and get some tissues and towels', and back he came, and well we tidied Amy up bless her. And I he said , well no I said 'Do you feel like going on with us now or don't you feel well enough?' She said 'No, I don't think I can'. So we asked, he called someone else. Well, this gentleman came and he said 'Don't worry, you go and do what you want to do and we'll take great care of her and we'll take her into the shop and', gift shop, 'and we'll get her seated and keep an eye on her'. Well, that's what we did and we had a lovely time in there. It was, but, and pick her up yes, well she was feeling better so we sat outside in the air for a while. Did she feel like walking on any farther? So yes, yes, she did, she thought she would so I said 'Well, come on then we'll walk', still this little group of us, 'to, we'll walk up off to the pier and sit down for a while and have a little break', which we did. Well, at the end of the pier was, well, I suppose you would call it a, not a restaurant exactly but you could get drinks of all sorts there. So we found a nice chair for her to sit in. So she sat there quiet and I said 'Do you feel like a lemonade?' 'Oh yes', she thinks she'd have a lemonade. So with that my, I mean I was sitting just there, the others were sitting outside in the sunshine. And looked across and my friend said 'Amy's gone to sleep', and I said 'Yes', I said 'that's good'. So with that she says 'Did she have her teeth in, her dentures in when she left?' I said 'I have no idea'. She says 'Well she hasn't got them now anyway if she, if she did'. So when she sort of came to I said 'We're going to sit outside now Amy for a little while, did you have your dentures in when you left this morning?' 'Yes, yes, yes', she says. I said 'Well you haven't got them now love so', I said 'they're possibly in the bag where I collected the sick they're now down the Royal loo'. So poor old Amy bless her, and that was on the Monday and we were away on holiday for a week so I said 'How are you going to manage without your dentures?' 'Oh', she said 'I don't usually wear them at home, that will be all right', and she did,

yes. But that, yes, we could, I would have con..., confiscated her dentures had I known they were missing, they were in there. Yes, I would, I would. But no, he'd disposed of them of course, took the bag and away they went. Yes, oh we've had accidents, I've had death and, over the time, yes I have.

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: And then we went off one day and the lady that was, she was only a friend of a member. And we left her she said, I've forgot what her name was now, she said 'She won't be coming with us this morning she doesn't feel at all well'. I said 'That's all right, that's quite all right', but we were then going back to lunch, it was a morning trip, went back to the hotel to lunch. And she said 'She'll be all right, she'll be all right, the proprietor assured me that they would keep an eye on her. 'I've left her in bed, they'll will make sure he has a drink and she's quite all right'. I said 'Right', so that was it so we left her. When we got back at lunchtime about one o'clock, the coach pulled up on the drive at the hotel and the proprietor was out waiting for us. He said 'Mary', and I said 'Yes', and he said 'do you mind', and a Mrs Horay [ph 00:25:47] was with me, who was the friend of this lady that was poorly. 'Go into the lounge where my wife is waiting', and he said 'I want to say, and get on the coach and explain why you've left'. So in we go and she was waiting with biscuits and a glass of sherry. She says 'Now sit down and don't upset yourselves', she said 'but while you were away this chair she, she was sat down, I remember now 'has passed away. But', she said 'we've had the coroner's officers out, or whatever they're called yes, had been out. The doctor had been out, certified death and she was, had been taken away, the body had already been taken away and I wasn't to worry and as it was her husband was telling the rest of the members on the coach. And so it was at lunchtime so eventually we all went to the diner, and I said to them 'We're going out this evening to the theatre, but,' I said 'don't upset yourselves, she wouldn't have wanted you, you all to be upset, just go and do what you want to do this afternoon. Be ready for this evening', we were going to the theatre. And so they did, they did and off we went to the theatre. We hadn't got far before a neighbour of mine who was on the coach on the holiday with us, her sister was with her. She came to me saying 'Oh, Mary, [00:27:32] ever so poorly'. I said 'Oh dear whatever's the matter'? She said 'She's got terrible stomach pains, terrible stomach pain', she said 'what can we do'? I said 'Well, do you think you'll be able to sit through the show'? 'Yes, she thinks she would'. But eventually of course, we got back to the hotel oh, she was terrible, terrible pains. So the

proprietress came and she rang the doctor. The doctor came out, gave her some sedation to try and, you know, in the middle of the night it was equally as bad. So her sister came to me and said 'Look Mary something will have to be done, we shall have to take her somewhere'. And so the proprietress said 'Don't worry, don't you worry', she said 'I'll ring the doctor'. And doctor came out, order, ordered the ambulance, the ambulance came out, she said 'And don't you worry about going in the ambulance, I'm taking you, I'm following the ambulance to the hospital', and when we got there... I knew she was an asthmatic and I knew if she had to have any sedation or anything, you know, it might be dodgy. So I explained all this. Well, I left her at the hospital and, as I say, the proprietress took me back to the hotel. The next morning we rang she was in intensive care but not too bad, not too..., Could anyone visit? Yes, yes, only two no more and only to stay five minutes. And her sister and I went, her sister went in first to visit her. She came out and I was out waiting to go in and then the nurse came out and she said who was I? I said I was the leader of the club and a neighbour of the lady that was poorly and she said 'Well, only a few minutes, only for, you can go in only for five minutes'. Anyway with that I burst into tears because I'd already a death the same day. And so she said 'Oh, don't upset yourself, don't get upset'. I said 'No I know, but', I said 'I've already had a death today', and I said 'I don't want another'. And so she said 'We shall look after her'. I said 'I know you will, I know you will'. And so we went in, I did go in with her, yes, I did, stayed about five minutes. She was in for three weeks, we had to leave her there, yeah she was. But of I've had all sorts. Accidents, broken arms and legs and, oh, all sorts. I could have written two books really.

[00:30:10]

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: Yes. [Laughing]

[JH]: Lots of different events in taking your holidays?

[MC]: Oh, I've done it for years, yes, yes I have. Plus anything, but I would never ever have any upset, no, nor the club. Some they might say 'I'm not coming back next week'. And I'd say 'Why'? 'Well, so and so's said that I shouldn't be doing this or I shouldn't be sitting here'. I said 'Now don't take any notice, you'll be back next week'. 'I shan't'. 'You will, you will', I said 'because it's not what is said it's the way it's said'. So I said 'Because he didn't mean anything so now no, you come back next week and you enjoy it don't you, the club'? And they said 'Yes', I used to say 'Well, then you come back, you come back'. And they used to, yes, you know, I wouldn't have any upsets if I could help it, never, no. And yes, they do enjoy it. We started off with fifty, we couldn't take any more because we couldn't accommodate them in the room for one thing. And another thing if we wanted a coach you could only take fifty, or fifty-two passengers so, you know, fifty members we started and ended up I think with about eighteen or twenty. Because sixty..., old people at sixty, over sixty they didn't want to join, they were still feeling quite young then and looking after grandchildren maybe and still at work and they just dwindled away. Yes, just dwindled away. And, as I say, we wanted a treasurer, we wanted an entertainments secretary, we wanted a deputy, and of course, I was leaving as well so really we wanted a new committee altogether and no one was prepared to do it, so that's how it all come to end. Very sad but no, no everybody was quite happy really, yes, quite happy in the end. Yes, and that's seven years ago, seven years ago, my God. But I've got all sorts of letters of approval, you know, and appreciating ..

[JH] Yeah.

[MC] what I'd done over the years and WRVS, yes, I have

[JH]: Uhhh.

[MC]: And what a lovely club it was and oh, different letters from different ones here. Yes, so, I've all sorts, all sorts of literature here. 2008, that was the year we finished.

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: 'I would like to offer my most sincere thanks for the dedication you have shown to WRVS. Your contribution has helped WRVS to retain its commitment to supporting local communities across the country. I would also like to thank, to take this opportunity to invite you to become a member of the WRVS Association, which was started in 1973, it is a friendly link between past and present volunteers of WRVS with activities such as luncheon, monthly meetings with speakers, and biannual outings as well as an annual reunion. Members receive *WRVS Action Magazine* as Association newsletter twice a year'.

[JH]: And did you join the Association?

[MC]: No, no.

[JH]: No?

[MC]: No. 'And details as above...' That was in 2008.

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: Because I'd already said that I was packing in.

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: The club in so there was no point in continuing. 'If you are interested please contact the chairman of The WRVS Association, Priory Street Centre, 15 Priory Street, York', or phone a certain number. 'Should you wish to volunteer on a WRVS Project again simply let this office know and we will update your details. Our phone number is' such and such a number. 'You can speak to any member of the WRVS Database Administration Team, or alternatively we can be contacted by e-mail or database WRVS. We wish you all the best for the future, yours sincerely, Christine Dobson, Head of People Support'.

[JH]: Uhhh.

[MC]: Erm, so 'Patron Her Majesty the Queen'. Yes, some, someone did, I've written to and thanked them for... [Pause] That's right, this was, this was actually at the last meeting then, it was a 'Mrs S Taylor WRVS attended this meeting and presented Mrs Curtis with a card for forty-five years, she being the only founder member still attending the club since it started forty-six years ago. Mrs E Gurshin [ph 00:35:27] ninety-eight is the only other member, founder member, who has attended meetings regularly until she had to leave the club about ten years ago owing to age and her health to go to live with her son in Kingswood. Our final get-together ended with a coach outing on the ninth of April to Webb's of Wychbold Garden Centre travelling via Evesham and the Blossom Trail, ending up at the Red Lion Inn at Wainlode where we all had a bar meal and a very warm welcome. This will be our final report, the end of an era with very happy memories'. So that was the last, when that photograph was taken.

[00:36:21]

[JH]: That was the last meeting?

[MC]: Yes, that was the last meeting.

[JH]: And you mentioned there another volunteer who was there from the beginning. Did you have many volunteers at the club over the years?

[MC]: Erm. At, on the committees I suppose yes, we averaged seven each meeting, at a meeting, yes we did, and the majority of the meetings, towards the end anyway, we let, were here, were here and oh, we... That's one of your meets, it's not the last one but... With the meetings the, the 10th of January 1977, and that wasn't the first one either, but I don't know what happened to the last, I think the treasurer took it with her, you know, I've never had it back. But, erm... Yes, this one's is dated 22nd of the 8th 2001. 'Meeting took place at 3 Elm Terrace, Foxmoor Lane, that's here of course.

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: 'Those present were Mrs Curtis, Mrs Taylor, Mrs Walker, Mrs Watts, Mrs Jones, Mr Denny [ph 00:37:49] and Mr Currie. Apologies from Mrs Ward, Mrs Currie - Mrs Currie. Mrs Curtis opened the meeting, there was no report from the treasurer owing to the book being audited. It was agreed that the way the raffle was now run was successful. Mrs Watts said how enjoyable the Easter meeting was and Mrs Watts gave an account of the entertainment we had enjoyed over the last session and then informed the committee that she would retire from the committee at the coming AGM. It was planned to have outings on May 30th, July 4th and August 1st. The Summer break from club would be from 1st to the 29th of August. Signed Mrs Curtis the 28th of the 8th '01'. But that wasn't the last meeting of course.

[JH]: No.

[MC]: No, that wasn't the last meeting.

[JH]: Quite a while before?

[MC]: Oh yes. Yes, quite a while before that was.

[JH]: And the committee were responsible for making decisions about what the club was going to do?

[MC]: They were.

[JH]: What were they responsible for - the committee?

[MC]: Different ones, to different one I should think. Mrs, I've got that here somewhere as well. Mrs Jones was our treasurer for... [Pause - shuffling of papers] That's right I suppose. Mrs Jones was treasurer for about twenty-two years and Mrs Wager [ph 00:39:45] was treasurer before that for a long time. Mrs Walker was my deputy towards the end, although I'd had a couple of others in the meantime, but she would not take it on when I said I was retiring. Mrs Histrick [ph 00:39:50] was the entertainments secretary. Mrs Vorse [ph 00:39:55] was enter..., convenor, she did the teas and raffle and in the end another, a Mrs Wright took on the treasurer's job after Mrs Jones finished but she went to live in Tottenham so we were wanting a treasurer you see and quite a lot of the committee. But they all took a part, they were all very good, yes they were.

[00:40:20]

It said 'At the same time we also learnt that the deputy leader, treasurer who was leaving the area

and an entertainments secretary would be required. After much thought and talk no one was prepared to undertake the responsibility and commitment that these offices held. Since the first club was formed in 1962 we have always been affiliated to the WRVS voluntary work which committee past and present have always undertaken willingly. So in February Mrs Taylor, her WRVS Territorial - Territory Manager was invited to our meeting hoping she could help prevent club from closing but to no avail. So it was with sadness and regret that our last meeting took place at Victory Park bowling pavilion on April 2nd. At this meeting thanks for, and gifts, vouchers, were presented to Mrs Curtis - by Mrs Curtis rather - to Mrs V Jones for her work as club secretary and treasurer, a job well done for twenty-two years. Also to Mrs V Walker, deputy leader, tea convenor and preparing club room for meetings. Mrs B Walls assisted, assistant tea convenor and in charge of raffles and Mrs J Rugg [ph 00:41:56] our recent treasurer. A raffle was held, sherry, tea and biscuits served, birthday honours sung and six members, sick members remembered'. Yes, and we always ended up with a birthday hymn and always remembered the sick, any of them that were sick.

[JH] Yeah.

[MC] Oh yes. It was used a lot, yes.

[JH]: And would you do anything special at certain times of year like Christmas?

[MC]: Oh yes we had Christmas parties, oh yes. Then we used to go out and find a, a suitable venue to have our, a meal. Several, several different places we used to go. Easter bonnets at Easter time. And oh yes, and during the, the club always finished for a week or so during Christmas or Easter you see, when the holidays were and August, the actual holiday. But oh yes we did all sorts, all sorts, all sorts. There were Easter eggs, Easter bonnets and at Christmas yes, we had a lovely time always, yes we did. What else would you like to know?

[JH]: And how was the club funded?

[MC]: How was it funded? We paid in the beginning two and sixpence, in old money of course. And then it was fifty pence, at the end they all paid fifty pence membership, and that's how we raised our funds. Yes, yes we did. And we had raffles and different things and made money but we never ever, I don't remember, only once I think giving to a charity. We had a gentleman come and speak about Marie Curie nurses and ever since then... We made a collection of course, to give him, which was quite a substantial sum, and then we went, ever since then I have been supporting the Marie Curie, I've got their daffodil on my cardigan, yes. Yes, ever since then I've done that, yes, and it's, they do a good job of work. Oh yes, we had very interesting speakers, oh yes, and people entertaining, singing, playing the piano and, and if we had any, well nothing coming on, we used to have bingo, play bingo or cards. And yes, so every Wednesday, every Wednesday there was some entertainment of some description. Yes there were. And they had a... I mean I was, I mean eightieth birthday, eighty yes, on my eightieth birthday we had, it was all on entertainment to come of course, and the treasurer and I were sitting at the table and I said 'Our entertainment hasn't turned up', so she said 'It will, it will, don't worry it will'. So I had no idea what the entertainment was going to be. And within a matter of a few minutes who should walk in but my daughter, two daughter-in-laws came with a beautiful cake in the shape of a coach with the driver sitting in the front and me stood alongside and they presented me with that. And then that particular day I think we had birthday cake and sherry and goodness knows what. And yes we did, sherry, yes they used to do, as I say, it was a voluntary job but they were good, they used to do things for me. At Christmas I always had a little gift or they'd go round and collect, because I was not supposed to know what they were doing but then of course, when the next meeting it would be 'This is yours Mary for what you've done and thank you so much'. And on the holidays always, always they'd make a collection, but I always charged on the holidays the full amount including the tip for the driver, always, and the gratuity for the hotel. Always so if I said it was going to cost them £150 all in that meant there would be no more collections, it was already taken care of. And so after that I used to make sure also that if there was any surplus after I'd sorted all that out it was given back to the members, to those on the coach as had taken part in the holiday. Sometimes maybe it would, perhaps in the very beginning in the early stages it may have been only just a pound. But sometimes towards the end, cost of the hotel, the holidays cost a lot more of course as the years went on, it sometimes was they'd get a five pound

back, sometimes even more.

[00:47:11]

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: And they used to 'How do you do it'? And I'd say 'Well, this is it, I'd taken it all into consideration so this is yours, this is yours now'. But I always used to take out the, I used to have to send a report back to WRVS, oh yes, they used to send out the how much I'd, I'd... How much I'd taken, how much had been taken out and for what and oh yes. So I did that. And often my treasurer used to say, she didn't ever have anything to do with the holiday that money was, I sorted that myself from the beginning to the end. And she used to say, I, I used to get her to help me before we sorted it all out, and we'd sit on the bed and I'd say 'Do you think that's enough'? And she, and I'd say 'And I'll have that ten pound'. She'd look and she'd say 'Oh Mary you've done too much here, your mistake...' 'No, I mean there's stamps and telephone calls and, but you must take your money for what you've paid out'. I said 'No, no, no, no, I'd rather they have it, I'll have a little'. 'Cos one might just say 'Well is it really all right if I have ten pound then'? She said 'Certainly, certainly', so maybe I'd just have ten pound for, which covered perhaps stamps and telephone calls and costs in... I mean I didn't particularly want anything but yes, so between us we, but she never ever took the money or anything, I saw to all that, and banked it and all for the holidays always. But yes, and everyone loved holidays, they were. But the only thing that did concern me regarding the holiday was the rooming list, when it came to the end. I was, 'Oh dear someone drops out at the last minute, but I usually could fill it, I could usually fill it and sort it out. But that, that was a worry, and finding out the rooms when you had a room list come. So and so wouldn't share with someone else and oh dear and not many single rooms it, that was a bit of a worry. But, you know, once I got them all on the coach it was all right, always all right once I, once I was with them on the coach everything was all right, I could cope with anything then. But the drivers, we had some lovely drivers, lovely drivers. The last driver that, well the one driver that took us last he'd taken us several times, but one had taken us day trips and everywhere we went holidays and all for about eleven years. So you got to

know them and we had a good rapport built up, yes we did, yes we did. So right, anything else?

[00:50:10]

[JH]: Did you wear a uniform?

[MC]: No.

[JH]: No?

[MC]: No, never wore a uniform, no. I had loads, well you knew I'd had long service medals and all of that, didn't you, you knew that, and bars and things, I know there's lots of medals. And all this rattling going on, my goodness me! [Searching papers] I was always very, very proud of that, very. And that one was the first one I ever, ever had.

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: And it's got 'WRV...', no just 'WVS' then.

[JH]: Yes. Because when you started...

[MC]: Yes, yes, yes...

[JH]: It would have been Women's Voluntary Service.

[MC]: Yes.

[JH]: And that's your club leader badge.

[MC]: It's the first one that, after... I don't know when I became leader I was presented with that. And I was always very, I should hate to lose that.

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: That one of course, was long service and telling me all about what it entailed.

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: [Pause] Thirty years. [Pause] I've got 'em here.

[JH]: Forty years.

[MC]: Forty years.

[JH] Yeah.

[MC] So... [Pause] It tells me in here what, what they all...

[JH]: Clasps aren't they and ribbons?

[MC]: With the ribbon with the rose that is for...

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: This has got 'long service', long service on that one. I never ever used to wear them only on WRVS occasions.

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: Rallies and different things, other than that I never, I didn't use to wear it to club.

[JH]: Did you go on quite a few rallies then?

[MC]: Oh yes, over the years, oh yes. Yes, we did used to go to Dowty Rota [ph 00:52:54] ...oh all, all over. And I got one that we attended when the Vernon Sisters were entertaining. And I had no idea but one or the other, the, from head office used to be there and they'd come and they'd say 'Mary do you mind giving the vote of thanks'? And I had no idea I would have to do it. But I said 'No, no, no, not at all'. So yes, and perhaps there'd be 500 people there or even more at some. But it was all the different clubs from around you see. And oh no, it never worried me, never worried me at all, I'd

just get up and thank them for having entertained on behalf of the club. But no, it didn't worry me a bit, not a bit.

[JH]: Ummm.

[MC]: And I'd do that. And then, but it tells me on here what all the different things are.

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: Of course, on the medals. This was dated 1981. 'It is with pleasure and pride that I have to inform you that you have been awarded the WVS Long Service Medal. This medal is only by faithful service and devotion to specific duties over a period of fifteen years. The design of the medal gives expression, recognition of the highest standard of the service you have rendered, your hard work and the way in which you have met and overcome difficulties. The cipher is surrounded by ivy, the symbol of steadfastness. One the reverse is rosemary to define above all remembrance and friendship. Service beyond self embodies the aim of true voluntary service and carries a message and a remainder for all of us. Let us remember that this medal stands not only for what WRVS is but for what has been done in the past by counties, county members and making a service worthy of the people and the nation'. Yours sincerely, Barbara... [Pause]

[00:55:22]

[JH]: Shenfield?

[MC]: Yes, 'Shenfield'.

[JH] Yeah.

[MC] 'Chairman'. And that was dated in May '81. Twenty-ninth of May. Oh, I've had lots of letters of appreciation so it's, it's all been worthwhile.

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: Yes, it has. Yes, it has. I've never ever regretted doing it, never ever.

[JH]: Because you've given something to the community and got something back as well?

[MC]: You did, yes, it was rewarding. And I am all for anyone, anyone that has a few minutes to spare and feel that they don't know how to use that time, yes, volunteer to do, not only for the WRVS but whoever. Yes, if you've got time, do it. Do it. Here I am, young or old, young or old. Yes, I have, as I say, I've enjoyed every moment of it and I'm all for the younger ones that are doing it.

[JH]: Erm.

[MC]: Yes. Well?

[JH]: And is there anything that we haven't talked about today that you'd like to mention?

[MC]: No, I don't think so, no. I've covered the holidays, the meetings.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[MC] And funny stories.

[JH]: **Yes.**

[MC]: That have been. Well I could tell you several funny stories but...

[JH]: **And do you...**

[MC]: And things that have happened, you know, to the members and...

[JH]: **And do you still keep in touch with WRVS?**

[MC]: Not as such, although, funnily enough, I did have a letter from them recently but that was only to do, something to with the updating all to do with computers and what have you but I'm, I'm never, we're no into it. Well I've got a computer anyway so I just do it. And I always, I do yes, if I have the raffle tickets, yes, yes I do buy the raffle tickets and send cash to them. Yes, yes. But no, and I don't hear from them as such, no I don't. And, funnily enough, I don't see or hear anything of the members of club. The only one I do hear from and I ring her is my deputy that was, yes, but other than that, no, no. And I did say at the last meeting over when we left that there was always a welcome, you know, if anyone called that wanted to see me because I, I was then, I don't know what, towards the end on the last holiday in a wheelchair so, and off on a stick for a long, long time.

And they used to say 'Mary you'll have to give this up it's going to be, it's too much for you now'. But I did struggle on until the last holiday and the last meeting. But now I've had a, had a hip replacement and it all went wrong and since then I've had, it's dislocated three times. And now this one's going as well so no I couldn't have gone on, no I couldn't, no.

[JH] Yeah.

[MC] But I could still, I feel I could, yes, I feel that I could take, do some but I can't, I can't. No, it's as much as I can do to walk about myself. [Laughing] No, so, no it would... I need help myself now rather than try to help someone else. But, yes I've had some lovely times, lovely, lovely times. I've been to some lovely places, I really have. We went to, the first time I think we went, maybe the second we went to Bridlington quite a lot, they loved it at Bridlington. We had, they were lovely people and they always made us so welcome and said what a lovely crowd we were. And I did a *Mr and Mrs*, years ago there used, this programme was on television wasn't it?

[JH]: Yes.

[MC]: So yes, yes. One of the gentlemen and I between us did this and it was a, and they prepared this, she and her husband they laughed and laughed because I put down some very funny questions. I might have said to the husband 'What colour is your wife's knickers tonight'? And he would answer and we would laugh, and we would laugh and have fun. And the next day she said, the proprietor says, 'we've got, our friends are, he is the Mayor of Bridlington'. And she said 'We've had such a lovely evening', she said 'we're going to invite him'. And he came the next evening and took a part in another. Then we were, and came to the coach to see us off and all, yes. He did and in all his regalia, oh yes, to see us off on the coach. But yes, I have met some lovely people and really, really enjoyed every minute. Yes I have. Right, anything else?

[01:00:28]

[JH]: No, that's it. And thank you very much for talking to me today about your time with WRVS and this will make a great contribution towards our Voices of Volunteering Project.

[MC]: That's quite all right, yes quite all right.

[End of Recording 01:00:46]