

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Summary Sheet

Title

Page

Ref. No.: GALG

Collection Title: Voices of Volunteering

Interviewee's Surname: Galloway

Title: Mrs

Interviewee's Forenames: Gillian (Gilli)

Gender: F

Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:

Employee 1993-1997

1993, Community Services Divisional Manager,
Wales

1993-1997, Community Services Manager,
South East Division

Volunteer 1997-Present (2014)

1997-1998, Company Member

1998-2004, Trustee and Main Board Member –
6 years

2010-Present (2014), (Vice Chair since March
2014) Benevolent Trust

Other Volunteer Roles 1993-Present (2014)

Emergency Services, Norfolk

Rest Centre Training, Norfolk

Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To): 10/07/2014 (Track 1)

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Name of Interviewer: Jennifer Anne Hunt

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Interviewer's Notes:

Gilli Galloway (GG) talks about her work as a WRVS employee between 1993 and 1997 as a Community Services Divisional Manager in Wales and then South East England. She mentions services provided by WRVS during the 1990s including Meals-on-Wheels (MOW), Emergency Services (ES), Hospitals, clubs and children's holidays. GG then comments on being a company member for a year before it was replaced by the Vice Chairman's Committee in 1998. Also discusses her role as a trustee and board member during a time of change in the organisation between 1998 and 2004. GG mentions her role as a volunteer for Emergency Services (ES) in WRVS including some of the emergencies and exercises she had attended. Training and rest centre demonstrations are also mentioned, GG moves on to talk about her earlier involvement in Contact centre training and preparing to hand it over to the Association of National Contact Centres. GG talks about her more recent involvement with Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) and the WRVS Benevolent Trust and gives her opinions on the current situation in the organisation. She concludes with three of her favourite memories about WRVS: Meeting the Queen at Milton Hill, the Royal Garden Party and removing flowers from outside Kensington Palace after Princess Diana's funeral.

[JENNIFER HUNT]: This is Jennifer Hunt, with Gilli Galloway on the 10th of July 2014, at her home in Walpole, Walpole St. Peter, Norfolk. Gilli, would you just like to introduce yourself.

[GILLI GALLOWAY]: **Yes.** I'm Gilli Galloway. Mm, I've been with the WRVS now for just over, well over twenty-one years now, and in a variety of roles, as a paid employee, as a member of the Board, as a volunteer, and now as Vice Chair of the Benevolent Trust. So I've had a pretty interesting scenic journey with the organisation so far over twenty years now.

[JH]: And tell me about your earliest memories of the WRVS?

[GG]: I think going to the Divisional Headquarters in Cardiff and being one of the first, well, properly paid members of staff, even though district organisers were paid it was done in a slightly different way. And I remember turning up sort of on the first day and, I don't suppose we were that popular, although people were smiling.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: But there was quite a lot of uniform wearing in those days, and it did take us a while to gain the trust, I think, of the volunteers, who did most of the work in the Headquarters at that time.

[JH]: And how did you find out about the Community Services Divisional Manager role?

[GG]: That was advertised in the local paper. And it was something that I'd always been interested in. My mother who is a hundred in August this year obviously went through the First and Second World Wars, and did quite a lot of work funnily enough, not for WRVS. But, you know, I, I suppose I was brought up in a, a generation of doing voluntary work, doing things in the community and always being very busy. And this, to me, seemed, just to combine everything that I liked to do with actually getting paid as well.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Which is a bit of a bonus really, although in those days we were paid... I can remember being told at my interview that the pay wasn't very high because the rest was our voluntary contribution which, when I sort of told my partner he sort of said 'Well that won't pay the mortgage'. But anyway we still went for it, and it was fine.

[JH]: And what did you know about WRVS before you joined?

[GG]: Only what I'd come into contact with, which I think is the same now for lots of people, you know, I'd seen Meals-on-Wheels, I'd seen tea bars in hospitals and things like that. I had no idea the breadth of, of the services they delivered. Mm, also I hadn't been living in Wales for that long so just the pure volume of, of, of activity I think, was quite overwhelming to get your head round. Mm, bearing in mind I was only doing community services, so there was in the hospitals and the Meals-on-Wheels and Emergency Services, on top of what I was doing. So it was quite amazing to find out just how many people and how many things were happening.

[JH]: And what was your opinion of the organisation before you joined in 1993?

[GG]: I think I was a little concerned it might be a little bit stodgy, you know, a bit old-fashioned with some very formidable ladies in green uniforms. And there were some very formidable ladies in green

uniforms but on the whole there was a, just a real passion to do things for people's own communities.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And to put in the effort to make it work. And, you know, we were sometimes working literally with string and Sellotape, we didn't have vast budgets for anything. We didn't have very sophisticated computers, we didn't, we certainly didn't have mobile phones and things. And I think there was just that feeling that somebody somewhere will make it work.

[JH]: And how would you describe your role as Community Services Divisional Manager?

[GG]: I think that was about trying, first of all I think just trying to gather the information about what was happening. Things in WRVS in those days grew like 'Topsy', I think, because people just set things up and got them going.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, and from a, from a corporate point of view that was actually quite an issue when it come to accounting and obviously insurances, and health and safety, and all that sort of thing. So it really was about getting out and about and seeing people, but also helping with events, helping Project Managers to recruit volunteers, looking at where centrally we could add some value without it being seen as dictatorial.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: So if we could produce something that a lot of people could use, be it a poster, or a policy, or some training I think we were able to bring that volume and that economy of scale to a lot of the activities. I think also we were able to link some of the more remote projects, either with each other or with this, you know, it's, it's, sort of, the whole of Wales, and people could learn from each other about how to do things.

[JH]: And what sort of events were you helping with?

[00:05:02]

[GG]: Oh goodness, all sorts of things. Mm, I think one of the most ones that, one of the lovely ones that sticks in my mind is driving all the way to North Wales with my colleague, Liz Munday [ph 00:05:07], who was a Hospital Manager, which was a long way from South Wales to North Wales, to go to a Darby and Joan club for afternoon tea, around Easter. And we arrived very slightly late because the traffic had been pretty grim, and tea was there. We were absolutely starving and dying for a cup of tea, and we were given a cup of tea and half a sandwich and half a hot cross bun, which we sort of snaffled quite quickly. And then we realised that we were being expected to judge the Easter Bonnet competition. You can't make the right decision, whoever you judged you were going to be wrong, so we just had to go with it. And then this extremely elderly gentleman came in lugging this organ and set it up in the corner, which took him a lot of time to do, to play, and he only then had time to play one song before the, the afternoon was over. And it was just one of those so disorganised, chaotic, surreal experiences, but was absolutely lovely. And I...

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: That's one thing I, I can remember really clearly. Mm, another one I can remember is being in the office, and the Emergency Service Team for some reason had been called out the day before and had been very late home after being called out to support something. And a small factory that manufactured or packaged polish in Cardiff went bang so the office staff asked if we would go off and help. And we're sitting there in, in office gear, we've got suits on and shoes and things. So we, we, we, and it was pouring with rain. So we tore off to this place and set up, took out the boilers, put our orange tabards on, off we went, and we were soaked through only to find that the tabards were new ones and the orange dye all ran. So we actually looked like we'd been *'Tango'd'* we were orange hands, we had it everywhere. And then two very nice gentlemen in a, in a tyre bay said that we could move everything into their tyre bay. So that was really quite funny, not what you expect when you've got an administrative or management job, but great fun all, all the more. And then there were the, you know, the, just the very sort of routine visits, but they were never routine because wherever you went you were with somebody who had a story or something that was funny or something that was sad. A lot of people were volunteering because they'd lost somebody, and it was actually their way of getting out of the house or giving back something. Mm, we met some amazingly cantankerous old bats, of which I'm aiming to be one when I get a bit older. But they were real characters, and I think, although sometimes it was very frustrating, the distances were very

long, we did very long, long working weeks and sometimes you really felt like you were just on, a hamster on a wheel trying to get things done. At the end of the week you, you were always in awe of what the volunteers were doing. Mm, and sometimes you felt that you also had to apologise that you were a manager.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Because actually you weren't doing what they were doing. And, to be perfectly honest, I don't think some of us could have done what they were doing. They were, collectively, the most amazing bunch of people. And the stories that came out over a cup of tea were, were, you know, from years ago, were really wonderful. And I think, you know, catching some of those, absolutely, I think has kept a lot of those clubs going.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And some of them had great names, there were the, 'The Silver Threads', and I'm not, some of the others were, but they, they'd got names for their clubs that were really lovely, you know, they'd, they'd thought about actually making an identity for themselves.

[JH]: And can you tell me about the other employees you worked with?

[GG]: Yes. I worked, as I say, Liz Munday [ph 00:08:54] and I joined within a week of each other. And we, we were, we shared an office at the top of this building. Mm, I think, it was almost put, put the naughty girls in the garret at the top out of the way because we were a little bit noisy and a bit sort of confident and a bit brash I suppose really compared to lots of the other people there. Mm, Carol Hodson was my Divisional Director, she'd, she'd been in post for a short while. Mm, Viv was our receptionist, but far more than a receptionist, she was the person that glued the building together and she knew everybody. Mm, and then we had a variety of other people some of which I'll probably forget their names, but it was a building that was always buzzing, very old building.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: In Cathedral Road. Mm, a bit dusty, and a little bit cluttered with staff, but just a load of people, and always, always somebody who would notice if you needed that cup of coffee, if you were just having a bad day.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And then latterly we actually moved to modern offices and turning those, that building out, was amazing. Yes, especially when you go down to the basement, you see a leg sticking out and thankfully it was a mannequin it wasn't a dead body or something.

[00:10:021]

And there were boxes of stuff from the war and, paper that was like onion skin where it had been stored for so long, and all sorts of amazing things. Mm, so moving to a new building was really quite strange but it did mean that we got some better technology, it meant we actually had a more efficient admin system. And then Margaret Davies, you can not mention Margaret Davies, who is still at Cardiff now, who I refer to as 'my other mother'. Margaret was an absolute gem, she knew everybody and everything in, in WRVS. And, always, always happy, always kept us going, never forgot birthdays or Christenings, or how was the dog, or anything else. And then I suppose one of the most extraordinary people was my Line Manager, Jan King. Mm, for those that knew Jan, sadly passed now, once seen never forgotten. Very flamboyantly dressed, very, very larger than life. My son absolutely adored her because she was just so not what he expected her to be, and he, he, he just loved it because she made him laugh. And she'd, she'd sort of do things and say things to him that perhaps you shouldn't. And it was lovely, it was absolutely brilliant. But, again, you know, I think that was the way, the way things were. And, the, the Community Services Team that I worked in, so the national team, again, we still keep in touch now, after all these years.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And we, I don't know, we were laughing actually this week at the Benevolent Trust meeting because Chris Graham's now joined us, and we were almost making ourselves blush remembering some of the things we used to get up to. Mm, but it was very much, again, that, that supportive environment of, somebody always had one somewhere, if you, if you needed something or wasn't quite sure how to do something we were always willing to share with each other and make it go. We

fell out, we had some very, very heated debates and discussions around how things should be done and should we or shouldn't we be doing things. Mm, but I think on the whole it was a, it was a really good time. And, again, we all covered massive geographical areas.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: We worked ridiculous hours. We drove, I can't, in not great cars, we had little old Volvos, you know, and, and stuff like that. And then when we went to Peugeot's and we thought we'd gone to Heaven. Mm, but it was, it was just a really good time. A time of great change for WRVS as well because the funding then was starting to be withdrawn. But I think a time of great camaraderie, a time of sort of, a great passion to get it right. And, sadly, I think some of that has been lost. But, there we are.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: You know, corporations change.

[JH]: And were there also volunteers working at the, at...?

[GG]: Oh yes, lots of volunteers. I do remember one thing, the first Christmas I was there, I joined in the March and in, in the Christmas we used to have to go to City Hall in Cardiff for a big carol concert, which was wonderful, mainly, you know, for volunteers. And it wasn't long after John Redwood, the Secretary of State for Wales, had made a complete fool of himself by not being able to sing the Welsh National Anthem. And I couldn't speak Welsh, I couldn't sing the Welsh National Anthem. And I remember a volunteer, who was ever so tiny, literally standing on tip toe and bawling at me phonetically so my mouth would make the right shape when I sang because we were going to be facing this sea of green.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And they were amazing. Mm, some of them, it was quite funny, it's like all groups of people, there were little bits of infighting and little bits of cliqueiness and little bits of 'Oh I don't like her, but I like her' but that was just part of it, it just made it really, you know, really interesting. And I always remember when we had these awful photographs taken of us in uniform to put on the wall, and it

was almost like the 'wanted' posters, you know. And the, the volunteers thought it was hilarious, well they didn't have to have theirs done it was just the managers. And I'm sure they would love to have got some darts and thrown them at the pictures because they were pretty obnoxious pictures. Mm, but, yes the volunteers are the ones that made it. I mean, yes, we were there, I suppose what we could bring was a bit of structure, we could bring the experience from managing things elsewhere.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: [Coughs], Excuse me, but, on the whole they were the ones that had that real on the ground knowledge of how it actually worked. We could help them to shape that and to develop it, but they were the ones that actually had their fingers on the pulse.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: I, I knew how to get someone, amazing at getting people to do things. They could persuade anyone to do anything I think. You know, someone, somewhere had a number in their little diary that they could ring up that would help them get something done. So quite, quite an extraordinary bunch of people.

[JH]: And which WRVS, as with Community Services, what particular service, WRVS services, did that involve?

[00:15:01]

[GG]: We had, well I mean basically it was everything that wasn't Meals-on-Wheels, hospitals or Emergency Services, but we had all the prison visiting centres.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: My, my son used to tease his friends by saying 'Oh Gilli's in prison again', because I think I was always at a prison somewhere most weeks doing something. We had the court tea bars, we had children's Contact Centres, all the Darby and Joan clubs and lunch clubs and all that sort of thing.

Mm, we used to do children's holidays, which had its interesting times I have to say. And really the Books on Wheels.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Community Transport, literally anything that wasn't the other three.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Was in Community Services. And so you had a real variety of work. Because I used to sort of try and work out my travelling weeks, and quite often I, because I lived in sort of South Wales, I'd try and start off at my furthest point and my way home during the week. Mm, but you, you never had two days that were the same.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Because even if you were at another Darby and Joan club it was different. If you were at another tea bar it was different. Mm, it might just be the Project Manager, the way it was laid out or, or, whatever was happening, it was just every single day was like starting a new job, and it was really refreshing. Mm, a lot of job satisfaction, a lot of frustration as well sometimes.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Because you could see things that you'd just love to do and, either for financial or other reasons, you just couldn't do it. Also, you couldn't go steamrolling over the volunteers and the Project Managers, as much as though sometimes you felt you ought to. You had to find a way of doing things that would get them to do it but make them think that they, make them want to do it, and that could be a bit interesting sometimes. And we did occasionally walk in to the office and swear quite a bit. Mm, but, you know, that, that's part of any job isn't it really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: There's always the days that don't go so well.

[JH]: Yes. And why did you say that children's holidays could be interesting at times?

[GG]: Well most of the children's holidays that we did were children from very disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly prisoners' children. And, if you can imagine the, the situation some of these children were living in we used to go and, and do visits before to sort of make sure things were ready if you like. Mm, they wouldn't even be in a position to bring their own toothbrush to a holiday, they wouldn't have one. So we used to go round getting donations and stuff, and make little bags up for them to take with them of soap and a flannel and very basic stuff that anyone would think anyone had. And you'd go to houses where they literally had nothing, but there was a lot of love in the house.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: You'd go to others where they had stuff and there wasn't a lot of love in the house. And, and you'd go to places where you literally stuck to the floor as you walked in the front door. Mm, we used to do a lot of work with Atlantic College in Wales, and as part of their Bacculaureate they, they had to do Community Service, and part of that was, was helping us. So we used to have a couple of their houses, and we'd have WRVS volunteers as well as the House Parents, and then the student to actually help with the activities, so they did the offshore life, lifeboat thing there, the theatre there, they'd do swimming, they'd do sport and whatever. Mm, but some of these kids, to them this was just, you know, we're getting fed three times a day, and we can have a shower every day, and we've got stuff, I mean this, this was so alien. And part of us thought is it fair to take them out, open that door and then put them back? But part of us also thought well actually at least they're having a couple of weeks having damned good fun. Some of them were, were a real problem. There was one young man who told me his name was 'Slash', and I thought 'Okay, I can live with that', and he got quite physical, not hitting people but he'd push and shove a lot, including me but by the end of two weeks... He was called 'Mark', and he wasn't an angel by any means...

[JH]: No.

[GG]: But he thoroughly enjoyed himself. Mm, because the students were young and they were funny and they had a bar, but it was a non-alcoholic bar, but they had all these mock tails and all sorts of things, and non-alcoholic beers so he kind of felt he was very grown up and very interested. We had another we used to own a few caravans and part of my job, I can remember, was selling

them off, and you can't sell second hand tatty caravans for love nor money I could tell you. Mm, and we, we put whole families in there where the whole family could do with a holiday. And I always remember an extremely well-spoken volunteer sort of, I don't mean to be unkind, but someone who probably had never fed an electricity meter before, come and saying 'Gilli, I really don't know what this woman wants, she says she hasn't got any money for the Lecky', what's the Lecky?' I said 'She hasn't got any money for the electricity'. 'Oh, why didn't she say so'? And it was really interesting.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And the volunteers were trying so hard, but they were so, these people were so alien to them that sometimes the communication was, some of it was hysterically funny.

[00:20:04]

And sometimes I think the caravan holidays were actually a real relief for the family.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Because they, we did make sure they had a, a starter pack of food and we made sure that they had some money for some fish and chips and whatever and that the kids could get taken away for a few hours and mum could have a bit of quiet. Because normally they had, you know, a pretty tough life, mums and the kids. Nine times out of ten there wasn't a dad, although it wasn't particularly just the single mums.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, or dad was away in prison. And so it was a pretty tough life, so we did work for them. And, so they could be a little bit unpredictable. We did have one girl that decided to run away. She didn't go far but she actually ran away from wherever she went, and then she got bored with it and came back so about an hour later she came back so everything was okay. Mm, but your heart was in your mouth for about an hour thinking 'Do we have to call the police? I hope she's alright'. So, yes, it was interesting times. I don't think we ever slept much when there was a, a holiday going on because you were constantly waiting for the phone to ring. But, again, these were things that possibly, I mean that certainly these days you would never think of doing.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: But they were, they were okay, and I think on the whole they did benefit the people they were, they were helping.

[JH]: And then you moved, so you started off in Wales?

[GG]: Mm.

[JH]: And then you moved to the South East, was that different from Wales?

[GG]: Yes. David, my husband, was moved with his work up to Sussex, and so we actually moved to Eastbourne, and so I went to work there. And that was slightly different because I actually had an office in a working centre where the lunch club and the day clubs were actually in the premises. And so I got to see a lot more first hand about how the, you know, the organisation operated. And it's one of those strange buildings, I can always remember that the lino was so old and so hard that whatever shoes you wore you sounded like you were tap dancing, it was the most extraordinary building. Mm, and Meals-on-Wheels used to go out from there and, and it was a very busy, buzzy sort of place. So I think that was quite good because it kept you very connected with, with the volunteers and with the recipients of the service as well and that was really good. Sadly within six months we got moved again, because my husband was a trouble shooter for a company then and we were moving round the country quite a bit. We moved twice in Wales.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: But that didn't matter because Wales I could still do. And that's when I was asked if I'd be first a Company Member, and then to go on the main Board, which is what I decided to do.

[JH]: And what were the WRVS community Company Members?

[GG]: Company Members at that time were WRVS volunteers who could have a direct line to the Board and be a link between the, the projects, if you like, and the Board. They then morphed into the Vice-Chairman's Committee. So it was very, it was a precursor to the Vice-Chairman's

Committee. We weren't as organised as that, in that we didn't have a Chair of the Company Members, you just reported directly to the Board. Mm, but certainly when Alice Cleland was the Vice-Chair then that's one of us.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: So it sort of changed into her committee. So it was a very similar role to the Vice-Chair's Committee. Mm, we were a link then between volunteers and the Board. And I suppose a reality check against some of the plans and strategies that, that, that the Board corporate might be looking to do.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: So that was quite interesting, and it kept me linked with the organisation.

[JH]: Yes. And at that time what sort of plans were the Board making?

[GG]: Well I think they were getting to the point where like all organisations, there'd, there'd been, you know, 'Let's push everything out', and they had District Offices and County Offices, and they were bringing a lot of it in-house, they were centralising lots of things into Divisional Offices. Mm, Divisional Offices were closing. Volunteers were getting, you know, were, were feeling a bit at a loose end, they hadn't got anywhere to go.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: They didn't have a meeting place or a central point of contact. Mm, we as Divisional Managers, with the best will in the world, could not cover the ground to see them as often as they would like.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, as I say, in those days you didn't have a mobile phone, so if you were in the car for four hours it, where I lived, if I wanted to go to Anglesey it used to take me seven hours. I could be out of touch all day, you know, until I, I got somewhere, maybe got a message in the hotel I was going to stay in. Mm, so there was a lot of change happening, a lot of centralisation, a lot of em..., emphasis

on accounting. And I think again it goes back to a lot of projects that had been perfectly fine but they'd put the money in a biscuit tin, they didn't have a till. Mm, and I can always remember having to get the accountants to right off the unknown contents of a biscuit tin that had been stolen. We had no idea how much, we could have had four pence or four hundred pound, we had no idea what was in there.

[00:25:00]

And so there was a lot of change, and I suppose a lot of structure going in which was uncomfortable for...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Volunteers and Project Managers who'd run very good and very viable projects for many, many years, as they would often tell you. Mm, lots more regulation around returns and things like that, which I think, you know, was, was absolutely needed, but I think was sort of quite an uncomfortable position for lots of volunteers and Project Managers. Also there was on the horizon the fact that The Central Government Grant was being discussed, and it was looking pretty likely that that was going to be stopped, and that was a lot of money, because that paid all the central costs. And there was a thinking about, 'Well, do we, do we sign into a fundraising organisation'? Well that didn't seem to be, you know, go down very well, because it never had been.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, 'Where can we raise money from, can we cut back'? So, as well as sort of centralising, there was also a, a real look at being efficient. More, not so much efficient in the doing of tasks, but the efficiency of the running of the business. So did we have, you know, too many staff, did we have too many of this, did we have the right software, did we...? you know, was there things we could do that were a lot better? So it was a great time of change, and I think, one of the things I'll say about the whole WRVS, I think where they've suffered is they've never really had a period of consolidation, in the whole twenty one years I've been involved it's always been another initiative. I'm not sure if there's ever been time for anything to 'bed in'.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: Until you did another one. So, sometimes you need a period of consolidation in a, in an organisation to, just to, to, to let it run and see if it works.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: And we seemed to be, at that time, in a constant churn, churn of change. Which, for, for, for paid staff and for volunteers was actually very difficult.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And very unsettling not knowing what was going to come.

[JH]: And why was it difficult in settling?

[GG]: Well I think, you know, people were, I think a lot of people were, they, they'd come to WRVS for a particular reason, either for work or, mainly for volunteers, and it had been, the word 'comfortable' probably isn't right, it had been familiar, it had been gentle, it had been no great crisis and pressure, although people worked hard. Mm, and I suppose there was an assumption of accountability, an assumption of transparency and an assumption that everything was done the way it should be. And then suddenly you were being asked to evidence it and be accountable, and to fill out forms and, it wasn't that people minded doing it and had anything to hide I just think it, it made it very formal and very business-like. The word 'commercial' came out in lots of conversations.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And people said 'But we're not commercial, we're a charity'. And I think it was, and I'm not saying that the word 'commercial' was put out to them but that's the way they perceived it. And I just find people, and people don't like change anyway, but I think when people are giving of their own time and they're committed to something it, it's working, for what they, as a group, decides it's going to do, to suddenly have this big corporate say 'Actually now there's seventeen forms, and this here I want to see on a Wednesday, and you have to do all this. And oh, by the way, put a till in, you've never had one before but you're having a till. And it's got to be this and that'. And it all started, it, it, and it was all the right thing to do but it was all at, in a very short period of time. And I

think it was just, for some people, just very unsettling. And, I don't say those people left because I don't think they did, certainly in the projects I was involved with we didn't have a mass exodus of people. But I think it did just take a bit of the shine off it for a lot of people, and, and that was a shame.

[JH]: And, who are the other Company Members?

[GG]: Oh goodness, do you know, I can't really remember. Who else was on there, I think Caroline Naylor was on there.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: At the time. Mm, I'm not sure if Lynne Rawlings wasn't one, because Lynne Rawlings was the very first Vice-Chairman recruited. It might well have been Lynne Rawlings. I can't remember who else was on there then. It's so long ago.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: It's, but mainly the, the people that were the founder members of the Vice-Chairman's Committee tended to, to have come from there.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: But I think when I was a Company Member the role was, it had been recognised that the role was really a bit odd. And, and so it was kind of a, a dwindling thing and, which is why I think the Vice-Chairman's role was put in and the Vice-Chairman's Committee was, was then put in place, which again was much more vibrant and much more well managed and, had a real purpose.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: I think sometimes with a Company Member, mm...

[Sound of mobile phone ringing]

[00:30:00]

[GG]: It was down to you to be very, as a Company Member it, as a Company Member it was kind of down to you to make it work, because there wasn't really much of a structure.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: With the Vice-Chairman's Committee that it morphed into that became much more of a, a very proactive, a very motivated kind of group of people. So I think I probably came out of the end of that.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Mm, it wasn't very long before there just weren't any Company Members anymore.

[JH]: And what were your opinions of the changes that were being made, to the organisation at that time?

[GG]: I think because I come from a business background I could absolutely see the business reason for doing them.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, I, I've got a commercial background, a City of London background, and [mobile phone] to me it was well of course you would, wouldn't you, that's how you run a business. Because at the end of the day it might be a charity but it has to run like a business. You have to have your accounts, you know, audited, you have to have money in the bank, you've got to pay the wages, and you've got to comply with a raft of regulations and legislation. So I could absolutely see why it needed to be done. But from a human point of view, you really understood why it, it rattled a lot of people. And it was then trying to get that compromise of giving, getting it in and encouraging and motivating people to do it, and just really working through the understanding of why.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: That it wasn't just a whim of somebody wanting another seventeen bits of paper but actually there was a, a legal reason or something for us to do it. The consequence of not doing it, I think, sometimes was even more, a more stronger message, in that nobody wanted to see their project shut down, or being sued or whatever. Although you didn't, you didn't do it in that sort of very intimidating way, it was, it was something to talk around with volunteers, if they were really resistant you'd sort of say 'Well the problem we've got is if we don't start to do some of this stuff there will come a day where somebody will challenge, and something will happen, so surely better to get it all in place', you know, the fact that you've got to do it anyway. But it was a case of having to get that because eventually we had to do it, but it's much better to do these things if people come with you.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Than to impose it on them. So, I'm not sure we got it right all the way round but I think we did, we did get a lot of it in place, with a level of co-operation and support. Mm, and I'm sure there were some that never, ever did anything but just paid lip service to it.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: But then that's the same with anything you do. I, I still have the same with what I do now and you can never get everybody on board, you just have to try your best. But I think you had to understand why they were resistant.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: It wasn't just to be difficult, there were some genuine concerns and fears, and just some genuine sadness that things were changing. It was, it was theirs and it was something going to be not quite theirs.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Yes.

[JH]: And then you became a Trustee.

[GG]: I did.

[JH]: And main Board Member.

[GG]: Yes.

[JH]: In 1998?

[GG]: Yes.

[JH]: And how would you describe your role as a Trustee?

[GG]: Goodness, it was absolutely fascinating. Mm, I did it for six years and this enormous bundle of papers would arrive before the Board Meeting and, again we didn't all have laptops and Macs and iPads and stuff, so we had papers would arrive.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And a huge raft of stuff. And I think it was the realisation of one responsibility that you had as a Trustee not only the legal responsibility of being a Trustee and a Member of the Board, for a very large organisation that had a very large amount of money going through its hands. You also had a respons...., a moral responsibility for the, the ethos of the charity and also for the well-being of, of, of all the people that were working in it. And that made it sound awfully grand, and it wasn't grand at all, because I don't think we had a grand moment, apart from when we had The Queen to the garden party. Mm, it was hard work.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: There was a lot to learn, there was a lot to get your head round. Mm, the intricacies of running such a large and complex organisation are, are quite staggering, and a period of change as well. And I think that, having the Chair, I mean when I first started it was Gerry Burton was the Chief Exec, and Lady Elizabeth Toulson was the Chair. And then we got Mark Lever and we had Tina Tietjen for the

rest of, of my tenure there. Mm, but we had some external Trustees who were really, really helpful. And we had Dean Adriano who had been with Sainsbury's.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, he was a big bear of a man, but a very commercial, very, very switched on around things, that obviously like retail and food and stuff like that. Mm, and then we had Ian Peacock who was with Mothercare and MFI. So, again, real external views, really a different way of looking at this thing that we were trying to drive through. And I, I can honestly say that it was, you know, there were, at times it was daunting, at times it was frightening, it was never boring.

[00:35:06]

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And it was such a learning curve, and such a learning opportunity. Having said that, there are also, it also exposed to you as, I suppose as an ex-employee it was probably more visible to me just what wasn't there and what needed to be there. And, and people you thought were actually really very good at what they did actually probably weren't quite as good as you thought, or somebody that you thought weren't as good but actually really good. And it was, it was like opening the, you know, taking the, the, the, the curtain off the door and actually looking at it through, you know, with clear eyes because you had access to all the finance and all the, literally bones of everything. Mm, I have to say I still don't think I completely understood it, even after six years, because I think there's so much to understand.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: But we all concentrated on the bit we could do best and I think collectively we did very well. When I was there we went through the re-branding, to the heliotrope and orange logo.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, that was interesting. Mm, we had a myriad of roadshows to go on talking to volunteers, called 'Capturing the Spirit'. What we were trying to do was hang on to the best of the past and not

lose it. Because at that time as well we were also having to look at rationalising the projects that we did because we were doing too much, and it just wasn't sustainable. Because we were losing the Government Grant, and as that was closing we had to close the budget the other way as well. And we had to start applying for funding and that's when the fundraising started.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: So it was a period of significant change. And, again, I think there was so much going on, there was, there was no time for consolidation, we just had to get on with it. Mm, I'm not saying it was the right thing to do, I think it, at the time it was the only thing to do. Mm, I don't think if we did it again now we could do it any differently. But in hindsight there's things that you wish you could have done differently but then isn't that the same with everything? Mm, we had some hilarious times, because, you know, when you worked so hard and you're with people so much you have to let off a bit of steam. And we, you know, we had some absolutely brilliant sort of cups of coffee at one o'clock in the morning after a very long, a meeting or, or a dinner or something, where probably we made some of the best decisions.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Actually. And, again I think we were very supportive, if there were, there, there wasn't, it never felt as though there was a personal disagreement around the table. There were some very pointed disagreements and agreements to disagree. Mm, I think we had strong Chairs and we had two very strong Chief Execs, and I think that's good, but brings with it its issues.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, I think the relationship between the Chief Exec and the Chair is absolutely vital. And, you know, if that got a bit scratchy, which inevitably over a time it does occasionally, we used to have sort of, 'Oh, I think we'll just go and get a cup of coffee'.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: It will keep it out of the way for five minutes.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, and it was fine, it all, it all got sorted because they were all very professional about it. Mm, I think that the Vice-Chairman's Committee input was absolutely amazing. And if I, if I, it's one thing I, I regret, I think it's that they stopped having that. Mm, I think there is a, it was the connect between the reality of the volunteering and the running of the business. It was that golden thread that actually was the communication, it was for understanding on both sides. You had someone you could send out as an ambassador who wasn't a, a threatening figure, who wasn't some, it wasn't a 'Royal Visit' as we used to call it it was actually another volunteer doing something.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: You know, awards ceremonies and medals and this sort of thing. And it was absolutely, absolutely amazing the amount we learnt, and the amount we got back as a Board from having Vice-Chairman's Committee, and having the Vice-Chair. I mean we were very lucky in having Alice because she was so well connected.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: However, I think, regards to personalities, just having that, that structure there was, was absolutely vital. I would not want to be on that Board now if that wasn't there. You know, the role as it is now, I would not want to be part of, I think it has become very disconnected. Mm, not deliberately.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: But I don't think there's a mechanism to connect it at the moment. And whereas we did have the Vice-Chair, and, to be fair, for what it cost, which was minimal the amount of value we had out of that was amazing.

[JH]: Mm, do you know why the Vice-Chairman's Committee sort of faded out?

[GG]: Well it was just a feeling, oh part of it I think is there was a, a, a bigger drive to, for commercialisation for, I mean that in the broadest sense. Mm, there was a complete change at the

top, a new Board. They now don't have anyone on the Board who is or was a volunteer whereas it used to be a case that we always had two people on the Board who had a connection with the service on the ground.

[00:40:03]

That's gone. Mm, so I would say we probably got a far more commercial Board than we had before, which has huge benefits in some ways. But they don't, they just don't have that connect with what's happening on the ground.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: And I think things that you hear that perhaps you shouldn't it's, it becomes obvious sometimes that, that that can be an issue when making certain sorts of decisions. For making others, it probably doesn't make the slightest bit of difference. But, I, I, I would, I really valued having that, that mechanism there, and those people there. And, again, we had some amazing people. You know, we had Judith Buss, who, bless her, died of cancer, a real character. We had Lindy Wood who was just a little dynamo, absolute dynamo, again, sadly passed now. But people that were just so dedicated and committed and so motivated and so vibrant that they would go and talk to, they'd talk to a thousand people and wouldn't turn a hair, you know but they'd do it in a very human way.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: A very realistic way. And people actually listened to them, it was brilliant. If we, if we went out, as the Board, you know, it was all a bit boring and a bit, you know, you know, so that, and that's all missing now I think. But, as I say, we were lucky we had it. I think it made our lives a lot easier. It actually made us think about things uncomfortably at times, which again is a good thing.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Boards should be made to feel uncomfortable because it makes you think properly.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, so yes I think, I think that was a really good time. Very tiring because I was also working full time as well. And I, I do look back now and think 'How on earth did I fit all that in'? But you do, somehow you do. And we used to say at Milton, I can remember when we bought Milton Hill and the first time we sat in the accommodation block they hadn't renovated the rooms and the bathrooms were actually sort of mustard and purple, and they were absolutely ghastly, and you actually felt quite ill going into them. And the next time we went back they'd all been renovated and they were nice and white and it was lovely. Mm, and things like that, and getting rid of the old headquarters, you know, in Brixton, and all that sort of stuff was all done during the time I was around everywhere.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And yes, huge periods of change.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, lots of fun, lots of hard work lots of frustrations. No different I suppose to any other business but yes, good fun, wouldn't have changed it.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Enjoyed it very much.

[JH]: And you also, you mentioned that you, there were, you had Mark Lever and Gerry Burton as Chief Executives. How were they different from each other?

[GG]: Very different. When Mark, when I first met Mark, when I first joined Mark was there as a Training Director, yes, Director of Training.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And they just had completely different styles. I mean they just did. And Mark was very much more the people person. I mean Gerry was very, very sociable, very amenable, very good to, to talk to, but was of an older generation could be, could do the Chief Exec serious bit very, very well. He

only had to sort of look at you and you thought okay. Mm, and not in a nasty way, but he was, he was a different generation to Mark for one thing. He had a different approach, I wouldn't say dramatically different in lots of ways, but different enough that we noticed the difference when he left. Mark was very much more about the collaborative way of doing things, working with people, very, very good at working with, with volunteers. I mean they absolutely adored him even as change, even if they didn't like changes.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: He was a person, I think they ought to adopt him. And, of course, he was young.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: You know, well we all were a lot younger then, but he was younger and I think some, particularly some of the older volunteers he was, he was just very good and being extremely good with them with never patronising them.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: They never felt like it had just been a pat on the head, they genuinely felt that he'd taken an interest.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And on the whole I think he actually did. Even though there was some times he was probably exhausted and didn't really feel like it. Mm, you could always, sort of, roll Mark out.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: You know, and of course he had a young family, so he'd talk to his volunteers about the family and, you know, he had sons, I think he had three or four young boys, I think he had three young boys at the time and another one on the way. Mm, it, it was just a completely different sort of approach in a very, he, I mean I don't think, although I knew Gerry quite well you didn't get the family bit.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: You didn't get the 'Oh look at the pictures of the kids', and the holiday and that sort of thing, whereas with Mark you, you almost felt much more included with him as a person. Mm, and I think that rolled through to the volunteers as well. So it was a different, I wouldn't say one was better than the other.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: But it was very different.

[JH]: And you also had Elizabeth Toulson?

[GG]: Mm.

[JH]: And Tina Tietjen, how were they different?

[GG]: That was very different. Elizabeth was absolutely charming, I mean what a lady a really absolutely wonderful lady.

[00:45:05]

What Tina brought with her was a real understanding of changes in the commercial world. She was very well connected with people who had relevant information that could help us shape things. And she was also, and she really was quite a dynamo and could be really quite scary in, not in an intentional way, she wasn't domineering or anything but she would make her point. And I think that was needed, because I think sometimes, you know with, with a Chair you do need somebody that can call the rabble to order, and we could be a rabble, and she was very good at calling us to order. But also, again, we were very fond of her and, and still are. Mm, but, I think with the difference of her coming in, the changes, Mark coming in, the organisation started to change quite significantly. Mm, and we had much more visibility of what the organisation was doing. Mm, as I said before, that was great in one way and quite scary in others because you thought 'Oh, we're doing that, and we probably shouldn't be doing that'. It wasn't illegal, but it...

[JH]: No.

[GG]: Probably not what our volunteers should be, you know, should be doing. And it was just something that someone had decided to start up because they could, for the best of intentions, and it had just kept going, you know 'Okay, fine'. Yes a very different approach.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: A very... I think Elizabeth Toulson in a way was the last link to the old way.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: The old, and I don't mean that about her, but the old WRVS, in that it was very much that more gentle approach, that very... Mm, I think people felt that it was very much like a family and people felt they really belonged to it. Mm, with Tina, she really understood the volunteers and spent a lot of time out actually with volunteers but had that understanding that if we don't run this company properly we won't have any volunteers.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: So there was a it was that sort of commercial edge that she brought in, which was very different.

[JH]: Mm, mm. And at that time, you'd mentioned before, the pur..., the change of colours.

[GG]: Mm.

[JH]: To purple and orange. Why was that decision made?

[GG]: I think again it was all about bringing it, trying to bring it up to date, trying to look for perhaps, for a different audience for volunteers. Volunteer numbers were falling off because basically people were getting too old or, you know, or the generation of people, I'm not saying women, who would naturally have volunteered when their children left home were working so there wasn't that natural replenishment of the volunteer base that there had been for all the years up to then really. Mm, the

age I was then was an age where I would normally have not been at work, my kids would have been just about to leave home and I would have gone to find something to do. And I either had a little job doing something and do a bit of volunteering or I'd just have done some volunteering. I was working full-time as were most people of my generation. So I think, you know, us baby boomers have really not helped volunteering because we, we've all got, you know, we've all, I suppose, seen more, want more, do more. But a lot of us have got careers, particularly women.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Who didn't have to, in the, the generation before. Mm, so I think, yes, that was a, a real sea change in, in the way that things were. We had to think about, 'Well, you know, does it put people off, we've got a lot of men, it's still called the Women's Royal Voluntary Service. Oh well we'll call it WRVS, okay, fine. Is that going to put men off? Well probably not. Yes, okay, that's fine. Oh the badge looks a bit, a bit staid'.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: I actually loved the very old badge and then we went to the maroon oval, which is still sort of looks rather nice. And so they had the branding company and we did lots of work with them and lots of workshops, it seemed to go on forever. Mm, and they came up with this thing which personally, I absolutely hated, but I could really understand why it had come to be that. And I can remember going to the launch at council in London, and when you saw it all up on banners you thought, 'Actually, that's really quite striking. I don't actually like those colours personally, but yes, I can see that that would perhaps catch an audience that wouldn't normally look at it'.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: I don't know if it did or not but yes, so that was part of it I think was really about modernisation.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Bringing it up to date, trying to reach a different audience. And at that time we did also think about changing the name, but there was no decision made and it was felt that probably at that time it was a step too far.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Because there was nothing that was obviously on the table as a solution. We had some hysterical suggestions from people who just used WRVS and some of them were quite disgusting.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: We had quite a laugh looking at those. But there was, there was nothing that was a front runner at that time.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: But the whole Board and the Vice-Chairman's Committee, and other people felt was appropriate to move to so we left it as it was for that.

[00:50:05]

[JH]: And how did the volunteers react to the, those changes you were making?

[GG]: I don't think they liked it. I can remember going to Northampton with Mark and a couple of other Trustees to do a roadshow with them to launch the new brand, and, and various other things we were doing, we were trying to get lots of difficult things at once. And there was a woman at the front who had her full uniform on, and she had all the old badges prominently displayed on this rather capacious bosom, bless her. And she sort of sat with her arms crossed, and when people were sort of chatting and Mark was talking to her and she went 'Well', she said, 'I am not wearing that. Look at these, they mean something. That...', and she was really off, and of course we, we just didn't know what to say really because we quite understood what she meant but we're committed to this thing so we had to go with it, so I think, that was one response. Another response was, a lot of people said 'Do you know actually I don't care what badge I'm wearing, I'm actually volunteering for my project'.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: And I don't really care if it's got pink spots on it as long as I can keep volunteering for my project. I might not like it but I can live with it'. And so I think it was a variety, there was no, but, I honestly don't think there was, there were many people that absolutely adored it. I think there were lots of people that didn't really care one way or the other, were quite neutral. Some that were just quite, you know, 'Oh it's alright'.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And there were a handful that really hated it, and, and they were, you know, and they had, and they had a point but we had to go with it so I don't think it rocked a major boat, but it gave some people a fantastic opportunity to have a go at us, so, and they did.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, so we, we let them have a go and it was fine. And I have to say that I, I have got all my badges upstairs. But the one I would, I would least like to put on is, is that old one, the purple and orange.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: I think, for me I, I just don't like the colours. But I think when I think of the WRVS I do think more, something a little more, a little less brash. Whether that's right or not I don't know but that's just my personal view.

[JH]: And did the Trustees make any other decisions at that time?

[GG]: Well we were making decisions about changing, we had a, a group of people in on a transitional programme, and some of the Vice-Chairman's Committee, Lynne Rawlings, my, my friend Lynne, she was part of that. Mm, and several other people brought in to look at what projects we'd got, particularly Community Services because we had, it was just a mishmash of staff. And, of course, it was close to my heart, because I'd been in Community Services. What, what were we

doing that probably there were other organisations doing almost the same, or the same, who could do it better, who were specialists? Mm, was there stuff that we shouldn't be doing? Well yes. Mm, were there things that we were doing that were really, were, well that, that actually the volunteers were doing because no-one else would do it, they didn't really want to do it? And that went on for a period of time, we had a number of projects con..., Children's Contact Centres. Now Children's Contact Centres were where there'd been an issue with the family and there was a Court Order for visitation, but it was a supervised visitation, so in other words the, the absent parent couldn't have the child on their own. And, or it was used as a transition between that and then them hopefully later on having the child on their own. So we had play leaders, and we had toys, we'd have a centre and they'd bring them along and sometimes their probation officer would come with them, or sometimes a social worker would come and do an observation. And they're actually, you know, it, it, it was funny, they were, they were, joyous places for the kids who were always so chuffed to see dad on the whole.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: You know, and they'd sling a ball, and they'd run and they'd play and things, and dad was pleased or mum was pleased to see them, whatever. But also awfully sad when people had to say goodbye, but awfully sad when a child didn't turn up and the visiting parent was there. But there was The National Association of Child Contact Centres, who were perfectly capable of running these. We've actually written a really good, and I, I did have a hand in writing a training course for it for our Contact Centres. A lot of it around, I have to say, qualities and diversity. Because a lot of our volunteers were of an age where, I wouldn't say they were judgmental, but it was harder for them not to be judgmental.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: For these people that were coming in, and particularly when you did get people with different gender identities or different ethnicities, where again in their generation this was quite difficult and unusual so, as it were, so in the end the, the Contact Centres were taken over by The National Association of Contact Centres. We did close a few projects because we shouldn't be doing them, mm, not that there was anything dangerously wrong with them, but they just weren't things that we should be getting involved with.

[00:55:01]

And then we went to a lot of projects again having the greater financial information about some projects you could kind of see those that weren't really even keeping a head above water. Mm, and nine times out of ten it was purely that their volunteer base had died, had died off.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Literally. And they were running it on a, a complete shoestring of volunteers and so they could only open for two hours instead of five or whatever. And we said to them, 'Would you like the opportunity for us to help you to close this down over the next twelve months'? And, and a lot of them said 'Yes'.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And that's what we did, and again trying to find someone else to take it over.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: So, some of our, the tea bars, things like Leagues Of Friends, some local groups and things like that where a sort of transition process was done. I think on the whole that worked very well. Mm, I, I wasn't personally involved in transitioning any programmes, but certainly, I think just the offer of help to some was quite good. It was seen as 'Oh you're shutting everything down and chucking everything away' by some people. You can't please everyone. But it, I think it was necessary and there were genuinely other people out there who could do some of the things we were doing so much better than we could.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And, and sometimes we were duplicating in the same area, which was mad. So it was a case of, of looking at all that. So that was a really big piece of work rather by the Board. Mm, yes, that was, it was an interesting time. And it was very interesting getting the reports back about what they'd found and what was going to happen, and who was coming forward to take things over. And again a lot of the Vice-Chairman's Committee had a huge input into that.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Mm, and also other volunteers who we really couldn't have done without and it was, it was a massive piece of work. They did have an interim in to, a Project Manager to, to, to manage the whole thing, but it was a very complex piece of work.

[JH]: And why was it decided just to focus on older people and hospitals and Emergency Services at that time?

[GG]: Well we didn't, we still kept a lot of the community projects, but we kept the ones that we were very good at.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: That we could do extremely well, we kept, you know, the Prisoner's Visitors Centres, which did very well. The Darby and Joan Clubs, Lunch Clubs, book, yes the the Books-on-Wheels. The, the, the Community Transport, we were very good at doing that. It was really a case of, of trimming down, bearing in mind that Community Services, as such, earned no money.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: It doesn't bring in an income. Yes, the Darby and Joan Clubs try and cover their own costs by what they charge for lunch and things like that. But they, they weren't really able to contribute a vast amount to central costs. And we were trying to replace ten million pounds central costs every year. Mm, call that a hard decision, maybe it was, but I think it was also about where can we put the most value, bearing in mind we had a dwindling number of volunteers, some of it by natural wastage.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: I mean sadly there'd been a vast peak of volunteers of a certain age group, of a certain generation who sadly were either now too old or were dying. Mm, as I said before people of, of my age as I was then would normally be filling that gap and we were out working.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Or, you know, doing other things. Mm, or we were looking after grandchildren while our daughters and sons would go out to work.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Mm, and, and I suppose there was this sort of like gap. So we had to, if you like, look at how we could best service the quality delivery and also make sure that we weren't duplicating what had been done elsewhere.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Because that was crazy, that was just mad. We were basically, as I said, we were, if there were two things operating in the same town, specialist things like, you know, Child Contact Centre work, I mean how crazy to have two. You know, and, and some of our, some of our volunteers did transfer to the other organisations.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Which was fantastic because they had the expertise and they could take it with them, and that was really good. So it wasn't really a case of, you know, not focusing on Community Services, it was a case of rationalising it sensibly and looking at where that, all those services could best be delivered for the future. And again I don't suppose we got it all right, but I think we got a lot of it right.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Certainly I, I think the Contact Centres were better being moved.

[JH]: And then when you sort of left the Board...

[GG]: Mm.

[JH]: From being a Trustee, you were involved with Emergency Services.

[GG]: Yes.

[JH]: As a volunteer.

[GG]: Very strange when you leave the Board, because you, you got so used to being at the very heart of everything and having access to everything, I mean very, very busy and very engaged and suddenly you're not. And you hear personally from people but you never hear from the Board again, which is, is, you know, I sometimes think is always a bit strange because I, I'm sure they could have used us for something.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, however, that, that's not the way it was set up and that, that, that's fine, and that's the way it is.

[01:00:01]

So suddenly you go from being frantically engaged in merciful relations like 'What do I do, what...? Mm, okay okay'. So I, I basically went to the Emergency Services Team but caught it at a time when I suppose the call on the Emergency Teams was dwindling again.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Because we were asking to get paid and people didn't like that very much. Mm, so, did a bit you know, got a couple of call outs, there's always something going on somewhere there being, you know, whatever. We had, you know, some things like the, the petrol crisis was one of the things, and some floods, all sorts of bad weather and stuff like that, so, you know, it kept me ticking over for a little while. Mm, but I kind of started to feel I'd disconnected a little bit from the organisation. Mm, and then, you know, lo and behold someone rang from The Benevolent Trust and said 'Do you want to come on there'. So back I am again now, back in the middle of it in a different way. So it's, yes, Emergency Services, I've still got a bag here, I mean we have, I have, perhaps it's an old fashion way

of doing it now, but I've got a bag under the stairs that's got, you know, paper, pens, Sellotape, scissors, you know, a blanket.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Some bits and pieces, I've got one of those space blankets in there. Mm, I've got a list of contact numbers in there even. I've got a phone, just in case my phone goes flat. Mm, and if you go you grab that, because at least when you get there you can stick a sign up. Mm, the last one I got called out to was, since I've been living here, not in this house but in the previous house, in Norfolk we have a lot of single track railway.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And a lot of the farms just have an access over it with no gates, and a train had hit a tractor, mm, near Kings Lynn Speedway Stadium, which is sort of a bit out in the wilds really. So we got a call and it had to be, didn't it, a Sunday, and it had to be kind of after everything had shut, after four o'clock, all supermarkets were shut, everything was shut. And they'd managed to rustle up two volunteers to meet me in this, literally in a field, luckily it was light. So we went to this field and I thought 'What do we get these guys', you know, 'we've got the, all these guys from British Rail'. So I went to McDonalds and I bought a raft of cheeseburgers and beefburgers and Coke and teas and coffees, filled the back of my car up.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Took those for, filled the back up with, with that. Raided our fridge for bottles of Coke and, and, and cups and bits and pieces, and just went. And then these two lovely volunteers from Kings Lynn turned up and they had been training with us. They, they were assuming that we had kits, well we, we didn't have any kit left, it had gone.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: Because over the years it had dwindled away and they were gone. So they were absolutely lovely but they, it, we did have to drive over a rutted field and I think they were a bit concerned. So

they help me set it all up and we got, everybody got a cup of tea, cup of coffee, Coke, a beefburger, some chips or something.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, and to be honest there was not a lot else they could do, so I said to these guys 'Well I'll, I'll stay here if you want to head off now', because it was starting to get dark by then.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: On a Sunday evening, and they had been incredibly helpful. Mm, and what the railway people were waiting for was their welfare wagon to turn up, because they have a welfare wagon...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: That was kitted out with, you know, a rest room and toilets and they can get something to eat and whatever. So I did another run to McDonalds and got yet more stuff for them, and by now it's about, it's about ten o'clock at night. And it, I think the best sight was seeing the welfare wagon bounce, bounce across the field.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Luckily nobody had been injured. Mm, the tractor had been cut in half, but the tractor driver had just jumped off it and not been injured. Mm, people had had to be taken off the train and walked into Kings Lynn, which is a, a fair walk down the track.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And there were people that were shocked but they were, luckily nobody was injured and, or killed. Mm, when you saw the state of the front of the train and the tractor it was amazing that nobody was, was mar..., really, really badly injured. Mm, but it just shows what you can do if you just think about what you do, you only, you know, sometimes it just needs you to turn up with a bucket full of McDonalds and it holds a situation.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: For two or three hours, until something else can happen. Mm, and then off you go. But you know, I, I, I think the Emergency Services side now is, is obviously not as prevalent as it was because it does need to charge for its services and people aren't willing to pay.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: Which is, you know, a fact of life, you know, you can't get these sort of responses now without paying for them.

[JH]: And, have you been on any exercises as well or any training?

[GG]: Oh I've been on Rest Centre Training, in fact as part of, one of my paid jobs was actually as Emergency Services Manager.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Emergency Planning Manager in, in Suffolk. And my role was as the liaison with RAF and US Air Force Mildenhall and Lakenheath for civilian recovery if a plane came down.

[01:05:00]

So I did lots of Rest Centre training. Not only received it but actually gave training to people and lots, to lots of blue light services and lots of local authority people as well. Mm, because, certainly in this area, there was a, a lot of very heavy military aircraft flying, and fighter flying, and apart from the fact you also had the flight line for Stanstead and other places. There is a, a real possibility that something will come down at some time s we did a lot of work around that. And I think Rest Centre Training is really interesting because it's not just setting up beds and chairs and things, it's what do you do with the, the four cats that arrive in the cat carriers who don't like dogs and there's dogs. And what's in that, that sports bag that appears to be moving, and it's the pet python, or a lizard.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Which I don't mind lizards, I'm not too keen on the snakes but, you know, a, a, you know a bearded lizard I think is absolutely beautiful, but what do you do with it, where do you put it? Dogs and cats aren't so bad, you can ring the local RSPCA, you can ring the kennels and catteries, but what do you do with a Burmese Python, you know, or, or a bearded dragon who needs a heated whatever? And, yes, you know. Mm, people that turn up inevitably without their medication, their glasses, that they haven't got their phone numbers with them it's quite an interesting and fascinating process. Mm, and, and, no, and to run, you know, we did a live exercise at Mildenhall to run it as, with actors actually playing the parts, you suddenly realise that it doesn't take a lot for a thing to break down.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: You know, the veneer of civilisation is very thin and it doesn't take a lot for that to crumble and to, to turn it into, pretty much into chaos. Mm, and people can get very territorial, they can get very protective, they can get aggressive in the sense that they're defending themselves. Mm, they can get extremely anxious. You have people there, you don't know what their health conditions are.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: You've got kids who want baby milk, nappies, you know, what do you get if you're given ten minutes to get out of your house, you know? I mean you, you grab the kids and the dog and you, and you might think to grab your phone or your laptop, but you're not going to pack a bag are you?

[JH]: No.

[GG]: You know, so it's all that sort of thing. And then where do you access things at ten o'clock on a Sunday night? Who can you ring, who can you get to open up, can you get Tesco's to open up to get you stuff? Who do you personally know who might be able to rustle something round for you? Have you got enough volunteers? Probably not. Where are you going to find, you ring all your mates, and get all your mates out.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: They're not trained but you just say I don't care, write their names, stick up a poster, make some tea, you know, a fascinating process to go through. I think everyone should try and run one for a day because it really makes you think about things, and how, how easily things can, can become a real issue. And also, I have to say, you can also get some fantastic spirit.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: In a place like that, you know. I suppose it goes back to I say the war time spirit, but I think, you know, if you were stuck in an underground station during a bombing raid in London and someone did start singing and someone else made a cup of tea, it probably helped, you know.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: So, I think the same thing still happens, it just happens differently, and I think, particularly now, and I can only speak for the area I live in, we have quite a lot of Eastern European immigration here, and they're, you know, they are absolutely needed because you've got agriculture round here, everywhere, food production and they work their socks off, I mean they really do. But you then would also have a language issue because not everyone is fluent in English. And, whereas in a rural area like this historically you could have set a Rest Centre up and it wouldn't have been an issue, now you would get a mix, in, in a, in a, an urban area, it would always have been that way, and people would be more accustomed to it. But we've had to actually think about how we address it in a rural area now where there is a real mix of population. Not a visible mix but there is a complete, I mean the, the, the culture differences are quite vast, the language differences are quite big. Mm, and, and it is a case of thinking about that more than perhaps we would normally do in this sort of area.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: In the past.

[JH]: And how do you feel when you're called out on an emergency?

[GG]: Oh the adrenaline goes buzzing. You just want to, yes, you're a little bit apprehensive, 'Oh, have we got enough stuff', or what...? Yes, do I exactly know where...? I mean, when you're told to

drive out 'Go down and drive through the white gate that we'll open for you, and just keep driving till you get to the railway line and cross the field'.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Oh, okay, right, that's a bit vague, I hope I can get there. The Satnav isn't going to work but you just really want to get there. Because when you get there you can do a quick sit virch [ph 01:09:52], you can, you can actually just in a few minutes gauge what's going on, find the right person, set something up and get started.

[01:10:01]

It might not be perfect but you can get something done.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And then you can start to say 'What else do we need, who else do we need, who can I get to go and do this, who can I get to ring somebody? Who's got a battery charger'? Because I mean your phones don't last forever.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, I've now got one permanently in the car that I can plug into my car so as long as I remember to get fuel I can charge my phone.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, but it's things like that, you know, but there is a huge, I won't say it's an adrenaline rush because you want to go off like a superhero, you know, and turn into a superhero and rush off and save the world. It's just a case of, well obviously something needs to be done and hopefully I can do a bit towards getting that done. And you always have to be prepared that sometimes you see unpleasant things, I mean there might be nasty accidents and all sorts of things going on. I mean luckily we, it doesn't happen that often but, you know, there are some times. A friend, I've, I've got a friend of mine who works in Emergency Planning and he was helping at a very, very bad road crash

where they actually had to evacuate people from houses and he sort of went to find what's that on the road and it was actually a piece of someone's brain. Now you won't come across that particularly very often but you are dealing sort of quite often with trauma, with stress, with worry. You have got to think about, you can't just sort it, you've got to think about how you're going to sort it. And if you've got to bring other people in to help you. You certainly can't go, you can't save the world yourself. Even though when you get in the car, that first two minutes, you think you can as, but by the time that you get to the, the incident you've actually rationalised what you're going to need to do.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Quite a fascinating feeling actually.

[JH]: Yes. And also you were delivering training, yourself, as well?

[GG]: Mm.

[JH]: Mm, what sort of training were you delivering to volunteers?

[GG]: Mm, I did a lot of training in Contact Centres again most of it, a lot of it around ethnicity, diversity, that sort of thing. Mm, we did Contact Centre training which was good. We did food safety training, and I didn't deliver that but I had to kind of break the news that you might have been cooking eggs for your family for eighty years but actually to do it here you've got to have a certificate, that didn't go down well everywhere.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, plus that, bearing in mind I was an English woman in Wales, which sometimes doesn't go down too well either. Mm, so that was quite interesting. So, yes we had to do, do the social training, we had to do the, the, the till training when that came in, ably assisted by my son Daniel, which was great. Mm, but there was, there was a lot happening where training was involved. And I came from a background of being a training officer with a big corporate before so to me that was, that was just second nature. It was, it was very enjoyable just part of what I think Norwich Transfer should always

be about. But, yes, I think the Contact Centre training was interesting. And, again, they picked, the volunteers themselves could sort of bring life experiences to that training as well.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And, and just add little bits that made it more real and a kind of a more rounded view of, of, of what this thing might be.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And the sort of things you can do, and things that I hadn't thought about, you know. Some people are just very creative and they're very together and, but, I suppose if you brought up a family of kids and you've not had a lot and you've had to make do, or you've, or you've just been a very capable person, you've got a drawer full of bits that you could quickly shove in a bag. Now I have to have mine ready because I would never know where to find it otherwise. But some people just have this knack.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And in five seconds they can be out the door with everything, you know, so it's, it was really quite interesting to, to get in, engage with people like that. As I say, we used to bring people in from out of the other organisations as well, which also helped because it, it actually started to get people talking about their different approaches to things. And then they would know who else you would call for that, so, you know, 'Well if you ring me, I can ring George', or whatever and, and it would work. So it was, it was good, yes, a good time.

[JH]: Mm, you've mentioned the Contact Centre.

[GG]: Mm.

[JH]: A couple of times, so how would you describe the Contact Centre's role?

[GG]: It was, there was a halfway house so that absent parents could visit with their children. They were normally under a Court Order for visitation, for whatever reason. Mm, it was normally the

father that was the absent parent, by choice or not. And it was a place where they could safely see their children and have some engagement with them.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: In the hope that in time that could move on to them being able to perhaps meet there and take the child out or whatever, but to have some sort of relationship with their, with their children. Mm, sadly, some parents used it as a weapon in that they, they'd say they were coming, they'd say they were coming and they wouldn't come.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: And so the absent parent would be there all full of anticipation, with perhaps a present or a teddy bear or they were going to, or actually this is the first time they were allowed to take them out, and they wouldn't turn up, and that was quite, quite sad.

[01:15:00]

You know, human relationships are very tricky things and it was very, very hard for the volunteers not to feel something for what's happening, but you had to stay very, very neutral. It was not our place to try and get the parents back together, or to talk to the kids about mummy and daddy, it was a, a place to offer someone with very high quality play equipment, lots of, of, of fun and drinks and stuff, and we were there to keep an eye, one to make sure the kids weren't taken out if they weren't allowed to but also just to keep an eye on behaviour.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, I mean some of the absent parents there was a reason why they weren't allowed to see their children. Mm, not abuse as such, but an incapability of parenting.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Which, you know, just, I think some of the volunteers were actually able to help with, because the, the, the parents could watch the volunteers playing with the children and think, 'Oh, yes', and

they, some of them just didn't know how to play with their children. And so they could, they could learn by playing with others.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And the volunteers were very good at doing that because they'd all got families of their own or grandchildren, or nieces and nephews and, and they'd come of, again, of that generation, a lot of them, where it was just second nature that you played with kids. The kids weren't shut in their bedroom with the television on or, you know, Xbox, actually you played with your kids.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And so, again, I think a lot of the absent parents who were struggling with that found it very helpful. I mean it was also really good for people like probation officers and social workers to have somewhere where the contact could be established to try it out in a very safe and controlled environment without it being in an office.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: In a council building, which is very intimidating for the child and for the parent. Mm, this was actually fun so, you know. And sometimes they, they were observed visits, because of the nature of whatever had happened before and, but it did mean that the social worker could actually, wasn't the only person keeping an eye, he could actually sit down, have a cup of tea and have a biscuit and just keep a wary eye, but they know that our volunteers were watching as well so, it was a, it was probably a more natural environment for the parent and child to play in.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Than in a Social Services office.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Some interview room somewhere, which is, sadly, what often happened, you know.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: So, yes, they were, they were sad and happy places. I like to think they, they, they did more good than not. I think moving them to The National Association of Child Contact Centres was the right thing to do because they really are the experts.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: But they were, I, I used to absolutely adore going to visit them. And quite often they'd be on a Saturday morning, which was great because you actually, actually, because you hadn't got a business meeting, you actually had time to spend there.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And you could spend the whole morning there with them and it was just, you know, it was interesting. Mm, I don't know, I mean I suppose it's just sad that we had to have them.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: But in a way, as I say, they're better than meeting in some anonymous office in a, in a very officious building. And actually we, we did have some very good play equipment, and again volunteers would collect, you know, and fundraise and we, we'd apply for, for grants mm, and we'd get donations of, of really good play equipment, mm, which, again, stimulated an interaction between the parent and the child which perhaps they wouldn't have had. Well they wouldn't have had any contact at all, to be honest, otherwise.

[JH]: And you also have mentioned in your biography that you wrote the training guide.

[GG]: Yes. I was part of...

[JH]: for the contact centre.

[GG]: I sort of wrote the training guide, we had a lot of input from the volunteers, a lot of input from some other, you know, advisors. But we decided that because, and again I think it was all part of this

kind of get things more structured, we had Contact Centres that were operating, you know, fine, but they were operating slightly differently.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: And we just wanted to make sure that we were compliant, because obviously you've got to think about health and safety. I'm going back a few years now.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: So it was in the days where possibly a lot of organisations were not as compliant with things when diversity and equality where volunteers would do stuff because it felt the right thing to do but actually it could have got them in a huge amount of bother because of legislation.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Be that right or wrong, I sometimes think we over legislate against things. Mm, and so we decided that we'd write a training programme for new volunteers, we'd also get the old volunteers to help us to put it together, and we'd test it out with them and we'd make sure that everyone had a consistent message about what this thing was for, how we could deal with situations so we, and, and it also gave them an opportunity to talk about the, the experiences of being in a Contact Centre. There was a lot of sort of they got free text in the training about so give us some examples, and what sort of things you, I mean what worries you, and how do you cope with, and learning from each other about things. And we were able then to put into that some suggestions.

[01:20:01]

We were able to frame it around the legislation and say 'Well actually, you know, that, that and that is absolutely fine, you've got to be really careful if you start going down this road because you are, you're getting to the borders of this'. Mm, we used to make them laugh, because, you know, we, we, we'd had some stories given to us from volunteers about really funny things that had happened. And we anonymise them obviously, but we were able to sort of lift their spirits because it can be an awfully depressing thing to talk about. Mm, so I think it was a really collaborative effort to get it written and I think what it did is, is it got the Contact Centres, it just raised the game that bit. They,

they were doing fine, but they, they weren't quite there, and there were some areas of potential risk. It was nothing with big red flags, but there was potential risks there. I also think that it helped them that when the, the NACCC said they would take them over they felt they were taking over a good quality product.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And that makes it sound awful but technically we were putting this thing in to a shop window, sort of saying 'We would really like you to run these centres', and probably taking, you know, 'the volunteers will want to come as well, and they are trained and they do do this right, and they do understand about this, and they do understand how that works'. And I think that really helped with the confidence level of the NACCC to actually then take them over. Mm, because they were taking over, over a well-run, well thought through project.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, and I think they also felt that we'd given it a level of quality assurance by, by doing what we done with it.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: So, yes that was, as I say, interesting. But I, I mean, yes, I, I did a lot of the lead work on it but I, I couldn't have done it without the collaboration of the others. And trialing it was quite interesting. The first one we did we thought 'Oh, if it all goes wrong, we're shot', you know. Mm, I think it went kind of okay.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: It wasn't brilliant, but it went okay. Mm, and we, we did try and, when I think back at the things we used to say though, things that today you wouldn't dream of saying because it would be deemed really inappropriate, but going back over the years, goodness knows how many years it was now, you know, we were trying to make them visualise the sort of people they might come across and we were again talking about ethnicity, but we were talking about gender as well. And, and so we were trying to sort of paint pictures for them and, and it was probably very inappropriate at the

time, but, it, we had to somehow convey to, to people that it didn't matter if a man turned up in a frock, or a woman turned up in a, in a dinner suit. It didn't matter visually what they looked like, it didn't matter whether they had seventeen tattoos and four earrings through their eyebrow. It really was something the volunteers had to just blank out.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: That's, that wasn't what they were there for, they were there as a parent. And whether or not you deemed they were fit to be a parent, or they looked like to be a parent, is irrelevant. That's, and it was kind, kind of paint the pictures, and, you know, I sometimes, I, I'd cringe and I'd think 'Oh, we used to say these things', but we did it for a reason, we did it to kind of generate the thinking around 'Am I ...'? But everyone's prejudiced to a certain extent about certain things, you just are because we've all got our own preferences but you can manage them.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And we were trying to help the volunteers to manage their prejudices, by almost making them smile if they did see someone like that. To remember their training and go 'Oh yes, I remember doing, I remember about that', and 'we I must just push that to one side, I might not like it, but I must push it to one side'.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: So that, you know, it's very...

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Some of the things, you think back now and think 'Dear me'.

[JH]: [Laughing]

[GG]: [Laughing]

[JH]: And now you are, and since 2010, you've been on the Benevolent Trust.

[GG]: Mm.

[JH]: So how would you describe your role on the, on the Trust?

[GG]: Well I'm now the Vice-Chairman, which is, was a great honour given to me back in March. Mm, very surprised, but very pleased. So I'm supporting Sheila Murray, who's the Chair.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, I think one of the reasons that I decided to do it, again I wanted to reengage more with the organisation, even though it was a separate charity. Mm, someone did say to us, 'Once you're in the WRVS it's a bit like having a stamp through like a stick of rock', you know, it stays with you forever, and try as you might to get away it's really hard. And I think they're absolutely right because I haven't managed to get away in twenty-one years yet, and I know there's been people around much longer than me. Mm, so it's, it's, it's just doing something different. And in these days of always looking to save money, cut things and whatever, we're in the fantastic position of having funds we can actually give away. Mm, in my working life I am constantly working on change programmes, cost reduction programmes for local and central government. So, again, to actually have something that you can do the other way round is, is absolutely brilliant. And going back to the reason it was set up when we look at an application we have a criteria, which is, you know, is it something that's actually required or is it just something we fancy having?

[01:25:00]

Mm, have they been a volunteer or a member of staff? Because it, it applies to both. And then there's what we call 'The Lady Reading Factor'.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: And that's the, they've given some duty, they've done their bit, this isn't a reward.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: This isn't recognition, this is just something we, is in our gift to do, as an organisation. And isn't that nice? So that's factored into it. We do look at finances, you know, if somebody had two hundred thousand pounds in a savings account and wanted fifty quid, we probably wouldn't, wouldn't volunteer.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: I would say we don't get those sort of applications in.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: Mm, but we, so we do look at that. So there is a, a financial assessment done. Mm...

[Phone rings]

[GG]: We do...

[Phone ringing]:

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Yes. We do actually look at, look at finances. We do check their volunteering. Obviously a lot of people, some people still have their volunteer number, I still have mine. Mm, some people have a Project Manager who is still available to confirm their volunteering but some of the very older volunteers, it's really very hard to confirm their volunteering.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Mm, because they might not have their number, their Project Manager might be long gone, either out of WRVS or dead, or the project might have been done a long time ago. So we do have to validate their volunteering somehow. Mm, and there's normally a way of doing it, because normally someone who knows someone, who knows someone who remembers them, you know.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: It's where, it's a case of, of really, so, and I have to say we rely very heavily on WRVS for that. And, and I will mention Matthew, although he'll kill me, but for, for Matthew, the archivist, I mean he does, although we have to have permission for, for him to look, he does help us to track things back where he can, if need be. Mm, it is really important that money is given to the right people, but equally we have to make every effort to make sure we search as much as we can. It's rare that we can't prove volunteers.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Somehow. Mm, the grants are for anything.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, they've ranged from the, the things you think about, the cooker's blown up, the television's blown up, the boiler doesn't work, mm, all the sort of day to day things that are quite expensive that somebody on a limited income will really struggle. But alright you could say that a television isn't a necessity, but if you live on your own, then a television is a necessity of life, it's a bit of company, it's a bit of noise in the background. Mm, we've done dental treatment for people, we've bought new spectacles for people. We've bought a toupee for a gentleman who was having treatment for cancer, and it was very important for him to have that. Mm, we have done things like clear a lady's garden so that she could then have her grandchildren to stay because it wasn't safe. We have helped with roofing repairs and all sorts of things. And, I can't think of anything, you know, that, sort of, we wouldn't do in that kind of line of thing. And then alongside that we do occasionally pay for other things. We are currently paying for someone's Life Line, because they don't, they're not eligible to have their local authority. It's not very much money, but we do review that every year or so. Mm, we have topped up a couple of people's nursing home fees. Again, we review it every year, we don't pay the whole thing. We have recently contributed, not all of it, towards a respite holiday for a very long standing volunteer who sadly now has to have full-time care from her husband.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: And is, sadly she's not too well. And the both of them go on a, a respite holiday once a year, one to give him a break, but also to give them some time together somewhere nice. And it's not particularly expensive, and they get funding from elsewhere as well, so they don't come just to us. But she was a very long standing volunteer so we think that's the right thing to do. Mm, the other exciting thing, and I think probably something I have had a hand in doing, when I first came on to the Board we wanted to get the word out that we were there a bit more. So, myself for Norfolk and Lynne Rawlings, she was on the Board then for Cambridgeshire, did some marketing and some media work. And I was on BBC Radio Norfolk, and we just said, you know, 'We, we, any, you know, 'if you know any ex-volunteers, any ex-members of staff', you know, 'people don't like asking for charity, but ask them to come forward, we'd love hear from them'. And I got a phone call from this training student doctor, and she was from Norwich, she'd volunteered in her sixth form.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Mm, for two or three years at the hospital in Norwich, and she was at Imperial College in her last year doing Medicine. And she had the option of an elective to go to the Flying Doctor, in Australia.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: But, but she had to pay for it.

[01:30:00]

So we decided we'd pay for it. And it was, I think it was all of fifteen hundred pounds. We said, 'Right, the deal is, if you do that, you send us the case studies and pictures, okay'? And she did, and they were brilliant. So we sat at the next meeting and I sort of said, 'Yes, can't we do more of this'?

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And Lynne had, you know, had been talking, and the Chair had been talking about things and, you know, it, it wasn't, it wasn't my idea, it was just that it, it happened to be me that sparked the phone call that kicked it off.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And out of that we developed the Youth Bursary and so now we ask for applications to come in by February for any volunteer up to the age of twenty-five. Mm, we ask them to have done a certain number of hours volunteering, I think it's fifty hours volunteering, mm, and we ask them to have a reference from their Project Manager. And the funding can be up to two thousand pounds, and it can be for something that's going to help them with their life or career. So we have anything from people going with gap medics, to going to India to help to build a school because they want to do environmental studies in conservation. Mm, we have paid for driving lessons for somebody who lives in a very rural area, he's finding it really hard to get employment but has been a fantastic young volunteer. We have assisted with... What other things have we done? Things like 'Operation Raleigh', I mean really sort of life changing things we've assisted with helping with fees for study, mm, where there's been a voluntary input. And this, you know, to, to pay for this has been, actually to support this person to get to the career they want to get to, so that has been something. This year we've supported, I think and I can't be absolutely right, eight or nine young people, we're waiting for a couple still to be confirmed, because we only pay the organiser or, the organisation.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: So we, we ask them to go with a formal, proper organisation, or college or whatever, and we pay them to make sure that it isn't just somebody wanting a couple of grand to go on a jolly.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: We have had some hilarious applications, I, I won't detail them because the people will probably know who they were and it will embarrass them. But yes, you do get people that think 'Oh I could just go on a holiday', or 'I wouldn't mind just doing that'.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Well I quite like to do things as well but I wouldn't put a grant application in. We're hoping to expand that as much as we can, it's getting the word out that's really important. Mm, the March meeting where we consider this is always one of our favourite meetings, because it is just so interesting. They write a supporting letter and you start to get this, this vision what this young

person really wants to do with their, their lives. And you think 'Wow', you know, 'cor, crikey, I didn't think I could do that when I was seventeen'. Mm, so yes, and, and again we are ask if they're under eighteen we ask their parents' consent, and then we ask them to write a case study and to provide us with the photographs that we can use. And if you look at the website there are some case studies on there now which are looking, you know, looking really interesting, so that's been really good fun. And then this last year we've actually gone through a re-branding ourselves.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: And we've decided to stay as The WRVS Benevolent Trust, because that's what we were set up to be. Mm, we are therefore RVS, Royal Voluntary Service Volunteers, and WVS, and WRVS, and everything else you can think of, staff and volunteers. Mm, but we have changed the corporate colours, we've just had a new logo agreed, which is fantastic. And already literature has just been printed as we are here in July 2014. Mm, so in the next sort of six months I think you'll see a lot more visibility of the Trust. The sad thing is that it's really hard to reach potential applicants. There isn't a central point of communication for ex-volunteers for example. Mm, they are also normally the kind of people that don't like to ask for help so we're trying to think of ways of reaching people who would know them. So at the moment we're looking at advertising and pushing things out to stuff like Age UK, through U3A, through WI and all those sort of channels where it might not be them that were the volunteer but they probably sit next to someone or has a neighbour, auntie, friend who was, and they could actually recommend that they come through. We're also linking up now with SSAFA, which is the military charity. Mm, we were very lucky to have their Chief Exec to come to a meeting this week and we've worked out other ways that we can do work together. So their case managers, who work all over the country, now ask everyone they talk to 'Have you been in the WRVS, have you worked for them'? Because..

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: Because, they can help us get grant applications. And we now have a piece in our application that says 'Do you have any military connection, and if, if so would you have any objection', obviously for Data Protection, 'to, to send your, your details through to SSAFA'.

[01:35:02]

And that way we think that we can actually get more for people.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Mm, because SSAFA also do signposting to other services, so they can help with, you know, the Social Services, they can help with Care Services. They are very good, I think because of being so involved with the military, identifying when people might have problems with stress and mental health problems and signposting to the right places. So we're doing more with that at the moment as well. And that's really a very exciting development so we're waiting to see how that...

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Again, we've got all the new raft of stuff, we've got a new website that's going to be launched very, we've signed on, off on that this week. Mm, it will be another two or three weeks before that happens but we're nearly there. And then we've got Twitter and we've got Facebook, you know, I mean things that in the past you just wouldn't have had.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: So we're looking to do that, partly as well to, to attract younger volunteers and to say 'Look, come when you can'.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: 'If you can't come every week for forty years that doesn't matter. Come once every two months for two years while you're in the sixth form and do something that you quite fancy doing, and then you'll go to Uni or whatever, but don't forget about us and then, actually maybe you can come back sometime'.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: You know, which I think it, there's a lot of perception that when you volunteer you're in it for life. And actually we need to say to people 'You can dip in and out of volunteering, just don't dip out permanently'.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: But, yes, use it for your, you know, I think when you're that age you are using it for career development, you're using it to try things out, to see which is right, I think retail or social care or whatever. Mm, you are doing it as part of, of study. You're doing it to add to your CV. I don't really mind why people do it as long as they do it. And, certainly for the youngsters I'd say 'Look if 'if you're doing it purely selfishly to add to your CV to get you to Uni, absolutely fine'.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: 'But just don't forget about us if we've supported you to do that. When you think about volunteering when you've got time come back to us and see what you can do'. So, by having Twitter, by having Facebook, we can get out there a lot more. Mm, and I think that's really important because we would like a lot more applications to come through. And, you know, we've just got to get out there.

[JH]: Yes. And so since you started in 1993...

[GG]: Mm.

[JH]: Mm, how has the, how has your opinion of the charity changed?

[GG]: I think I am concerned that the decision makers are a little disconnected from what happens on the ground. And equally, therefore, the volunteers possibly are disconnected from what happens at decision making level. Whether that's perception or reality I am not too sure but certainly what I hear going round it's, it's more consistent than not. So I think there is a feeling that almost it is being run a bit too much as a business without... And I, I think, I understand why it has to be, but I think that, that, they're, they're missing that link which gets the loyalty of people to do what needs to be done every day, and get them out of bed to go and be a volunteer, mm, or a member of staff for that matter. Mm, I do think that the promotion of the hubs it's a very good move.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: In a way, you know, laughingly you, you know you're getting old when you see things coming round, because I remember District Offices and County Offices, now we're not going quite back to that but we are going back to a, a local focus for volunteers. And I do think that is really important and, and, and almost cancels what I said today about being disconnected, I think actually that makes the organisation connect better with them, but that's on a more operational basis.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, so I think that's good. I'm, you know, I'm, I'm ever the optimist that the, the software system, the hire system will help in, in tracking things and linking things up and making it a lot more easier to get out to people. I think that they are at a real tipping point on the viability of, if you call it 'the business', and I do have concerns about the focus on elderly people.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Because there are other very large players out there who are very well known and very well recognised. And I still think if you say Royal Voluntary Service, WRVS, call it what you like, that, that the awareness, the public awareness is very low unless they have come across it personally, and then they'll know the bit they came across. And it's likely to be a hospital shop or probably Meals-on-Wheels for mum. Mm, or as a user of a, an older person's day centre or something, but, generally I think the public awareness is very low, and that does worry me.

[01:40:00]

Because we are, you know, relying on, I can remember sitting on The Emergency Committee and it was pretty healthy in those days, but I, I don't know how it is going now. Mm, you are reliant on, on money coming in, you're reliant on that public awareness and that, if you like, brand recognition, to get volunteers. Mm, so I, I am, I am worried. I am concerned about it.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: I don't think it's the quality of service on the ground I'm concerned about, I'm actually concerned about whether in the big bad world of, you know, of, of people going where they feel

comfortable because they know it, or they think they do. And I think the Age UK branding is becoming incredibly prominent. It's a bit like, you know, it, my generation, I feel comfy flying Virgin.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: I don't know Richard Branson, I haven't got a clue but it's a brand that to me, I feel I trust him, because I feel that I know it. I don't really, but I feel that I do.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: And I think, I was talking to my mother about it the other day, who is a hundred next month, and she has been part of Adult Age Concern for a very, very long time. And when it moved to Age UK she couldn't quite understand why till I explained it, 'Oh, okay, fine'. Mm, but she wouldn't dream of doing, going, even though I've been part of WRVS, she wouldn't dream of doing, going to a WRVS Lunch club, 'Oh no I'm an Age, an Age, an Age, an Age UK person', you know.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, and as I was corrected yesterday, and in Wales it's Age Cymru, so I'll have to remember that. But I, I do think their brand recognition is very low. I think that is a, is a real concern in the way the market operates now. Mm, I'm not quite sure where their income is going to come from, because on the back of that fundraising is that bit harder. And I know that they've got, you know, they do wonderful work and try to fundraise, I know that they do huge pushes about legacies, but if you've got an Age UK one sitting here and a, an RVS one sitting there you're probably going to recognise the Age UK one first. And that's it, you don't necessarily always give to it, but it's, it's that sort of comfort feel that makes people do things. And I'm not quite sure how they address that, I'm not sure what they can do about that, unless they start to do some joint work with some, with some of the other charities.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And dual brand some of the projects, perhaps. I don't know whether that's... It's always difficult to try and merge organisations at that level because there's always people that don't like each other or there are financial reasons why you can't do it, sometimes legal reasons why you can't

do it. Mm, I do have concerns that it has shrunk significantly in the relatively short period that I've been there. Mm, and I, I would hate to say in five years' time that I, I thought 'Well, I thought that would happen'. I hope I can sit back and say 'Isn't it looking fantastic'? But I'm not sure.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Really not sure.

[JH]: And what would you say is the most significant change you've experienced?

[GG]: I think it is that real obviously disconnect from the volunteer.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Mm, I, I, I hear a lot of volunteers, and some of it might be whinging, who basically say 'We're just not looked after. You know, it's not our direct line managers don't look after us but they're, they're being asked to do an impossible job, they're covering, oh I would say the whole of Suffolk, Suffolk and Norfolk, how can they possibly do that and look after us as well, you know'? And, and actually I think they feel quite sorry for some of the managers because they like them but know that it's an in..., it seems an impossible task. Mm, I think some of the changes are that there isn't that personal link.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: With the volunteers that there used to be, albeit, and you could argue the commercial side, 'Well that's an expensive team', well actually do you know that most people did that from nothing. I know no volunteer is free.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Because you've always got the infrastructure, the insurance and travelling, but they're as near as damn it free, for what you get out of it. And, again I go back to this, I suppose harking back, I do think the Vice-Chairman's Committee was absolutely integral to doing that link. Mm, and now there isn't anything, it went from that to nothing. So there wasn't even then a member of the Board who

had a WRVS link, it went from... I, I just find that a little bit difficult to, to understand how you then really have an ear on the ground. Because when you go as a Board Member, I've done it before, you go out as a Board Member, even if you've been a volunteer and a member of staff, and it is like a Royal Visit. You will go to a project, it will be polished up, you know, they will talk to you, they might have a moan, but you won't really see what's happening.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: Mm, and it's, I think that's the bit that might just influence, I wouldn't say change, but might inform and influence some of the decisions that will need to be made.

[01:45:06]

And there's probably some very hard decisions to be made, I mean money is not endless. The business I work in central and local government they have their budgets slashed every year. Yes, everyone can find a bit from somewhere, there's always a bit of deadwood somewhere, there's always a process you can change. But you do get to a point where you, you can't do anything else, and the money just isn't sitting in the bank anymore. And my concern is that I think over the years we had an awful lot of assets, they've been sold off, I presume the money's now been used to run the organisation, fine, but it's going to run out sometime.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: If there's nothing else to sell off, like property, we had an awful lot of property that had been left to us or we didn't, or we bought or whatever over the years. If that's all gone there is nothing else to sell, you've sold the 'family silver', for the right reasons.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Because we shouldn't be sitting on three hundred properties or whatever, we weren't a property company. Mm, but then, then what are you going to do? So, you know, do you, you know, are they in negotiations of thinking about, 'Well what is the art of the possible'? I'm using words that I use at work but, no, what is this, if we really thought ridiculously what could we do? And, and I

don't know if they are, I hope they are. But my real concern is that perhaps they're not, perhaps they're desperately trying to keep it going well.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: But I don't know, maybe, maybe it, maybe it shouldn't be there for the future if it can't survive. Maybe it should take the best of what it's got and do that with someone else.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: I don't know. Time will tell.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[GG]: It will be fascinating to revisit in five years and see where we are.

[JH]: Yes. And what would you say is your most treasured memory of working with the WRVS?

[GG]: Oh goodness me, I think two, and they're both to do with The Queen. The Queen came to the WRVS' Garden Party at Milton Hill, and it was the most appalling weather, it rained and it rained and it rained, and we were going to be presented to The Queen. Big deal, really excited, posh frock, posh hat, my hat got so wet it collapsed and I had to put it in the bin.

[JH]: [Laughing]

[GG]: Before The Queen came, and I was mortified that I had, one I was soaking wet, but also I had to see The Queen without a hat on. That was quite, that was a sort of funny, but lovely moment.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: Because I still got to meet The Queen and we had a fabulous day. I also then had the, the absolute joy of taking a group of volunteers to The Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. And Gerry Burton was still there at the time, so Gerry kindly arranged to host lunch for them at a club in

London, which they, and they were so fussed over, they were absolutely, and they were adorable women, they were so lovely, and they were so funny. Mm, but they were also so excited, you know.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And it was a glorious day and we went and, as always your feet hurt because you've got the wrong shoes on but my hat didn't blow away that day. And we were waiting to be presented and the equerry come across and said 'Oh, you know, when we come would you like to bring your group out and The Queen will stop and talk to you as a group', and, you know. And there was one lovely lady there and as she bobbed to courtesy to The Queen her hat fell off, and The Queen picked it up, and this woman has probably dined out on it that The Queen picked her hat up. And The Queen did it with this most gracious smile.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And gave it back to the lady, put it on, 'Thank you Ma'am', and the conversation carried on, and it was just absolutely lovely.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And it, it meant to me we, we probably had in ages, oh goodness me, hundreds and hundreds of years of age experiences with this group of ladies, and The Queen. Mm, and, and it, a fantastic anticipation of meeting The Queen, and this, this joy at being at the garden party, and the weather. And the, and the other thing, actually being honoured to be there and then this sort of like funny escapade that happened that sort of welded the whole thing in our minds forever. Mm, it was just absolutely brilliant, and it was, yes because my first thought was 'Oh no, her hat's come off', you know, and then I thought 'Oh how brilliant, she'll never forget this day'.

[JH]: Yes. No.

[GG]: And, and it was absolutely lovely. And I think that, to me was, just talking to them and hearing their moans as well. And they weren't angels and they, you know, they didn't want to be put on a pedestal, but they had all got extraordinary stories, they had all got funny things, they'd all got tragic things, and they'd all given so many years of service, not only to WRVS but other charities as well,

and they were just genuinely really good fun to be with. And I came home after that day feeling totally inadequate really.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: They were just such fun. And they were probably all at least, oh, at least twenty years older than me if not more, some of them were more, and they held up far better than I did during a hot day in the wrong shoes.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: So yes, I suppose in a way that kind of encapsulates it because it wrapped up, and I suppose the other thing that really sticks in my mind is that I worked on Princess Diana's funeral.

[01:50:03]

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And I was there in The Mall for two or three days. I was there the night before the actual funeral, again it rained. And we did wear uniform and wet woollen uniforms are not much fun. Mm, and then we went back afterwards, and in fact my husband came as well to clear all the flowers.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And it was just the most overwhelming thing. By the time we got to the original first flowers they were completely liquid, because, you know, they must have been there for a while. But we, we tried to save all the labels.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: We tried to save all the things that had been left there, there were toys, there were bottles of champagne, there were gold chains, I mean I can't tell you the things that had been left as gifts. Mm, and I was working at Kensington Palace for my bit of clearing up, and obviously taking anything we could back to the head office in, in London to, to tidy up and make, all the silk flowers make into

arrangements and what teddy bears hadn't been melted on candles were, you know, sort of cleaned up and sent away to places. And I suppose what just sort of overwhelmed you was the stupidity of some of the things that happened. You know, you'd say 'We're out of bin liners' and a liveried footman would bring you a bag of bin liners. And you thought 'This is crazy, this is just, it's like something out of an *Alice in Wonderland* Mad Hatter's Tea Party film, it's crazy. Because I'm here smothered in gunk, you know, and there's a liveried footman bringing me bin liners, you know. And then it started to get a little bit mawkish because you'd then get the ladies that wanted to be seen, the sort of the slow mos tottering on their impossible high Jimmy Choo's, with these magnificent arrangements of flowers, and it, just to be seen.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: Which wasn't particularly nice. Mm, and, and, but again people watching, it was, it was fascinating. So yes, I suppose that sticks with you as well that, you know. I can remember my son waking up and going, because my son used to go 'Gilli, Gilli some, someone important's died'. And I put the, you know, the television on and I thought 'Oh crikey, we're going to be busy', and then it kicked in.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: And we were busy, you know, and I wasn't a major organiser, I, I was just a doozer.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: But Heaven's above we worked flat out for days. And it was the most amazing experience. Mm, I don't think it will ever happen again.

[JH]: No.

[GG]: I'm not saying it was right, I think there was an awful lot of overreaction to it. I do remember being there the day The Queen came back from Balmoral with the boys because I was actually driving past the front of, of Buckingham Palace as she pulled in. And they had got it very wrong, and thank goodness she came back when she did. And I remember a reporter jumping on the bonnet of my car, because it had WRVS logos on.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And saying 'I want to interview you', and I was driving a car. I thought, I said 'Get off the car', you know, 'you're going to get squashed', you know. I said 'If you want to talk to us, we're down...', we were down by St. James' Park. I said 'Come down and see us there, we're down there, we'll talk to you down there'. Mm, and he was just a very young over enthusiastic cub reporter I think, you know, who thought it was some sort of official looking car and leapt on the bonnet. 'Oh for goodness sake, here we go', that would be good paperwork wouldn't it, run over a reporter.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: But yes, you know, we had fantastic relationships the, the 'Sally Army' were there, they were brilliant, the police, you know, the police horses were nicking sort of things, like if you had a bag of crisps suddenly a big head would come over and nick the bag of crisps out of your hand. So we, it sounds awful, we actually had some really nice times and met some lovely people. But it was very, very emotional, and, you know, afterwards it was almost like you'd been through sort of a, a, a, an accident I suppose.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: You were absolutely fine because the adrenaline kept you going and you kept going, kept going. And then when you actually stopped you, you felt wonky.

[JH]: Yes.

[GG]: You didn't feel ill, but you, it really hit you. You thought 'Goodness, I think I've just witnessed something very extraordinary', and had a minute part in, in, in being there. It was just the most peculiar feeling. Mm, but yes, so I suppose it's been quite an interesting journey with WRVS so far.

[JH]: Mm.

[GG]: And it's, it's still got a ways to go hopefully.

