

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Transcript

Title Page

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Title: Mrs

Interviewee's Forenames: Jenny

Gender: F

Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:

Volunteer and Employee, Cirencester,
Gloucestershire, 1991-2015

Volunteer Driver

Emergency Services

Service Manger Meals-on-Wheels

Service manager Hospital Shop

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Interviewer's Notes:

Jenny Hincks (JH) talks about her time as WRVS and Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) volunteer from c1991 to 2015. This includes being an unofficial and official WRVS volunteer as a Driver, Meals-on-Wheels (MOW) deliverer and Emergency Services (ES) volunteer. JH then worked for the Charity from 1996 to 2011 as a MOW Manager and then a Hospital Services Manager. She concludes with her thoughts on how RVS has changed over the years, where its place in society is today, its future and what her most memorable moment is.

[Start of track]

[JENNIFER HUNT [JH] This is Jennifer Hunt with Jenny Hincks on the 27th of April 2015 at her home in Cirencester. Jenny would you just like to introduce yourself?

[JENNY HINCKS [JH] My name is Jenny Hincks, I am fifty eight years old. I am married. I have two children and two grandchildren and I've worked for the WRVS for just under twenty years.

[JH] And why did you join WRVS?

[JH] I joined WRVS firstly as a volunteer, I did Dial a Ride and the Lunch Clubs. Then in 1996 I became a Meals-on-Wheels Organiser and Manager. And then in 1997 I became the Manager of a shop at Cirencester hospital, again managed by the WRVS.

[JH] And when did you join as a volunteer?

[JH] I was an unofficial volunteer until 1991 and then I joined officially on the 12th February 1991.

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

[JH] Because I'd become an unofficial volunteer for quite some time before I joined, I was very aware of the origins of the WRVS, or WVS as it was then. And obviously as I then became involved with it in a, in a work, professional capacity, with working for them, I obviously learnt more about the history and what different aspects of WRVS, 'cos it has evolved over the last twenty odd years that I've been, been a vol..., official volunteer. So it's, and of course it's changing again.

[JH] And what are your earliest memories of WRVS?

[JH] Meals-on-Wheels, putting this big, heavy, heavy crate, metal, insulated crate, into the back of a car and taking it to different people, that's the first thing I did. My husband used to drive the car and I used to just get in and out of the car, take it to people. And my earliest memory is probably the people, the elderly people who we took the meals to, the fact that quite often we were the only people they saw from day to day, and we were just welcomed, even if it was only for those few

minutes that we were there. We were, you know, they'd tell us all about their day before or whatever.

[JH] And what was a typical Meals-on-Wheels round like?

[JH] Because we're quite a rural area here, it could be up to twenty miles a day, we would go from some, somewhere locally in the town, which is obviously quite quick, and then we'd go out to the villages, 'cos again they may not have no bus service so they, they were the only ones we saw. So there was never a routine day, it was all, always different.

[JH] And how many meals were you delivering each time?

[JH] Anything from ten to thirty each time. And then when it obviously got, as WRVS got more involved with the County Council the meals, amount of meals we delivered got more.

[JH] And you said your husband drove you?

[JH] He did.

[JH] Was that your own car that you went in?

[JH] In my own car, yeah. Yeah. I never had a WRVS car, we didn't have those at the beginning. And my children, as my children got bigger my daughter became a member of the WRVS and my husband was a member of the WRVS, we all joined at the same time. And she used to help if, if my husband couldn't drive, I drove her and she helped deliver the meals so we have been with the WRVS for a long time.

[JH] Uhhh. And how often did you go out on Meals-on-Wheels then?

[JH] Every day, well at the beginning I went out once a week, as a volunteer.

[JH] Uhhh.

[JH] But then when I became the Manager of the Meals-on-Wheels in 1996 I went out every day, because sometimes there was never a volunteer available, or we had extra people, they might phone us up in the morning and they, they didn't have a, a round, you know, it's a different round, 'cos if it was a one off meal, I would take it out just as a one off meal. So I went out every day, even on Sunday.

[JH] And when you were a volunteer for Meals-on-Wheels what sort of meals were you delivering?

[JH] It was very simple then, it was very much the meat and two veg. There wasn't many choices you had what, unless you were a vegetarian, which there wasn't that many vegetarians in those days. So it was meat and two veg.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] And a pudding of some sort, but different every day.

[JH] And who cooked the meals?

[JH] We had a centre in Cirencester that they used to cook all the meals, and it was a central place that everybody converged on at half past eleven we'd pick out boxes and take them off to where we had to take them.

[00:05:11]

[JH] And did you meet other volunteers when from WRVS?

[JH] Yes, 'cos we all met at the same time, when we were doing Meals-on-Wheels. I mean when I was a Manager obviously I, you know, I met them every day, so it was a seven, it started off as a five day, but by the time I left it was, it was seven days a week. So I met them every day, [laughs].

[JH] And when you were an unofficial volunteer, were there any other services you got involved with?

[JH] I used to take people that, we call it now a Befriending Service, it wasn't called that. A lady that had partial sight and I used to take her shopping. I used to take books, which again doesn't happen anymore. We used to take books round to people who were housebound. I've done lots of things, I can't remember all of them, [laughs].

[JH] So when you did books, that was Books-on-Wheels from ...

[JH] It was the equivalent to Books-on-Wheels but it literally, it, we used to go to the library, the lady that I was particularly then used to say what they wanted and then I used to go into the library, pick a selection of books up, put them in my handbag and walk to the, to the house, 'cos it was local to Cirencester.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] I never did outside Cirencester for that.

[JH] And was it just the one person you were delivering to?

[JH] No, I had one lady I used to take shopping every week, and I had three ladies, er, for the books. And they were invariably Agatha Christie or romantic story books.

[JH] Ummm.

[JH] We didn't, we had adventurous.

[JH] And did you finally start doing other things for them, apart from delivering books?

[JH] Yeah. With the lady with the shopping I did because she was partially sighted. We used to take her to get her pension. We used to, in the summer when it was nice, we used to, the children, my children were small so she used to sometimes come to the park with us for, it was, it wasn't, we, we became friends rather, as well as, obviously I was helping her in other ways as a, a volunteer.

[JH] Yeah. And why did you have to join officially in 1991?

[JH] It was policy then, whether it was policy before I truthfully don't know, but it was policy then that if you were a volunteer you had to officially join, and I did. And not only did I do it, my husband and my daughter did it at the same time, because we were unofficial volunteers by then.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] 'Cos my daughter volunteered, 'cos then she was fourteen, fifteen then, so she could join, because they, they also had age groups then. At first it was, you know.

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] There wasn't an official age group, whatever, but, then it became that you had to be fourteen, but she was already gone fourteen by the time, you know, it was official.

[JH] **Yeah. And did you carry on doing Meals-on-Wheels?**

[JH] Yes I did, I continued, again we all did, until 1996 when I was asked to take over the manager's job of Meals-on-Wheels.

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] So I, I still became a volunteer, I also did emergency by then. I was still one of the emergency volunteers for the WRVS then by that time, so though I was not a volunteer 'cos I was a paid employee.

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] I was still a volunteer in the Emergency Services.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] So a little bit of both.

[JH] **And you were also a volunteer driver for the..**

[JH] Yes, yes.

[JH] **WRVS?**

[JH] Yeah. I was, yes, I forgot about that.

[JH] **And why did you become a volunteer driver?**

[JH] Because I'd done it unofficially and it just, I just continued doing it. It was just one of those things, you just continued to do, but, you know, obviously because you were an official volunteer didn't stop you doing the job you were doing. Again, my, my husband and my daughter were in, they did it.

[JH] **And what was involved with being a volunteer driver?**

[JH] It was what we now call the 'Dial a Ride'.

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] You would pick them up from their house, take them shopping, hospitals, dentists, doctors, and then pick them up afterwards and then take them back to where they were. It was, it was interesting, I enjoyed my time.

[JH] **And can you tell me about the people who you used to drive?**

[JH] Who use to, or I used to drive for?

[JH] **You used to do, give lifts to?**

[JH] Oh, they ranged from, I think the oldest one I can remember was ninety six, and she was a very active ninety six. She had a Zimmer, but she was a very active ninety six. And we used to leave her in town for about three hours, 'cos she used to just go once week and it took her three hours to do it. We used to have elderly gentlemen we used to take to the doctors or the chiropodist or, or

the library. I, it, it was mostly elderly people in those days, not many young ones, but they all had disabilities or they were elderly.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] You know, wheelchair users, something like that.

[00:10:23]

[JH] And is the service still going, you said it's 'Dial a Ride'?

[JH] It's 'Dial a Ride', yeah. It's 'Dial Ride' now the Cirencester's Voluntary Service are running it now because they took over from the WRVS but I still volunteer for the..

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] For the Cirencester Volunteer Service, so I'm still volunteering in, in a roundabout way for.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] For the same people, but in a...

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] In a different capacity, because again I think that, and I'm still an Emergency Services volunteer.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] For the WRVS.

[JH] Yeah. And when you started as an Emergency Services volunteer did you have any training?

[JH] Long time ago. Yes, yes I did, we have training now obviously, every, every year, I'm doing mine next week. We were taught how to light this huge cooker, I can't think of another word, big cooker it was with a chimney on.

[JH] **Oh, erm, a soya, was it a soya boiler or a trench cooker?**

[JH] I don't know, it was a big cooker. It was about that big and you used to, you have to put earth around it to stop it catching fire.

[JH] **Oh that will be a trench.**

[JH] Is it, I don't know. I don't know what it was called. We got learnt how to do that, we got learnt first aid. We, we were learnt to make sandwiches, [laughs], strange as it seems, and a cup of tea, and how to make a cup of tea from nothing at all, you know, you've got a gas stove and a, you know, I never did it, but I was shown how to make a, use a tin can and a pair of pliers to pick it up out of the...

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] Fire. Because although it was, probably health and safety wouldn't allow it now but, you know, if you, if all else fails and you've got a set, a heat source and a can and a pair of pliers you could boil a cup of tea.

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] I've never tried it but..

[JH] **No.**

[JH] I got taught how to do it, but it was very basic. It was very basic training in those days, you know, how to, somebody got burnt, somebody got cut, broken arms, broken bones.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] Suffered from exposure, because when it was first started, of course, it was very much an open air thing. Now it's very much a, in a, in a protected environment now so it's completely different, of course to when I first started. I have been called out three or four times, one to an unexploded bomb site where I had, we had to take all the people from their houses around it into a centre, 'cos there was an unexploded, world war two unexploded bomb. I helped with the flooding, when the, the big floods, 2007, where we had to keep people safe and feed them, so obviously they couldn't go back to their, their homes.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] So, yeah, I, I've had a few but that's again as a volunteer. So it's gone from learning how to build a fire from scratch to, [laughs], just to, you know, just taking people to a place of safety.

[JH] **Yeah. And running a Rest Centre?**

[JH] Yeah. And running a Rest Centre, yeah.

[JH] **And who gave you the training, was it...**

[JH] Oh it was, the lady who gave me the training, so long ago it was, she used to wear the green uniform. But we never did that when I, we never wore it but she did. And she used to have this hat perched on the top of her head and she, she said, she, she just told us the basics, you know, this is what you do in an emergency. They didn't have rest places to go, they used to have tents and they used to bring the tents along and put them outside, so, it's a long time ago, but I must admit I've never used one of those. But I'd probably, with a bit of, bit of being told again, I'd probably be able to do it, but now you wouldn't be allowed to do it.

[JH] **No.**

[JH] It would explode, [laughs].

[JH] **And have you helped as part of the Emergency Service team with any events that weren't emergencies?**

[JH] No, no I've only ever worked in emergencies. I've never been asked to do it, I've just been asked to, as an accredited volunteer.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] You know, to, to do Emergencies.

[JH] **And how do you feel when you had to gone on an emergency?**

[JH] It's very tiring, it, it's a long day, or night, as it was, once I went. But it's very satisfying to know that you've, you know, you've provided, even if it's only a simple case of a cup of tea and a, and, and a sandwich for somebody who, who sometimes can be there for a long time. And reassurance to know that they're not there on their own, if they want to talk to somebody, you know, you sit there and talk to them for five minutes and they quite often, especially the elderly, are worried about 'cos their, their cats, they couldn't take their cats with them.

[00:15:23]

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] You know, where is she or he, or, and, you know, you can reassure them that they've been taken to the RSPCA or wherever the...

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] The, the place is. So it is, it's very, very satisfying to know that you've helped them. As I say it's tiring, but it's nice to think, you know, you've reassured them that it's not the end of the world, you know.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] They're not on their own and, and, and children are looked after so, you know, sometimes they can be a bit scared of different things but yes, it's, it's very good.

[JH] And what equipment did you have?

[JH] [Laughs]. No, I got no equipment at all, I am now given a list of things for me to take, you know, pen, pencil, torch, but everything else now is provided, you get this box and everything's in there, so actually I don't have any, anything to take, you know, any equipment at all, you just go there and they supply the, whatever you need.

[JH] Ummm.

[JH] So it's probably easier 'cos just in case you forget it, or you're out when you get the phone call, 'cos I have known people that have been out on the, you know, coming home from the shopping and they've, you know, said, 'you've got, can you come?' They've dumped the shopping and just driven off so. But no I don't, I don't have anything to take with me.

[JH] And then, as you said, you, in 1996 you became Manager for Meals-on-Wheels?

[JH] I did.

[JH] And how did you become the Manager?

[JH] The lady who did it before, done it before me retired after many, many years, so everybody knew her, and 'cos I knew her as well 'cos I'd been a volunteer. And I was asked by the Regional Manager, the Gloucestershire Manager, 'would I consider taking the job on?' So I did, after about two days training I had to do it. But then, of course, I knew most of the, the workings because I did it as a volunteer. And I, I was, and I just took it over and went on, 'cos basically what I was doing, it just meant that I had to do a lot more paperwork.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] A lot more paperwork, and do the bills and things, course now it's all done centrally, when I did, was doing it you had to send out the bill to every person, every week. And then the driver had to pick the money up or the cheque or whatever, every week. It was a lot more paperwork and logistics involved than it is now.

[JH] Do you remember how much a meal cost?

[JH] Oh, oh it was less than a pound, oh when I left it was only about one pound thirty, [laughs]. What was it, really cheap, about ninety, ninety odd, 96p or something like that, it was less than a pound.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] 'Cos I quite often had bills for about seven pounds something, so I always, I, I remember that. The, but you, you did use to get paid for your petrol as a volunteer. It, but, yes, it was, it was good, it was very cheap. I think it's about ninety, I think it's less than a pound, I think it went up when I left about one pound thirty. But it was a meal, it was hot and they appreciated it so much. You know, people, as I say, who never saw anybody from one end of the day, just to have a hot meal, you know, it's brought to them in their house, they just appreciated it, and it was, it was nice for me to walk out that door thinking, 'right, I've spoken to them, they're alright', you know, 'till tomorrow', you know, and I always, you know, used to say 'see you tomorrow', or whatever and, but they really did use to appreciate it. 'Cos basic meals were hot and filling, which is the more important bit.

[JH] Yes. And how many volunteers did you have?

[JH] On the Meals-on-Wheels I think there was about eighty for the Meals-on-Wheels, 'cos we had quite a diverse, I think we had about sixteen or eighteen rounds to do, so quite a few volunteers of that. But they were all good, and they used to do a lot more than they should have done, you know, very, very nice and, you know if you, if they came back and saw somebody couldn't turn up, they'd say, 'right put it', you know, 'I'll come back and pick it up and take it to them and do the second round', or, or whatever, so yes, the volunteers are very good like that.

[00:20:23]

[JH] And which areas in Gloucestershire were they covering?

[JH] Just the, just Cirencester and all the little villages around.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] I think the most, furthest away would have been South Cerney, which is about four or five miles away, Bagendon's probably about seven or eight. But of course it wasn't just going to Bagendon, it was the houses they went round. I think I used to do about thirty miles a day, you know, quite often 'cos it was, the, you know up hill and down dale type thing.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] I think that's quite old.

[JH] And how did you manage your volunteers?

[JH] Well, they were all very good. It was very much a case of, as I did with any volunteer that you should do, you know, you, you asked them and you requested rather than demanded them to do things, 'cos if you demanded they wouldn't do it. And but they, they did it themselves, you know, they were, they were so dedicated to what they did that it was, you managed them in a overseeing manner, rather than, you know, telling them what they were doing, you know, they, they had got, they were so used to their round and they used to come back and say, 'oh Mrs So and So's in hospital so don't, don't take a meal to that tomorrow', or something, 'cos they knew them by name.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] Because they'd been doing it for a long time. And even the, the new ones, when I left, we, we never lost many volunteers, so they knew, they knew all, all their customers and, and by name, you know, and say, 'oh, she's not very well, they've had to get the doctor out to her', and you get, you know, even if you didn't go regularly to them, you got to know them as people as well so.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] I didn't really manage them, I just sort of looked after them and made sure they'd got what they needed to ..

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] Do the round. Because, as I say, they did it long before I got there, and some of them were still there when I left, so, some of them left because of their age and things but, or they lost their licences 'cos of their age or something, but Lauren was still there when I left. So, so you didn't sort of, you just let them get on with it.

[JH] **Uhhh. And as a manager you were a, a sort of member of staff?**

[JH] Yes, I was a member of staff.

[JH] **Wasn't you? Yes.**

[JH] Yes.

[JH] **And did Meals-on-Wheels change at all?**

[JH] It did, when I, when I first started, as I said, it was basically you had to, each week you sent out a, a piece of paper, well a piece of paper with how much they owed on it, some paid it every day, 'cos it used to be, 'but I'll pay it every day', or you paid it once a week. By the time I left they were paying it, you had to pay it once a week, all by, through the bank, most of them paid by cheque. But you very, you, I don't, can't think of anybody that actually picked it up every day anymore, but it used to be every day most of them, but by the end it was once a week or once a month, but mostly it was once a week. So it changed quite drastically 'cos it meant that I didn't have to go to the bank every day to bank the money.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] I only had to bank it in once a week, or once a month, but mostly once a week. And we used to, we used to have an office in town that I used to take the money to and then have it checked and then we used to, I used to go to bank it, 'cos we used to do it in the office, we had an office then.

[JH] **And what was the office like in town?**

[JH] It was a room about the, about the size of this room.

[JH] Ummm.

[JH] And there was three people in it, continually, and then on a Thursday when we did the money, there was an extra two people. And we had some desks in there, because I never worked from the office, I actually worked from home, I always did. But once a week I had to do the money and check the books and everything and they used to check that the money, rather than just me check it somebody else had to check it. And then I, we used to take it to the bank, so it was a very small room, up two flights of stairs, right in the attic, but, yes, it was, it was very good because down below used to be the [inaud] [00:24:45] for Volunteer Service, and then we used to have it upstairs and then they took over, 'cos we stopped having an office when I was working at the hospital. Because obviously I went from working Meals-on-Wheels to working at the hospital.

[JH] Ummm. And why did you move to the hospital?

[00:25:02]

[JH] The lady that left the hospital, the Manager did, she decided to retire and, if I remember correctly, it was her husband's illness and she retired on that day, she told them on that day. So I went up there to do it for two weeks, just as a, while I was being a Manager of the Meals-on-Wheels. And then I decided that I couldn't do both jobs, it was too much for me to do both jobs, so I stopped the Meals-on-Wheels 'cos there, there was somebody who, who was quite good that took it over, another Jenny took it over, and I went up to the, to the hospital full time then. I had between sixty four, when I first started I had sixty four volunteers, and all we did was run the shop and take a trolley round the ward twice a week. By the time I left, and I did it for nearly twenty years, I had eighty four volunteers and I had, we were doing the ward round every day, twice a day, once in the morning with the newspapers and once in the afternoon with just sandwiches and, you know, biscuits and drinks and things. We had, we also did lots of other things as well which was really interesting, I enjoyed my, my time at the hospital. A lot of them were still there when I left, they were there when I started, because of course then we were in our, in our sort of thirties then, you know, the, and I was very proud that I gave a lot of them their medals, for being there for..

[JH] Yeah. The fifteen years?

[JH] The fifteen..

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] Year medals. I was very honoured, I gave my husband and my daughter their fifteen year medal, 'cos they came with me to work in the, volunteer in the hospital, so they followed me, so I was very proud to have given them their medals as well. I gave two ladies their twenty seven year medals. And I gave one lady who had been doing it since nineteen forty something, I can't remember and she, she's stopped doing it now, but up until about five years ago she was still doing it, and she's in her nineties, she's 97/98, she gave it up now. And I gave her a bar as well, so I had lots of proud moments in, yeah, in my time there, including representing the WRVS at a garden party and meeting The Queen.

[JH] **Was the garden party at Buckingham Palace?**

[JH] It was, and I was one of twelve people that went down there from all over the country. And because I was one of the longest serving volunteers there, I was honoured to be, to meet The Queen, which was a really great honour. But, and it was nice to, you know.

[JH] **And did you wear a uniform for the garden party?**

[JH] No, no we don't have to, we didn't have to, up until about, oh, 1998, we don't have to, we didn't have to wear a uniform.

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] I would have liked to, but, no we just went in our normal dress, very smart dress I might add.

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] But no, I would have liked to have worn them but by then of course the, the, the uniforms were out, you know, don't, anybody, nobody wore a uniform and they'd already been archived by then, 'cos they were so precious because obviously they were originals of..

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] The material was very precious. I did work over at the archive in Devizes?

[JH] **Devizes.**

[JH] Yes, I did that a few times to archive the material that, you know, that was over there. But then it, they stopped doing it for a while because the curator, I can't remember what the gentleman's name was, he, he left and they had to sort of, they closed it for a little while to..

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] I also, with many volunteers, hosted, when it was The Queen's Golden Jubilee, I helped, with many of my volunteers, have a, a tea party for all the people in, in the Cirencester that, that were, you know, elderly people in Cirencester and WRVS, there was, we hosted a, a five hundred people and there was this, the most, most WRVS volunteers made teas and cakes and scones and things like that, as we do.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] As all volunteers at WRVS can always make a cup of tea and make a sandwich. So, yes, I've had a very varied time with the WRVS.

[JH] **And when you were at the hospital you mentioned the trolley shop?**

[JH] I did.

[JH] **That you had. Were there any other WRVS services that you ran in the hospital?**

[00:30:18]

[JH] They all were, the, the trolley, the shop, the actual shop, which sold teas and coffees and chocolates and toiletries for the patients, and Christmas cards for The League of Friends, because obviously we didn't provide Christmas cards at WRVS, it didn't then. So The League of Friends, we

used to sell it for them. Then we used to, as I say, then we had the trolley shop go from twice a week to five times every day apart from Saturday and Sunday. In the morning we used to take newspapers up and in the afternoon we used to take the trolley round, and they were all run by the WRVS. And, and they, WRVS don't run them anymore, they're, it's the hospital runs them now, but when I was there it was the WRVS. But we used to sell, oh varied things from a bar of chocolate to exercise bands for the physio department and that sort of thing, you know, and if a patient wanted something quite often we could get it for them, and we used to, it, we just run it for that, yeah, for that length of time.

[JH] And what did you do with the profits that the hospital shop?

[JH] WRVS, er WRVS, obviously my, I don't know, but all the profits went to the hospital, we provided, over the years, and I'm trying to, we provided refitting three ward base rooms. Provided all the, one year provided all the trolleys in casualty. Another year we provided all the chairs in the outpatients. Another year, I think we've done three day rooms, one year we prevent, we provided chairs for the physio, for the people who have trouble getting in and out of chairs, provided that. We provided defibrillators, oh I can't remember all the things we, we provided over the years. As many, you know, whatever the hospital wanted..

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] If we had the money for it they got it. And each year I presented it to them so we've done equipment for the x-ray, I'm trying to think of all the departments in, but that sort of thing, so we always, you know, all the profits went to the hospital. And we provided a, a trolley for books, for the, because the book service used to be done by the Red Cross and so we bought them a new trolley to put the books on.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] To take it round. We did things for the, the chapel, because they wanted, er, it was stuff in the chapel. Oh many a thing, I, probably if I looked back on my photographs I could tell you but, 'cos I've got rather a lot of photographs.

[JH] Yeah. And what happened to your role as the hospital Manager?

[JH] You mean when I finished?

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] I gave it up due to the fact that my husband's got Parkinson's and I found that my role as, as carer became more involved and, and I just couldn't do both jobs. And I couldn't do the job justice, and I felt that I would, would be letting the, my volunteers down by not doing the job as good as I could have done, so I gave up to become my husband's full time carer.

[JH] **And did you still stay in touch with WRVS?**

[JH] Oh I still see my ladies, I check on them, all, around the town, 'cos obviously they're down, and obviously I'm an emergency volunteer, so again I, I do that.

[JH] **Yes.**

[JH] I don't do much else for the WRVS, pure and simply because I just don't have the time as I've got other things I'm involved in now, and I'm not involved at the hospital.

[JH] **No.**

[JH] Anymore.

[JH] **And do you remember what year it was when you stepped down from the hospital?**

[JH] 2011. I'm pretty sure it was 2011, it was about three, four years ago that ...

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] I stepped down. But I felt it was the time to go.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] Because it, you know, I, I couldn't do my job justice, and nor, and provide a, a good care for my husband, so.

[JH] And did you feel that WRVS had changed significantly since..

[JH] Yes.

[JH] You first started?

[JH] Yes. When I first started there was a lot more volunteers, there was, and it, as I got through the years I found it more and more difficult to get volunteers because there was lots of other charities. And I also found that when we, they used to diverse quite often, I'd get used to doing one thing and they'd change it. And, because when we used to, first started it, we used to have the hospitals, we used to have the Lunch Clubs, we used to have the Book Clubs, we used to have the WRVS, the, the Dial a Ride.

[00:35:30]

[JH] Ummm.

[JH] The transport. And then it changed that it was very much, the Lunch Clubs all closed, and then it was just the hospitals, and now it's getting, evolved into the fact that now it's kind of got the Home from Hospitals, the Befriending, the Book Club still is going, but it's changed so much over the years, and of course it's changed its name, again.

[JH] Ummm.

[JH] Because when I first started it was the Women's Voluntary Service, although there was a lot of men, including my husband, but they were still called that, and then it got changed to the, what was it, the..

[JH] It was WRVS.

[JH] RVS, then it was the WVS wasn't it, it was WVS then it's WRVS and then now it's the RVS, yeah.

[JH] **Royal, Royal Voluntary Service, yeah.**

[JH] And of course I was part of, when it became the Royal Voluntary Service I, er, 'cos I was there then so, I've been doing it a long time

[JH] **Uhhh.**

[JH] And I will continue to be a member.

[JH] **And in 2004 as well they had quite a big change with the colours and..**

[JH] Yes, they did.

[JH] **Branding, what did you think about that?**

[JH] Well, because I was working for them I was very involved with the, you know, 'what do you think of this idea', and we went through quite a few changes before they picked the one they've got now, which I, I do like. We, once upon a time, it was gonna be purple and orange and green, so it's changed a lot. But, yes, because I was involved in it.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] I had, I had no problems with it. Some of my volunteers did because they said, 'why change it?' Which I understand because they'd been doing it with the green, erm, and because of the work with the shop, it was branding the shop a different thing but that was easy done. And the uniform, you know, the tabards had to change because they were green with WRVS written on them.

[JH] **Yeah.**

[JH] And of course they had to change to the, to the, the purple so, so yes, I didn't mind it. I don't know why they had to drop the Women's Royal Voluntary Service because there was many a

men in, in the service and none of them objected to being called a Women's Royal Voluntary Service, because that's what it was always called.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] So they, even the men didn't understand why it had to change, but I understand it had to change and, and I could see that, you know, that was how it goes. But they, you know, they could never understand that.

[JH] And...

[JH] I wasn't around when they changed it from the, it was before my time that the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, 'cos the 'Royal' bit came in.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] 'Cos obviously that was before I started, so, working, so.

[JH] And have there been any other changes to WRVS?

[JH] Well they do a lot more Emergency Services than they used to. I know that sounds silly because we always were involved with emergencies, but now it's a lot more, where there used to be react to emergencies as and when, and it was just the Women's Voluntary Service, of course now they work in partnership with the councils and the Red Cross and all those things, so that's changed significantly. When I first started it was just the WRVS phoning me up and saying, 'can you come along to', wherever. And we, we found a hole or something, where now it's much more structured and, of course, the county council is the one that, er, that coordinates it all now, where, of course, it was just the WRVS or the Royal, the Red Cross, or St. John's, now they're all in partnership, so that's changed a lot. But for the good, because it's, it means that the, the, the help can get to the right place, the right time, very quickly and you're all saying, you're all doing and saying exactly the same thing, you know, you, you don't have to just, we, when we used to do it all we used to supply was tea and sandwiches in a room.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] And that was it. Now, you know, there's, there's the, the RSPCA looking after the animals, the, the nurse, you know the Red Cross doing the medical side of it so that WRVS are not just tea and sandwiches, they do the, the, the looking after as well, which, so that's changed, which I, I, I find a lot better.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] But I do miss actually the rushing around, you know, you just got called out and I had to go down to the local, erm, 'cos it was always just local.

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] You didn't get called to, to Cheltenham or Gloucester or wherever, you stayed in Cirencester because that's where your office was and that's where you stayed. So I, in, you know, and you, so now you, you can go anywhere in the county, so long as you're in Gloucestershire. You know I have gone over into Wiltshire, well 'cos they asked for help in Wiltshire. But, different, and we move with the times.

[00:40:29]

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

[JH] Only the fact that the volunteers are the centre of the WRVS. Without my volunteers that I've had over the years, both friends that were volunteering with me or were volunteers as, as part of my job, I've got to admit I have met some wonderful people and they are dedicated to the WRVS, and what they do, they do a hundred and ten percent, and I know that I wouldn't have done half of the things I've done without those volunteers.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] Whether I count myself as a volunteer, or as an, as, as a Manager, without those volunteers it wouldn't, the WRVS wouldn't exist. And, and I think, you know, they're, those are the people we've got thank.

[JH] We've talked about the changes that have happened to WRVS while you've been involved, what was the biggest change?

[JH] I don't know, I don't think there's any one big change that I could say, it's evolved.

[JH] Ummm.

[JH] And I've evolved with it, so I think that, that, the saddest part I found was actually leaving, as I said I, you know, 'cos of the volunteers, and I was sad at leaving but I, I felt that that was the time to leave. But, because I'd been in it a long time, perhaps if I had have been a short time I, it would have different. But because I went, as it changed I, you know, my role changed as well. I can't think there was any one big thing that I think that a change has happened. I say, apart from changing the name and that, but then I was involved with that, so, again it changed, I've, you know, I've changed with it, so. I think the type, the type of volunteer is different as well now, where before we were very, we, the retired volunteer, shall we say. But now we're getting a lot more younger ones that may be doing their Duke of Edinburgh Awards, we had a lot of, we used to have a lot of them at the hospital. We got the people that are looking for work and are using their volunteering as a way of getting into work. We still get retired people, but of course there's people that retire below the retirement age and therefore are, want to do something to keep themselves interested and getting out. We, you get more people now that are, you know, you know, can't, can't find a job but they want to do something. Or you just, have lost their partners and want to be able to be involved because of that, 'cos they want to get out and meet people. So there's a lot, a different variety of volunteers and, when I first started when they were retired people who just wanted to volunteer to, to, you know, to, to get out of the house type of thing, so that has changed, in a nice way.

[JH] And where do you think Royal Voluntary Service's place in society is today?

[JH] I think, I, I think the people in it now it's going to have to take them a while to get used to the name. Because quite often, even now, they'll say 'who are they?' And when you say, 'they are the Women's Royal Voluntary Service', 'ah the WRVS', they'll know instantly, and, and it's recognisable. But I think it just needs people to learn that, that they are the same ones, just with a different name. Especially where people are, on Remembrance Day, there used to, a lot of WRVS members used to lay a wreath, they don't do that anymore now, which is sad really. But, you know,

quite often you'll say, 'it used to be called the WRVS', and they say, 'oh, I know that'. It, it's that perception isn't it?

[JH] Yeah.

[JH] That, the name, they recognise your name and it will take time to recognise a new one. But, I think in society, as I say, people know it, they're just getting used to it.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] But, you know, people remember it if nothing else, erm, for the Meals-on-Wheels and the, and the Lunch Clubs and things like that, especially if they're, they're, you know, they're, they're older. And the young ones they're, 'well my nana used to tell me about that', [laughs].

[00:45:10]

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] I'm an oldie, I'm getting old.

[JH] And what do you think is the future for the Organisation?

[JH] I think because we are getting an aging population we will have more important role, because especially you're now you're doing the Home from Hospitals, because the role of the hospitals are changing. There's very much more a community based ethos, you know, 'take them back to their homes 'cos that's where they're best at', so in that case it, it, as long as it continues along that line and WRVS, and WVS doesn't change the, the way they're doing it again, I think that will, that will grow because they'll need it, because there are more older people, and they will continue to get older of course. And I think the, the way volunteering is changing, as long as they can keep their volunteers then they'll go from strength to strength. As long as I can continue volunteering I shall.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] But, and I do, and I enjoy volunteering, not just for the, the RVS, but for other things.

[JH] And what has been your most memorable moment in your time with WRVS?

[JH] Meeting the volunteers, I, I'll never forget all the volunteers I've met because they've become friends as well. Meeting The Queen, which was another memorable one, I don't suppose I'll ever forget. And actually my role as volunteer for the WRVS was part of the reason I had, I got chosen to run with the Olympic Torch, because I volunteered, I, I'd stopped working by then, but I still volunteered for the Emergency Services and, and because the whole, I do lots of volunteering apart from that, I was shortened to run with The Torch.

[JH] And this was in 2012?

[JH] 12, yeah. So, and my daughter was, my daughter was chosen to, to do it as well, so we were one of the only mother and daughter in England, there was one in Scotland that actually both run with The Torch, I say run, I did not run, I was, I, I had the distinction of being the slowest walking person but.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] My daughter's in a wheelchair, so she walks as fast as the person who is pushing her, but I didn't walk very fast, but I did it, and I think that was one of my.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] But because of my WRVS, yeah.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] WRVS, sorry, RVS isn't it, yeah, so that was, but no I think, I think the volunteers are my proudest achievement. You know, seeing them, and some of them go on from volunteering, do the Duke of Edinburgh Award, coming back to do volunteering work while their children were little.

[JH] Uhmm.

[JH] And then going on to work. So, you know, to think that, you know, just volunteering, it, it, my little bit of volunteering they did got them into work, so that's an achievement in itself, for them as well.

[JH] **Well thank you very much for talking ..**

[JH] Okay.

[JH] **To me today Jenny, and this will make a really good contribution to our Voices of Volunteering Project.**

[JH] I'm not sure...

[00:48:47]

[End of interview]