

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Transcription

Title Page

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Collection Title: Voices of Volunteering

Interviewee's Surname: Kenna

Title: Mrs

Interviewee's Forenames: Judith

Gender: F

Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:

1973-2005 Volunteer, Wirral and Grantham

1985-1990, Meals-on-Wheels Organiser, Wirral

1992-2005, Secretary, Grantham Office

2000-2005, Organiser, Grantham Office

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Interviewer's Notes:

Judith Kenna (JK) talks about her time as a WRVS volunteer from 1972 to 2005, firstly on the Wirral (1972-1990) and then in Grantham (1992-2005). JW discusses her first role in the Hospital Tea Bar in Arrow Park Hospital, Wirral, the Magistrates Tea Bar and also her role as Wirrals Meals on Wheels Organiser. She also discusses her move to Grantham and her role with the WRVS there, discussing the Hostess Scheme in the hospital and then her work on the MOW service, going on to describe her role as Secretary in Grantham Office. In her final comments JK gives her opinions on the organisation and how it has changed over the years.

[JENNIFER HUNT]: This is Jennifer Hunt with Judith Kenna on the twenty- fourth of February 2015 at her home in Grantham. Judith would you just like to introduce yourself?

[JUDITH KERR]: Yes. I first joined WRVS in 1972, I think it was, on the Wirral. And then in 1990 we moved over to Grantham and I joined again here, on the Wirral I was Local Organiser for a while and Meals-on-Wheels organiser and I became District Secretary here and again Meals-on-Wheels Organiser but out of the Grantham office. The Grantham office was responsible for Grantham and the surrounding villages, some of which were as much as twenty miles away. So we were kind of the umbrella for the, for the various villages. And we did Meals-on-Wheels, tea bar at the Magistrates' Court, tea bar at Stocken Prison and we had a clothing department which...

[JH]: Well, why did you join WRVS?

[JK]: [Pause] Do you know I really don't know. My mother had belonged to WVS, but I don't think that that really was a factor. I had had... no I hadn't done it before. I don't know. I mean I think perhaps it was a sort of, I wasn't actually working at the time and I thought 'Well, I may as well be doing something useful'. Then after that I had a village store and post office so obviously I had to drop it for a while, but then I took it up again when I'd, when I'd finished with the post office. And I think, I think everybody needs to have a project. Whether they have more than one project I don't know but it seemed like a useful thing to be doing.

[JH]: How did you find out about WVS on the Wirral, on the Wirral?

[JK]: I knew several people who were involved in one way or another, that's how I found out about it.

[JH]: And you've mentioned that your mother was involved with WVS, what did you know about WRVS before you joined?

[JK]: Very little. I didn't know for example that WRVS did anything much apart from Meals-on-Wheels. And on the Wirral I don't remember what else... Yes, we did hospital tea bar, a Magistrates' Court tea bar and I remember a friend of mine saying 'Oh yes, well, they're a bit short, we've had to go to a Magistrates' Court this morning', but she, she hadn't told the people she was with why she was going to go to the Magistrates' Court. So she said they were terribly impressed until we told

them that we were only going to serve cups of tea. [Laughing] But, and we did, we did a hospital tea bar at Arrowe Park Hospital. I don't think, we had an Emergency Team also. And, but I was never a member of the Emergency Team although I seemed to get roped in often enough but I was never a member of the Emergency Team. But we did, I remember, do you know the football disaster between Sheffield and Liverpool?

[JH]: Hillsborough?

[JK]: That's the one.

[JH]: Mm.

[JK]: I couldn't remember the name, I tried to remember it last night, it was Hillsborough. There were a lot of together sessions for all the people who had been bereaved or in any way affected by it, and all the WRVS branches round about took it in turns to go and, and sort of man the tea bar and keep it open and we were roped in for that. But I don't know why I got roped in but I did. We did, I remember we did that several times we went over there for that. And otherwise it was Meals-on-Wheels.

[JH]: What are your earliest memories of volunteering for WRVS?

[JK]: [Pause] My earliest memory is on my first morning somebody saying to me 'Well, at least we have progressed beyond the days when we used to take out a large container of mince and a large container of rice pudding and every time we went round a corner both of them fell over in the boot of the car', and I think that was probably the thing that made the biggest impression on me because I had visions of it. I think that's my, in my earliest, my earliest recollection of it.

[00:05:26]

But I do remember also being impressed by how desperately alone some of the people we went to were. And so often, I can't remember whether we went every day. Yes, we did, we did a seven day service on the Wirral. And I think I'm right in saying that somebody had died and had left a certain sum of money so that Meals-on-Wheels could provided, be provided seven days a week instead of five. Now she must presumably have left it to the council rather than to WRVS but that I couldn't be

sure about. So we did seven days a week. And we had a number of widows on our volunteer strength and they said they were happy to do it at weekends because weekends were a very difficult time for widows, a very lonely time for widows so to have an objective was a good thing. [Pause]

[JH]: How would you describe a typical Meals-on-Wheels round?

[JK]: [Pause] Well, sometimes it just, you just called wherever you were supposed to go. In those days we had no computers so we on the Wirral we used cards, so everybody had a card for different days. And some days you just delivered to every card on your list and there wasn't a problem. Sometimes you would go and the person you were supposed to be delivering to wasn't there or didn't answer. And in the early days we then had to proceed calling the police or whoever was necessary to say she should be there but she isn't there, she can't go by herself so somebody must have taken her but do we know where, you know, can we find out? And sometimes it was alright and sometimes they were found on the floor. Then that changed and we always had, if anything like that happened we didn't call the police on our own we had to go through, go back to Social Services, and I remember doing it once to a lady who was a really a lovely client, she was very, always very friendly and very pleased to see us and we couldn't get any reply from her, which was unusual. So we reported it to Social Services who did nothing about it and she was there for another twenty-four hours on the floor. And that sticks in your mind, but we had reported it so I'd known it wasn't our fault but nevertheless she was, that's where she was and they didn't pursue it. Difficult to describe a typical day because some days, as I say, was run of the mill, you just delivered the meals, said 'Hello', was everybody alright and went back. Sometimes it wasn't so easy.

[JH]: Where did you collect the meals from?

[JK]: In West Kirby there was a new swimming pool and adjacent complex, library, various other community things and there was a large kitchen and that's where we got the meals from. Then at a later stage they equipped the kitchen at the school so that we'd pick up the meals from there. And to start with we had the very big old heavy metal containers which had red embers in a little drawer in the bottom to keep the thing hot, but latterly we had polystyrene boxes which didn't really keep the meals hot at all.

[JH]: And what sort of food were you providing?

[JK]: Well, it was in, it was, when we went to West Kirby it was cooked from, as far as I knew, from fresh. But when we had the, the special kitchen done then I think all the food was frozen and everything was put in to the foil, foil containers. And we took a pudding and a, and a main course. And it varied. We had complaints if it was salad, 'Not going to keep very healthy on that am I?' some of the men would say. 'What sort of a pudding is this for a man?' I can remember one of the men saying. It was a little, you know, what's the word? Dessert, it's like the ones you buy in the supermarkets, you know, a yoghurt or a caramel or something, 'What sort of a pudding is that for a man?' Well, it's the same sort of pudding as it is for everybody else really. [Laughing] But they liked, they liked their meat and two veg and they liked their steamed pudding or milk pudding.

[00:10:53]

[JH]: Did you have another volunteer who went out delivering the meals with you?

[JK]: We always went in twos. Occasionally at weekends, when we were doing a weekend round because the weekend round was smaller, occasionally at weekends people went on their own but during the week it was always two.

[JH]: And did Meals-on-Wheels on the Wirral change while you were delivering there?

[JK]: Mm, not a lot. We changed, we moved the kitchen but that really was all. But it did change a lot shortly after I left because then it was organised from Wallasey instead of being organised at small places round about it was organised **all** from Wallasey and **all** the cars went out from there. The only difference was that from having always used our own cars we then had a WRVS car and we used that. And then the Local Authority provided us with a van as well so we had a car and a van going out every day so people weren't using their own cars at all.

[JH]: You also mentioned that there was a hospital tea bar that WRVS were involved with on the Wirral?

[JK]: Yes, at, at Arrowe Park. And although I did that when I first started I don't know, I don't know how long we went on doing that, I can't remember, I'm sorry.

[JH]: How would you describe the tea bar at the hospital?

[JK]: Well, I mean it was reasonably well equipped and it was basic, but there wasn't, you know, nothing special about it. To be truthful I can't remember.

[JH]: And were you still on the Wirral when it was the Fiftieth Anniversary of WRVS?

[JK]: Yes, yes.

[JH]: And how did you celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary?

[JK]: [Pause] I think we had a garden party, I think we had a garden party. But I was very lucky then because there was a garden party at Buckingham Palace and the Organisers, most of the Organisers went to that. And people who were Meals-on-Wheels Organisers or who were Organisers of projects had their names I think drawn out, I think we were selected simply by being drawn out of a hat one from each area. And I was very lucky to be selected to go to Number Ten Downing Street. So on a day where London was like a cauldron we had to wear WRVS uniform and present ourselves at Number Ten.

[JH]: Did you meet Margaret Thatcher while you were there?

[JK]: I did.

[JH]: And how did you feel about that experience?

[JK]: Well, it's great to be walking up that staircase with all those, all photographs all the way up of previous Prime Ministers. And I suppose there was a feeling of pride in a way to be one all there in, all there in uniform and, you know, Margaret Thatcher was, she was very flattering and she did say 'I never mind how much money I have to pay to WRVS because I always think of how much money you are saving us'. And only a couple of years after that she had Philip somebody or other.

[JH]: Sir Philip Woodfield I think it was.

[JK]: That's the guy, that's the guy who did a survey of the way WRVS worked and made sure that it was streamlined a bit. But I'm not sure whether that was still under Margaret Thatcher, I can't remember, it might have been John Major but I'm not sure.

[00:15:12]

[JH]: I think it was John Major because it was after '89 I think.

[JK]: Well, maybe his wife, his wife delivered Meals-on-Wheels didn't she and maybe she said 'Hey, there's a heck of a lot of waste here [Laughing] you'd better do something about it'.

[JH]: [Laughing]

[JK]: And indeed there was because it had been set up in 1938 hadn't it and, and over the years it had kind of spread itself, and there was a tremendous amount of paperwork involved which really, well it needed streamlining that's all I'd say. It happens to all organisations if you don't, if you don't reorganise.

[JH]: And you mentioned that you moved to Grantham in about 1990?

[JK]: Well, my husband got, took early retirement and we had lived in Grantham before and he said 'I would like to go back to Grantham', and I wasn't really so very keen to go back to Grantham but in the end we decided that we would because we had one daughter up north and one daughter down south so we were sort of halfway, and Grantham is quite a, quite a good communications point so we came back to Grantham. I determined that I wouldn't join WRVS again because you tend to volunteer for two mornings a week and find that it takes three or four or more, but, but I did.

[JH]: And which services were you involved with in Grantham?

[JK]: Well, first of all I was in, I was involved with the host, what was called then the Hostess Scheme at the hospital, which was a new set-up really to welcome people in to the hospital. It didn't do anything it was just there so there was somebody there just to point them in the right direction or to find them a wheelchair if they needed it or to, you know, provide a welcoming face. But it was a neither, not [Pause] a very challenging project and I think quite a few people found that they, they

weren't busy enough they wanted to do something more. But we did stay there, until the office closed down we did keep going. But WRVS, I have to say, were never terribly interested because it wasn't a trading project so we didn't make any money. And, and we had a major difficulty because it says in the WRVS blurb for possible, for potential volunteers 'You must never be out of pocket as a volunteer'. Well, everybody who's volunteered for anything knows that that's rubbish. But nevertheless they were entitled to their mileage and we had to sort of wring the money out of the hospital, because the hospital has a tremendous number of volunteers and none of the others got their mileage paid but WRVS people did.

[JH]: You were also a Secretary in the Grantham office?

[JK]: In the office, yes.

[JH]: What did that involve?

[JK]: [Pause] The Grantham office. When I volunteered here the Grantham office had been without an Organiser or a Secretary for quite some time because the Organiser I think had retired very quickly because she was ill and they'd brought in somebody as a, as a Secretary who I think had not been a member before so she was working in a, in a vacuum so to speak. And then she left as well and so I was asked would I be the Secretary and I said 'Yes', but I didn't want to be Organiser. And then somebody else volunteered and she, she was made the Organiser. And being Secretary really involved producing the lists for the, for Meals-on-Wheels each day. Contacting the members to make sure that they sent in their reports whenever they were supposed to be sending in their reports and just generally speaking doing this paperwork. Because actually at that time there was quite a lot of paperwork.

[JH]: Where was the Grantham office?

[JK]: [Pause] It was in St Catherine's Road. [Pause] And The WRVS and The Volunteer Bureau and CAB and The Seminarians all worked out of the same pair of houses which had been converted to make the separate offices.

[00:20:00]

[JH]: And how would you describe the building the office was in?

[JK]: Well, it was, I would think it was probably a Victorian building. It was not a terribly convenient building in that it was on four floors. So that when the new laws for disabled people came in it was virtually impossible to convert it, and in fact it has now been completely reconverted in to five separate apartments which they are about to sell off I think. But it, it was a very pleasant office, I will say it was a very pleasant office. And we had an office in the, two, two big rooms, and we had a communal kitchen in the basement. And the office at the back was, was the Clothing Department and the office at the front obviously was the, the office staff were, or the typing and office staff.

[JH]: Did Grantham have a Clothing Store at that time?

[JK]: And that's where it was in, in the back office. We had a number of people who came on a regular basis with the entire family in the spring and the autumn and got them all kitted out. Because I don't think that they had to have any authorisation from Social Services to come, I think they could come entirely un-recommended. But we had a Clothing Department when I was on the Wirral and it wasn't our, it wasn't our office but in the Chester office which also had a Clothing Department. They had a number of quite upmarket people who brought their very nice clothes in. And one lady brought in a very nice designer outfit and the Clothing Organiser at the time decided that really it was a waste and she took it to a shop which recycled clothes. What's, what's the word I'm looking for?

[JH]: Recyclable or charity shop or recycling centre?

[JK]: No, it was, it was more up market than that.

[JH]: Vintage, was it a vintage shop or a...?

[JK]: Well, it was a shop. [Pause] No, it will come back to me later, where they, they, you could take good quality clothes and they would pay you for them and then they resold them. And so she, they took this outfit to this shop, whatever it was, and got, with the money that they got... I mean there was nothing underhand about it at all it was a regular practice. With the money that they got they bought underwear and things which they never had enough of for their clients. But the designer clothing place decided that it was a very nice, it was, it was a very expensive outfit so they put it in

their window and sadly the lady who had given it came past and saw it in their window and knew that she'd given it to WRVS and made the most almighty stink about it. And although there really wasn't anything wrong we were warned that this was not a good idea and we just needed to be a bit more careful. Then, and well, I suppose connected with that when WRVS was a uniform organisation it was found that people who had either finished with their uniform or couldn't get in to it any more or for whatever reason threw their, their uniform away either to a charity shop or a jumble sale or, or wherever. People were picking up the uniform, wearing the uniform and with that authorisation were getting in to people's houses and taking things. So again something to be aware of. But, of course, we don't have an uniform any more. You don't have a uniform any more do you? No.

[JH]: No, no. And when you found that people were using the uniforms when they'd been thrown away was that on the Wirral or...?

[JK]: That was on the Wirral, that was on the Wirral.

[JH]: Yes. And here in Grantham what projects or services were you involved with?

[JK]: Well, we did a, we, a new, a building was converted for the Magistrates' Court in Grantham and an area was set aside for a tea bar, which was supposedly for people who were coming up in court and, and for the staff. And the, the tea bar was equipped at our expense and it had a dishwasher and it had a fridge and it had a freezer and it, you name it it had. And it had a microwave and, you know, it had everything. But having provided all that they then provided a kitchen for the staff so it was cheaper for the staff to bring their own stuff in and use their own kitchen than to come to the WRVS tea bar. So it was never really a terribly successful project except that they did a lot of training days at there and we were asked to put on lunches and we did that, oh, for a long time, and they were very nice I have to say, the lunches were very good. But it wasn't really what we were supposed to be there for.

[00:25:47]

[JH]: And what did you serve at the tea bar in the Magistrates' court?

[JK]: Sandwiches, crisps, tea, coffee, fizzy drinks.

[JH]: And did any profits, were, well, did you make any profits from...?

[JK]: Yes. You're going to say what did we do with the profits from the Magistrates' Court? And I have to tell you that... [Pause] They went back to WRVS, they went back to WRVS. When we had a tea bar at the hospital the profits always went back to the hospital. But I don't think that... [Pause] They went, I'm pretty sure that the prospect, the profits from the tea bar at the Magistrates' Court either went in to community projects, that's possibly what they did, of one kind or another or they went back to WRVS. But I really don't want to be quoted on that because I really don't remember.

[JH]: And how often did you help at the Magistrates' Court tea bar?

[JK]: I didn't help at the Magistrates' Court tea bar except if they were desperate, if they were very short of volunteers. I wasn't on the general rota except that when the Organiser there broke her leg, I think she did, she broke her leg and I did the shopping then for about six, eight weeks but that was my only contact with it.

[JH]: And did you also get involved with the prison tea bar?

[JK]: Yes.

[JH]: And which prison was that?

[JK]: That was Stocken Prison which is down towards Oakham and Stamford area. And we went, we used to go there Wednesdays, was it Wednesdays? Saturdays and Sundays I think. And two people would go and we served chocolate biscuits, crisps, not sandwiches, no fresh food, cups of tea, cups of coffee, fizzy drinks.

[JH]: Did you have to get all the food from a certain caterer for the prison tea bar?

[JK]: I'm pretty sure that the prison ordered it with all the stuff that they ordered. I think we gave them a list of the things that were needed and they ordered, they ordered it. I do remember we ran in to a bit of bother one time because we had a WRVS collecting box which we put out on all the projects that we did just for voluntary donations, and on one occasion somebody forgot to take it in and lock it in the cupboard and it was left on the side and the, the prisoners, the trusted prisoners

who cleaned out, you know, who washed the floor and dusted and all the rest of it were very indignant because they thought it had been left there to tempt them to misbehave. So we had to withdraw that pretty sharpish.

[JH]: Did you just serve visitors at the tea bar?

[JK]: Yes. We, we only served visitors but they could take things back. There used to be roughly, the prisoner could come and then all, the whole family and prisoner would be round a table and whoever came up to the tea bar could get food and, and drink for the prisoners but the prisoner, prisoners were not allowed to come up to the tea bar.

[JH]: And when you went in to the prison was there a process that you had to go through before you got in to the canteen?

[JK]: Yes, yes.

[JH]: And what was that process?

[JK]: There was, there was a, I seem to think there was a kind of a turnstile thing that we had to go through. And I remember at one time we were asked would we mind taking some drugs in so that the dogs could have experience of finding them. So we were given a sealed envelope, I mean we were watched all the time there was no question of any, any, you know, anything funny. We were given a sealed envelope and asked to put it in a pocket or something and then so that the dogs could sniff round and see if they detected it, which they always did. And it was taken off us anyway before we got through to the next doorway.

[00:30:16]

[JH]: And how did you feel about having to go through that process just to get in to the tea bar?

[JK]: Well, it was a prison. It would have been, it would have been ridiculous if we had been able to wander in at will wouldn't it?

[JH]: Was there any other services that you were involved with in Grantham?

[JK]: Mm... [Pause]

[JH]: You mentioned here that you were involved, well that there was an escort, a welcoming, welcoming service in the hospital?

[JK]: Yes, yes. Well, that was the Hostess Service that I told you about. But it was, it was really so that if people came in to the hospital and didn't know the hospital they wouldn't feel entirely lost and could, and there would be somebody there to, to direct them in, in the right, in the right direction but... And it, it functioned for quite some time but it was never very dyn..., a very dynamic project and there was quite a lot of wasted time in it if you see what I mean. Because The Red Cross did the tea bar in the Outpatients and in the Fracture Clinic so we, we didn't do that.

[JH]: And were you also involved in Meals-on-Wheels in Grantham?

[JK]: Yes.

[JH]: And was that different from Meals-on-Wheels on the Wirral?

[JK]: [Pause] No, not really. We had a computer by that time and instead of using cards we had a computer printout for each day. And everybody came to the office. Which thinking about it was not very sensible but still they did, they came to the office to collect their, their sheets for the day and any instruction, special instructions they needed to be given. There was a Meals-on-Wheels car. No, there was a WRVS car for Meals-on-Wheels and they, one of the routes would take the car and then they had to drive to the hospital to pick up the meals. But, [Pause] no, I don't think there was any particular change there.

[JH]: Did you go on any deliveries while you were...?

[JK]: Yes, yes, I did. I think, seem to recollect we delivered meals five days a week, I think we did. Yes, we did. I'm sure we did.

[JH]: Did that service close, close down eventually?

[JK]: Yes, it closed down because Lincolnshire County Council decided that they could operate the whole service more efficiently themselves rather than paying us to do it. Now whether that actually proved to be the case when they, when they withdrew funding I don't know but that's what they decided to do. So we were more or less told 'Well', you know, 'thanks, on your way'. So we packed up. When the Meals-on-Wheels Service finished then the office also finished because that was the main function of the office really. And so the office was closed down and therefore everything else closed as well.

[JH]: Were there any other changes to WRVS at the time that everything was closing down?

[JK]: [Pause] I don't think so, not that made any difference to us I don't think.

[JH]: You also mentioned that there was a Books-At-Home, Books-on-Wheels scheme in Grantham, how was WRVS involved with that?

[JK]: Well, only peripherally really because we, we provided the volunteers. We sent a letter round to all the people who, all the, all the customers or clients who were involved with us in any way at all to say, you know, we were able to provide this scheme if they were interested, and really there wasn't a lot of take up, I was surprised how few people wanted it. But I think perhaps they were worried about admitting somebody else to their houses. And the people who did Books-on-Wheels had about four clients each and they and the clients decided how often they wanted the books changed, what sort of books they wanted and what time of day the client would like to be visited, assuming that the volunteer was able to go about that time. So mostly they went in the evening and I think most of them went every three or four weeks. And I do know that one of, one of our volunteers still does that, but now of course, it's entirely organised by the library. And apart from sending the letter out so that everybody had a letter to know that the service was there if they wanted it and from providing volunteers after that we really had very, very little input, the library organised it, we just provided the volunteers.

[00:36:17]

[JH]: Were they WRVS volunteers?

[JK]: The volunteers were WRVS volunteers. Yes they were, they were all WRVS volunteers as far as I recall.

[JH]: And...

[JK]: But the library paid them their, their mileage and, and dealt with them direct we didn't.

[JH]: And did your role as Secretary change?

[JK]: Well, it changed because the, the Organiser left to get a paid job and so I sort of became Organiser as well. So yes, to that extent it changed.

[JH]: Did you have any, take on any other duties as Local Organiser?

[JK]: Not really because I'd been involved with most of the projects anyway.

[JH]: And did you go round and visit volunteers on their projects?

[JK]: Yes, yes, we did. Particularly Meals-on-Wheels projects. But there was a, in Bourne for example which came under Grantham for, for Meals-on-Wheels but there was an organiser in Bourne so she did all the Bourne projects. But we had, if we had, we tried once a year always to have a buffet lunch to bring in all the volunteers if they wanted to come and the, the Organisers from the various villages were always invited.

[JH]: And as well as having the buffet lunch did you have any other social events for volunteers?

[JK]: Only an occasional coffee morning, the occasional coffee morning. But we were always a bit strapped for cash. We didn't then have, in the Internet and we didn't have E-mail so everybody had to be notified by post or by phone. Then it was a nightmare trying to get people in because they never seemed to be. And as everybody, everybody had to be sort of contacted individually it didn't happen as often as perhaps it should have done. And since WRVS closed down it, we haven't really had any contacts from them. I know there are groups, I mean I still meet with three or four volunteers on a monthly basis and I do know there are two or three other groups who meet occasionally still, but we don't have any communal coffee mornings and what not any more.

[JH]: Did you provide any training for volunteers?

[JK]: Mm, yes. Well, largely on the job training. I mean if somebody was a new volunteer they were never sent out on their own they were always sent out with somebody else. Although we did everything in twos anyway, always sent out with somebody else to be told how to do things, what you couldn't do, what you shouldn't do, what you ought to do et cetera.

[JH]: Did you start any new services or projects while you were Organiser?

[JK]: Well, the Magistrates' Court tea bar was a new service. And then WRVS pulled out of prisons and magistrates' courts and I never understood why but we were told just quite simply 'Leave everything behind, lock the door and that's the end of that'. But WRVS had paid for all the equipment in that tea bar, including the dishwasher, the cool cupboard, the freezer, the microwave and everything else. Just walked out and left it.

[0040:04]

[JH]: How did you feel when The WRVS started pulling out of a lot of things that you had done?

[JK]: Well, we knew that the, that the Stocken Prison tea bar was very much appreciated. But I think actually they did also have prison volunteers and I think they probably took that over. Although our volunteers went to the tea bar afterwards as prison volunteers not as WRVS volunteers, some of them went on for quite some time. I don't know what they do now. I've no idea. And the Magistrates' Court that had been extremely profitable. Yes, I think actually the proceeds must have gone back to WRVS because I can remember the Organiser saying to me 'We've made a lot of money for them they're a bit stupid to pull out of there', so it must have gone back. But I'd prefer that wasn't made public.

[JH]: No. When they started pulling out of things like the courts and the prisons which were making the money did you then move on to doing fundraising for the organisation?

[JK]: No, no we didn't.

[JH]: Have you ever done any fundraising for WRVS?

[JK]: Not for WRVS.

[JH]: And when did you retire from...?

[JK]: I retired when they closed down the Grantham office.

[JH]: I think you've put about 2005, about ten years ago?

[JK]: About ten years ago.

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

[JK]: [Pause] No, I don't think so. Let me have a little look at this. [Pause] Well, I remember one thing with Meals-on-Wheels. I hadn't been, I was Secretary at the time and I hadn't been there very long and the guy at Social Services rang up and said 'Mrs', whatever she's called, at Ancaster has decided she doesn't want to cook the meals any more'. And we said 'But we haven't got a project at Ancaster'. And he said 'Yes, you have, she's WRVS and she's been cooking the meals for the last', I think it was ten years. 'She cooks the meals in her own kitchen and then delivers them three times a week'. And we knew absolutely nothing about that in the office. 'Leave it with us and we'll check it out', and checked it out and couldn't find anything about it at all. But it turned out that she had been appointed about ten years before, she had volunteered to cook meals for, for Meals-on-Wheels and she'd been doing it three times a week for ten years unsung. And she'd dealt directly with Social Services so all her expenses went in to them. When she cooked the meals, she then delivered them and she'd only decided that she'd had enough, and who could blame her? And we had absolutely no idea. Which maybe shouldn't go in the archive because it wasn't very much to our credit. But there was nothing to say that it had happened and we didn't know how it had happened.

[Pause] We had an Emergency Team in, in Grantham, I'd forgotten about that. But Pat Goddard was the Manager of the Emergency Team. And there was a fire one time at Ingoldsby Hall, which is a village I suppose about ten miles out of Grantham. And I got a phone call about five o'clock one morning 'Can you rally the Emergency Team and do something because the fire service want their pod manned for this fire'? And I said 'But I'm not on the Emergency Team'. And she said 'No but

you're the Local Organiser and, and we can't raise Pat', who was the Manager. So this was the manager at Lincoln who was ringing me so I thought 'Well, I'll get on with it'. So we, I collected a few people and we collected some bread and we took ourselves off.

[00:45:00]

And the fire service had a sort of pod which is a sort of mini caravan which went on the back of the, one of the fire engines and was taken wherever and was equipped with kettles and so on and so forth. And we provided sandwiches and so on and so forth and managed to keep it going until they got the fire put out and the fire brigade withdrew and all the rest of it. And it turned out in the end that the, the Emergency Manager had been there fast asleep all the time and hadn't got the phone call. So the fire people had gone to Lincoln and said 'Somebody do something about it'. So Lincoln went straight on to me and said 'Do something about it'. And I assumed that they had all tried to get hold of Pat but seemingly they hadn't so she was extremely annoyed they hadn't managed to get hold of her. 'I was there' she said, 'never got a phone call'. So we never found out quite how that happened, but that was that. I can't think that there's anything else that I need to tell you except that when, when the office, I said to you that there hadn't been an Organiser in the office before I joined, there was a volunteer called Mary Willows. Mary was in charge of the Clothing Department and she ruled it with a rod of iron and she kept the office going all the time when there wasn't an Organiser and it all needed to be done and she kept on volunteering until we closed down ten years ago. And Mary died just before Christmas at ninety-nine. [Pause] I can't remember anybody else.

[JH]: In your opinion what was the biggest change to WRVS while you were involved?

[JK]: [Pause] We had a large number of men volunteers, when I first started we didn't have any men volunteers at all. We had a large number of men volunteers by the time we closed down the office, and very good they were. That I suppose was the main change. Also they stopped making us write narrative reports, which was a great relief for everybody. [Laughing] But I don't think that overall... [Pause] When I first started we had a Home Office grant and that provided for virtually everything or seemed to, seemed to do, and latterly after Philip Woodfield, Woodbridge?

[JH]: Woodfield.

[JK]: Woodfield, everything had to be accounted for, and trading project, trading projects had to fund themselves. So that non-trading projects really were not of interest to anybody any more, and that was, that was a big change, there was a change in attitude. I don't know that there was anything else that was particularly...

[JH]: How did, how did you feel about those changes?

[JK]: [Pause] I don't know to be honest, I can't remember. I think like everybody else I accepted them and the whole character of the service was changing but that it was inevitable. I suppose we all complained about it because you do, but that's about all, can you see in the light?

[JH]: Oh okay. And then do you know what role Voluntary Service, as it's called now, do you know what it does in Grantham?

[JK]: No, it doesn't do anything in Grantham as far as I know. Does it?

[JH]: I don't think so.

[JK]: No, I don't think so.

[JH]: And do you have any contact with the organisation?

[JK]: None at all, I haven't had any contact with the organisation since I retired. You are the first contact I've had in ten years. And I know one of, one of the volunteers was contacted a couple of years ago to enquire whether she would be prepared to do some funding for WRVS, fundraising for WRVS and she said no, she wouldn't because, [Laughing] because she had been the Organiser for the Magistrates' Court Project and they worked very hard on the training days that when they did the lunches and then WRVS pulled the plug on it. So she was extremely indignant about that and she said 'I wouldn't raise a ha'penny for them'. Maybe I shouldn't have said that.

[00:50:34]

[JH]: And what is your most memorable moment of your time at WRVS?

[JK]: [Pause] I don't know, I suppose probably going to Number Ten Downing Street. Because I was lucky because our, our MP took me and gave me afternoon tea in The House of Lords first, so it was a very memorable day altogether.

[JH]: Well, thank you Judith for talking to me today and this will make an excellent contribution to Our Voices of Volunteering Project.

[End of Interview 00:51:12]