

# Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

## Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

Ref. No.: CLAP\_MILE

**Collection Title:** Voices of Volunteering

**Interviewee 1's Surname:** Clarke

**Title Interviewee 1:** Miss

**Interviewee 2's Surname:** Miles

**Title Interviewee 2:** Mrs

**Interviewee 1's Forenames:** Pat

**Gender Interviewee 1:** F

**Interviewee 2's Forenames:** Ena

**Gender Interviewee 2:** F

### **Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:**

Volunteer 1987-Present

1987-2013 – Café/Shop Assistant, Bristol Royal Infirmery, Somerset

2011-Present – Emergency Services, Bristol, Somerset

2013-Present – Café/Shop Assistant, Callington Road hospital, Bristol, Somerset

**Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To):** 07/05/2014 (track 1)

**Location of Interview:** Christ the Servant, Stockwood, Bristol

**Location Recording is deposited:** Royal Voluntary Service Archive & Heritage Collection, Devizes, Wiltshire

**Name of Interviewer:** Jennifer Hunt

**Type of Recorder:** H4n Zoom

**Total no. tracks:** 1

**Mono or Stereo:** Stereo

**Recording Format:** WAV 44.1/16

**Total Duration:** 01:22:53

**Additional Material:** Recording Agreement, Biography Form, Tea Towel and Golden WRVS spoon

**Copyright:** Royal Voluntary Service

**Clearance:** Yes

### **Interviewer's Notes:**

This was a joint interview with Pat Clarke (PC) and Ena Miles (EM) talking about their time as volunteers in Bristol Royal Infirmery (BRI) and Callington Road Hospital shops. They go on to talk about joining Emergency Services (ES) and serving tea and coffee at rest centres during 2013/2014 floods and being on standby for emergencies. The current state of the charity and PC and EM's opinions of the future of

the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) are also discussed.

There were some interruptions to the interview due to people walking in and out of the room and noise outside the room. In some cases recording was paused this is indicated in *italics* in the summary.

Time (HH:MM:SS)	Synopsis
[00:00:17]	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>Would you like to introduce yourself?</b> EM introduces herself first with a little bit of information about her family life, why they are in Christ the Servant Church and what she did before she retired. Explains that both PC and EM worked fulltime when they joined WRVS and why they could only offer to volunteer on a Sunday.</p> <p>PC introduces herself and talks about her life outside of WRVS/Royal Voluntary Service, what she did as part of her working life and her other hobbies and volunteering work with EM.</p> <p><b>Why did you both join WRVS?</b> EM and PC explain how they both became volunteers through the church and were inspired by a sermon about going the extra mile. After they went in for coffee and a friend who was already a volunteer [Edna Stone] said that WRVS was desperate for volunteers at BRI. Started volunteering in August 1987.</p> <p><b>What did you know about WRVS before you joined?</b> Didn't know a lot about the organisation, though they knew a little about their war work and that they had coffee shops in various hospitals.</p> <p><b>What were your opinions of WRVS when you joined?</b> PC says that they didn't really have any EM mentions that they didn't know much about it but in the initial years they really did enjoy it. They both go on to explain the induction process including an interview in the old WRVS office in Redland.</p>
[00:06:10]	<p><b>Hospital Work</b></p> <p>Comments on going in on a Sunday for the first time and from then on being totally responsible for the hospital shop. PC mentions some of the responsibilities they had in</p>

	<p>the shop and that everyone was a volunteer. At the time there was only one paid member of staff responsible for all the hospitals in the area.</p> <p>EM explains how it fitted in with work very easily and that they liked playing shops</p> <p>PC and EM move on to talking about people who came into the shop and how that has changed over the years.</p> <p>EM also comments on how they are no longer responsible for anything due to paid supervisors and EM and PC share their feelings on this. PC explains that there seemed to be an attitude change within the organisation 'more a commercial venture rather than, as we always thought, a social thing that we were helping people'. Talk about regular people coming into the café/shop on a weekly basis who just came to sit somewhere warm but EM and PC feel that you can't do that today. Also mention relationship with members of staff in the hospital.</p>
[00:13:07]	<p>EM mentions other changes to the organisation including closing services in the 1990s and refers to the ones depicted on a WRVS tea towel. Comments on the new slogan '<b>Together for Older People</b>'. PC and EM both comment that if the organisation was in its current state in the 1980s they would not have joined.</p>
[00:15:57]	<p><b>Supervising Duke of Edinburgh Award</b></p> <p>EM and PC talk about some of the Boys they supervised who came from Clifton College and Church School in Bristol. Including an incident when the till broke down and a lad used five bar gates to add up and not being able to check the accounts without a calculator. Also mention a time when there was a fire alarm practice on a Sunday and the fridges had flooded.</p>
[00:20:43]	<p><b>Why did you stop volunteering at BRI?</b></p> <p>EM and PC explain that they didn't really stop volunteering but that WRVS/Royal Voluntary Service lost the contract with the Hospital to Costa. Also mention that because of this you had a lot of volunteers with nowhere to volunteer except for a small cupboard in the children's ward which served tea and coffee. Also mentions that there was a whole period when they were waiting to move but other hospitals were too far away. If the children's hospital had been up and running they would have transferred to there but it had been too long (18 months).</p>
[00:23:52]	<p>EM and PC talk about how they were contacted about Callington Road Hospital. EM doesn't know how long it can run for because of foot fall and she and PC haven't been very busy. PC also talks about the price of items in the shop compared to machines and the Tesco across the road.</p> <p><b>How is your role at Callington Hall different from BRI?</b></p>

	<p>PC mentions that the role isn't that different from BRI though they are now allowed to get the float out which they weren't responsible for at first. EM comments that it is very quiet.</p> <p><b>Do you still have time to talk to people who visit the shop?</b></p> <p>EM mentions that one of the negatives about being at Callington Road is the nature of the work they do you don't know who is staff or patients and you can't really relate to people. <i>[paused here while EM left the room]</i> Gives an example of one patient visiting and not relating to them. PC comments that it isn't very busy which they did enjoy about the BRI. Also talks about a former manager commenting that it would be very busy when EM and PC were in. Also they very rarely had a queue because they were quick at serving.</p> <p>EM mentions an instance at BRI where a university student came in and wanted to take photographs. PC talks about an artist who visited regularly to show his pictures to everybody. EM tells the story of the Hospital Chaplin coming in during one of their last sessions at BRI and saying 'who is going to hold the hands of the customers, if they're in a commercial enterprise'. At the time they didn't know that WRVS had lost the contract and were very surprised when it did. The staff had also used it because their own bistros closed at 2pm on a Sunday.</p>
[00:35:09]	<p>PC mentions that they got their 15 year service medals while at BRI and then 20 year badges.</p>
[00:35:31]	<p><b>Do you work with other volunteers?</b></p> <p>EM says that from choice they work together because they work well and know each other. PC comments that she always handled the money and the till and EM always served the food and drink.</p> <p>EM has worked with other volunteers over the last twelve months.</p> <p><b>Does WRVS provide any other services at Callington Road?</b></p> <p>No, only the shop which is a very new venture, RVS committed to six months, but EM can't see it remaining a viable option. PC mentions closure at Frenchay Hospital and people being offered alternatives which are too far to travel to. PC and EM comment more on Costa and how an increase of the brand replacing WRVS in hospitals worries them.</p>
[00:39:39]	<p>EM and PC talk about making profits for the hospital and having no overheads apart from paying staff for the last few years. They bought equipment for the hospital with the profits or raised a bit more money if they needed to. EM mentions not claiming expenses.</p>

	<p><b>Do you remember some of the gifts you bought from the profits?</b> EM mentions buying scanners, special beds. PC says whenever the hospital wanted something they were able to raise it through the WRVS shop and the friends of the hospital group, also included decorating the children’s ward.</p> <p>[00:42:40] EM mentions one of their most memorable days Alice Cleland presented them with their long service medals to EM and PC. Alice also asked them to be involved with an event in London, Volunteering afternoon at St. James Palace.</p> <p>[00:46:56] Mention the changes to the colours from red and green to orange and purple in 2004. PC explains that they were invited to a conference to discuss a new logo. There was a gentleman there who talked about possible changes but PC felt it was a ‘fata accompli’ as the new logo was already in use. EM and PC felt this was when it (WRVS) became more commercial. EM and PC feel however that you should still retain the core principle of why people volunteer. Emphasis change from service to commercialisation.</p> <p>EM mentions that they don’t like the way it was restricted to just the elderly and feel they have something to give across the generations. PC says in the past that there was much more volunteering in the true sense of the word. EM comments about people being more conscious of the length of time they volunteer for than they used to be.</p>
<p>[00:52:19]</p> <p>[00:58:02]</p>	<p><b>Emergency Team Volunteer</b></p> <p><b>What does Emergency Services involve?</b> EM talks about many years before 2011 they always said they would be available for ES work. Mentioned that they had been willing to be involved for a long time but nobody had ever contacted them about it. So their name was added to the list at that meeting. Mention the training they went to at wells. Comments on being put on standby for floods and how they felt like fighter pilots. Talk about volunteers at Somerset Levels providing tea and coffee. They feel that there is a great emphasis on saying no if you don’t feel It’s for you. However EM and PC don’t see making tea and sandwiches as an issue.</p> <p><b>Have you received any training?</b> EM explains that you get basic training of what to take with you. Useful to know the avenues for food and take on board different diets. Mentions Somerset Levels and how helpful supermarkets were.</p> <p><b>Have you been on any exercises?</b> EM mentions a learning session that they had been on and how it was an eye opener when council workers talked about dealing with a fire at Debenhams when it was being</p>

	<p>built. Comments on an exercise on what to do if there was a nuclear fallout and how they felt it wasn't relevant.</p>
<p>[01:02:43]</p>	<p><b>Changes to WRVS/RVS</b></p> <p><b>Did the changes made in 1992 affect you as a volunteer?</b>  Both comment that it must have been then when the changes started and didn't entirely appreciate it. PC mentions that she didn't realise they got this special thing (grant). <b>Was that when you started to see more and more staff becoming involved?</b> EM says that 'it must have been then' when they had both been involved for five/six years. PC talks about not having a supervisor up until then and how they appeared very suddenly.</p> <p><b>Five years later we stop doing things like children's services and services welfare ...</b>  PC comments that they just noticed this gradually and EM agrees, they suddenly realised what services had gone. EM mentions the sorting of clothes being the first thing to go in Redland. PC says that they didn't know why, EM replies that there was no communication. Mention about the coming and going of supervisors.</p> <p><b>How did you feel about that decision?</b>  PC says that had they known about the changes at the time they might have said something but so gradual they didn't welcome the change. Both mention that they lost the community aspect of WRVS, which is what they signed up for in 1987.</p> <p><b>We have already talked about the changes in 2004 and not being consulted was that any different last year</b>  They expected the change in the name because of the men working in the organisation. Both please about going back to the green and like the new logo. EM mentions she always fancied a green hat.</p> <p><b>Have you had any contact with the Hubs?</b>  No, PC asks if there is one in Bristol, EM comments that she doesn't really know what they do but thought it was just an office for the Local Manger and the Area Manager.</p> <p><b>Have there been any other significant changes that you have noticed?</b>  PC mentions that it has become more commercial over the years, more business-like. Both comment that one aspect that hasn't changed is working with the public.</p>
<p>[01:15:22]</p>	<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <p><b>How have your opinions/knowledge of Royal Voluntary Service changed over the</b></p>

<p>[01:19:45]</p>	<p><b>years?</b></p> <p>Both talk about it changing from a voluntary to a commercial organisation, don't know why the decision was made to change focus, PC thought it might be to do with money. Noticed more articles in publications on helping the elderly and less about activities with young people. Comment that they don't really know anyone within the organisation except for a few people. Mention that it was a big mistake unless there was pressure from the government to stop and give the example of Meals-on-Wheels no longer being provided in their area. EM: 'they're losing their base aren't they, because at some stage ... what is going to be left for them'. Comment on the future of Royal Voluntary Service. Both think that they need to start reopening the doors that they closed but were never told why closed those doors.</p> <p><b>What was your most memorable moment?</b></p> <p>Alice Cleland giving them their medals as she visited them rather than having to go to a medal ceremony coupled with representing WRVS at St. James Palace. Always enjoyed working in the Hospital. EM 'Given us more than we've given it'. PC 'the fact that we have been able to help, even a little bit, one feels you've done something if not very much.</p>
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