

# Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

## Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

**Ref. No.:** CURA

**Collection Title:** Voices of Volunteering

**Interviewee's Surname:** Currie

**Title:** Mrs

**Interviewee's Forenames:** Angela

**Gender:** F

**Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:**

Volunteer 1985-1998, Employee 1998-2013

Emergency services volunteer, Truro, Cornwall  
1985-1988

District Emergency services organiser - Carrick  
District - 1988/91 (volunteer)

Emergency services instructor - 1989 onwards  
(volunteer)

Senior emergency services instructor - 1993  
onwards (volunteer)

Cornwall emergency services manager - 1993 -  
2000 (volunteer)

Devon emergency services manager 1998 - pt  
time employee

Devon and Cornwall emergency services  
manager - 2000 - employee

Senior emergency services manager - south west  
and Wales - 2002 - 2005

Head of emergency services - UK - 2005 - 2010

Head of resilience and recovery - UK - 2010 -  
2013

**Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To):** 15/07/2014 (Track 1)

**Location of Interview:** Interviewees home, Penelewey, Cornwall

**Location Interview Deposited:** Royal Voluntary Service Archive & Heritage Collection, Devizes Wiltshire

**Name of Interviewer:** Jennifer Anne Hunt

**Type of Recorder:** H4n Zoom

**Total no. tracks:** 1

**Mono or Stereo:** Stereo

**Recording Format:** WAV 44.1/16

**Total Duration:** 01:30:02

**Additional Material:** Biography Sheet and Recording Agreement

**Copyright:** Royal Voluntary Service

**Clearance:** Yes

**Interviewer's Notes:**

Angela Currie (AC) talks about her time as a WRVS volunteer and employee from 1985-2013. AC was involved with Emergency Services (ES) as a volunteer, District ES Organiser in Carrick, Cornwall, she was also a trainer and instructor and talks about courses delivered by WRVS and at Easingwold College. Comments on being an ES manager and transferring from being a volunteer to employee covering the Cornwall and Devon area to covering South West England and Wales. AC also talks about her time as head of ES and the changes that came in 2010 when the service was renamed Resilience and Recovery (R&R). The interview concludes with AC's opinions on the current Royal Voluntary Service (RVS,) its future and what has been her most treasured memory of her time with the charity.

Time (HH:MM:SS)	Synopsis
[00:00:09]	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>Angela, would you just like to introduce yourself?</b> AC talks about her work in agriculture before joining WRVS and joining the RAF. Also working for the crown commissions in Scotland and then setting up a small farm accounts business in Cornwall but it did not fill all her time so joined WRVS.</p> <p><b>Why did you decide to join WRVS in 1985?</b> AC comments on seeing an advert in the WRVS office in Truro for ES volunteers.</p> <p><b>What did you know about WRVS before you joined?</b> AC mentions knowing very little about it, her grandmother had been a member during World War II but did not talk about her work. Small local office was very efficient, felt needed and wanted.</p> <p><b>What were your opinions of WRVS before you joined?</b> Knew very little about them except Meals-On-Wheels, ES was completely new to AC.</p> <p><b>What are your earliest memories of WRVS?</b> Earliest memories were joining and investigating the history, very quickly learnt that WRVS had started as an emergency service.</p>
[00:04:50]	<p><b>Emergency Services Volunteer 1985-1998</b></p> <p><b>How would you describe your first role as an ES volunteer?</b> AC talks about ES training and asking lots of questions, ended up a trainer and team leader. Also became the local ES organiser and suggests why this might have happened. Mentions going into the office every day and doing her usual work there but also became involved in other WRVS work through other volunteers. WRVS seen more as a club then and office always very busy with volunteers. Would not work like that today, talks about a volunteer answering the phone.</p>
[00:08:55]	<p><b>Can you tell me about the first emergency you attended?</b></p>

	<p>AC comments on attending a gorse fire on Lizard Peninsula, West Cornwall. Fed fireman for a prolonged period of time, mentions that you got an adrenalin rush. Also a lot of what WRVS did was 'training, training, training'. AC talks about people not letting go of the old Civil Defence training and even then the end of ES was on the horizon.</p> <p><b>How did you feel when you were called to an emergency?</b> AC says she felt quite excited about putting what she had learnt into practice. Talks about being pleased when really needed but sometimes felt disappointed when just making tea for council staff or if people did not go to the rest centre.</p>
[00:14:07]	<p><b>Were there any other emergencies or exercises you can remember that you attended?</b> AC mentions attending Boscastle floods and being called by the regional ES manager and asked her to go. Then got a phone call from the council to find out what happened in the area. Rang a volunteer who was in the area who had caravans and cars floating past her house. The volunteer also had people who were escaping the flood in her home. Two rest centres were setup and AC ran one in Camelford and had to get volunteers from anywhere and everywhere as local volunteers could not get in from Boscastle. One of AC's most high profile emergency as she was interviewed by Sky and BBC. Talks about having a contract with the council at the time to be responsible for running rest centres.</p>
[00:19:42]	<p>AC mentions a big incident in Torbay, Devon where a factory that made jelly sandals caught fire and 500 people had to be evacuated. Involved with 7/7 bombings and the aftermath of 9/11 as aircraft were being directed back to the UK. As AC took on a national role she became involved in emergencies all over the country. Talks about 2007 with all the floods could not visit them all and the backlash of the job being involved with the media but this was also good publicity for WRVS.</p> <p><b>One of your earliest roles was a district ES organiser, what did that involve?</b> It involved making sure that each area had a team with team leaders, that they were all trained and read to respond. AC talks about working closely with the council in Carrick District and reflecting the organisation of the local council. AC mentions it was her favourite role as you had more control. Hay day of ES was when they worked closely at district level with County Council, Police and other voluntary organisations.</p>
[00:24:03]	<p><b>Can you tell me about the volunteers you worked with?</b> AC talks about being a volunteer herself and continuing to volunteer when she was a member of staff. Volunteers came from all walks of life, some did other things with WRVS and some were hard core ES volunteers. AC comments on why some only did ES such as other commitments, still in contact with some volunteers who were in ES. AC talks about helping out at the Royal Cornish show.</p> <p><b>How would you say that changed over the years?</b> AC talks about senior management and trustees deciding not to do community services anymore because of returns. ES still carried on helping at shows because AC</p>

<p>[00:29:10]</p>	<p>felt it was good for training and advertising. Mentions a big change was not doing things with children, which she felt was a good thing because of Health and Safety so no longer did crèches but did help with lost children if Police were involved. Talks about how important it was to continue with the information booths for training still do the Royal Welsh Show.</p> <p><b>Can you tell me about the office you worked in?</b></p> <p>AC talks about the Truro office she worked in over the years, the different offices in the building, the clothing store and very close Knit bunch. Mentions being a manager in Cornwall and Devon and the change to being a member of staff and did a lot more work with groups outside the WRVS. Comments on seeing the decline of ES in WRVS especially when told they had to be paid for everything they did. AC thinks that people are still very proud of what they do but ES has gone from being the reason WRVS exist to a difficult to manage service. Talks about having 15 ES managers and 12,000 volunteers at one time to having 3000 in 2013.</p>
<p>[00:35:06]</p>	<p><b>You also mentioned you were an ES instructor and trainer, so how would you describe that role?</b></p> <p>AC says it was an absolutely key role, the basic training, team leader training, food hygiene, wrote a rest centre training programme which they also sold to other groups and brought in income for WRVS, £1500 a day for the course and it was accredited by Easing Wold College. Also accredited by the school of leadership and management. Mentions changing from having volunteer trainers to not and then WRVS doing a U turn and having them again. Even when AC's direct team went and she was an advisor her and her team of 2 still delivered training. Cabinet office and different resilience groups were always interested in the training and the way WRVS ran it.</p> <p><b>You mentioned Easingwold College, what happened to the training we did there?</b></p> <p>AC talks about when she first joined and WRVS had the college for 2 weeks every year. Describes it as a terrifying experience, senior WRVS members were scary individuals, had to wear full uniform to build a soya boiler even gloves. Brought together all the organisers in ES in a lovely environment. Now Easingwold is run by an external body who charge for it to be used.</p>
<p>[00:42:06]</p>	<p><b>How did you feel about those changes?</b></p> <p>AC says change was inevitable, Red Cross were edging ahead in ES especially when they started charging rates to clients. Also went down badly with volunteers, abuse from local authorities and going to WRVS volunteers asking them to work directly for the council. AC mentions she pointed out that ES or R&amp;R would be very beneficial to older people if they were vulnerable, could really fit into Hub structure.</p>
<p>[00:46:03]</p>	<p><b>Employee 1998-2013</b></p> <p><b>How was your role different as a member of staff?</b></p> <p>Talks about it being a gradual change could not get an organiser for Cornwall and Devon paid a small grant. Not long after changes made to WRVS as grant was being wound down and it was decided WRVS would have a staff structure. AC was asked to apply for a full time job and initially said no but then agreed to be a part time</p>

<p>[00:55:45]</p>	<p>member of staff with a job share. AC comments on restructures which affected the area she was in charge of and the amount of staff. Another restructure meant AC became head of UK ES, felt at that time started to lose touch with volunteers. Describes how restructures cut down the ES team as time went by. Also talks about AM taking over the 24/7 roles and not really wanting to, when LMs came in AC put a system in place so that they took on some responsibility for callouts. Still receives calls asking for advice including organising reefs for remembrance services.</p> <p><b>You mentioned being responsible for ES nationally you attended events, what sort of events were you attending?</b></p> <p>AC's main role was being on Cabinet Office Resilience Committees, resilience Advisory Board for Scotland, various activities for the emergency planning society. AC talks about the ES National show and conference, going to big DEFFRA, Highways Agency to talk to them about emergencies, Voluntary sector national board planning emergencies. After 9/11 and the Tsunami the Government was keen to have one point of contact for ES sector, setup voluntary sector forum which had other voluntary groups on it and was used after 7/7 bombings.</p> <p><b>Does that forum still run?</b></p> <p>Yes, things changed considerably as people left who had been there since the start. Mentions the Civil Contingencies Act 2004/2005 as before had been working to the Civil Defence Act 1948. Very involved in what volunteers response should be in an emergency, went to a House of Lords Committee meeting with Mark Leaver. Also used the act as a lever to get more training but AC felt she was winning a losing battle.</p>
<p>[01:06:43]</p>	<p><b>In 2010 it changed to R&amp;R was that part of a restructure?</b></p> <p>Yes it was, put in place the structure RVS has now (July 2014) and did not want ES as a title. AC talks about trying to put in place a system of after care for elderly people involved in emergencies.</p> <p><b>Were you still involved with training volunteers at that time?</b></p> <p>AC says she was involved in making sure WRVS still trained volunteers, when she left put online training packs on the intranet.</p> <p><b>During this time were you working from a WRVS office or were you working from home?</b></p> <p>As soon as AC became a properly paid manager she worked from home. Talks about offices being shut and people finding out after they shut. Kept the county offices and then the regional admin centres. AC had to close offices in her area, volunteers were in tears. AC comments on the downside of working from home. Talks about training in the Hartford Office and a lot of people joining WRVS because they were lonely but were still lonely because they had no office to go to.</p> <p><b>Other people have said there was a lot of comradery and a real social aspect which was lost ...</b></p> <p>AC talks about parties that they used to have and it meant you knew people a lot better.</p>

<p>[01:17:22]</p>	<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <p><b>Thinking about all the changes you have experienced. What has been the most significant change?</b>  AC talks about when WRVS stopped being a government funded organisation, WRVS was looked at differently, people had joined because it did not fundraise and that suddenly changed. Volunteers did not like the “aggressive” fundraising approach also AC saw the loss of uniform as a key change and talks about volunteers and uniform.</p> <p><b>You have mentioned the loss of uniform, what did you think about changes to the colour in 2004?</b>  AC says she was not ‘terribly excited about it’ but likes the new colours. Comments on having to selling it.</p> <p><b>How did you sell it?</b>  AC talks about saying it was a bright new image and how things had moved on, focus had changed.</p> <p><b>What sort of response did you get from volunteers?</b>  AC laughs, explains that some did not believe the change would happen, some just said they did not like it; some still wore green and kept green for the Cenotaph Parade but then had to pull out because WRVS could not afford to produce uniforms. ‘It was met with mixed emotions’.</p>
<p>[01:22:58]</p>	<p><b>How has your opinion changed of the organisation since you joined?</b>  AC talks about being proud of WRVS and the volunteers, still proud of volunteers though she does not always agree with what the organisation is doing or how they do it. Comments on volunteers being dedicated and would volunteer in the services they provide with or without WRVS. AC mentions that name changes in 2004 and 2013 were a bone of contention with volunteers.</p> <p><b>Where would you say RVS’s place in society is today?</b>  AC thinks that it is in a very difficult place because of all the other groups providing the same services. Mentions the local newspaper advertising for volunteers for lots of different organisations to do exactly what RVS does but RVS is never mentioned.</p> <p><b>What do you think is the future for RVS?</b>  AC says it is fragile and could lose its place in society and people might not want voluntary organisations with such large overheads.</p>
<p>[01:26:35]</p>	<p><b>Do you have anything else you would like to share about your time with WRVS?</b>  AC talks about going to two Buckingham Palace Garden Parties, going to Downing Street three times and being involved in the Jubilee.</p> <p><b>What would you say is your favourite or most memorable moment of being with WRVS?</b>  AC talks about the Queen’s Jubilee, WRVS have five lost children facilities and</p>

	information booths. WRVS were 'running around London like demented flees'. Comments on it being a 'buzz' and exciting occasion. AC mentions she remembers the volunteers and training the most as well as the friends she made.
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