

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

Ref. No.: HARD

Collection Title: Voices of Volunteering

Interviewee's Surname: Harris

Title: Mrs

Interviewee's Forenames: Doreen

Gender: F

Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:

1958 Norfolk Clothing Store

1963-1974 Norfolk County Secretary

1975-1985 North Norfolk District Office

1985-1989 South Norfolk District Office

1989 Norfolk Training Organiser

Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To): 09/07/2014 (Track 1)

Location of Interview: Interviewees Home, Lowestoft, Suffolk

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

Name of Interviewer: Jennifer Anne Hunt

Type of Recorder: H4nZoom

Total no. tracks: 1

Mono or Stereo: Stereo

Recording Format: WAV

Total Duration: 01:06:35

Additional Material: Biography Sheet and Recording Agreement

Copyright: Royal Voluntary Service

Clearance: Yes

Interviewer's Notes:

Doreen Harris (DH) talks about her time as a WVS/WRVS volunteer in Norfolk starting with the clothing store and then her work as county secretary; she also talks about how she became a district organiser and her role in North Norfolk and then South Norfolk. DH comments on her time as a Training Officer and her opinions on change within the organisation.

Time (HH:MM:SS)	Synopsis
[00:00:11]	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Doreen would you like to introduce yourself? DH introduces herself</p> <p>What are your earliest memories of WVS? DH talks about traveling during the war and meeting WVS on train stations</p> <p>Why did you join WVS in 1958? DH explains how she became involved through meeting a member of WVS and being sent to a lady who sent her to the clothing store in Norwich.</p> <p>What did you know about the organisation before you joined? DH comments she was aware of them but didn't know a lot</p> <p>When you joined in 1958 what was your opinion then? DH says she 'loved it' throughout her time, met a lot of interesting people.</p>
	<p>Norfolk County Clothing Store</p> <p>Can you tell me about your role in the county clothing store? Talks about being a helper at the store and most members being older before a new member around her age arrived. DH sent clothes overseas and counted clothing to be sent out. Comments on high standards in the store.</p> <p>What was a typical day at the clothing store like? DH mentions going in once a week, how clothes were sorted and shelved. Talks about people who visited the clothing store and most people were very grateful. Mentions having to find a suit for a man going to his doctor's cheese and wine party.</p> <p>How would you describe the building? DH talks about the office in Norwich at the back of the Cathedral, comments it was a nice place to work in.</p> <p>What can you tell me about the other volunteers you worked with? DH mentions they were older, had a lot of fun and ate lunch together</p> <p>Who else received clothing from WVS? 'Anybody who had been sent to us by social services', everyone had to have a note from someone in authority.</p>
[00:08:29]	<p>Norfolk County Secretary</p> <p>What can you tell me about your role as county secretary? DH mentions it was to help the county organiser who she had worked with in clothing. Often went out to see members with and on behalf of the county organiser.</p>

<p>[00:17:01]</p>	<p>What are your earliest memories of being county secretary? DH says she was amazed at how much it covered and completing the day book, comments that she always enjoyed the work. Everyone seemed to have the same thoughts.</p> <p>Can you tell me about the county office you worked in? DH describes the office and where it was, who else shared the offices, moving to a new office.</p> <p>How did you feel about your role as county secretary? 'I loved it', DH explains that she enjoyed going out and meeting people, being an unofficial deputy in the summer</p> <p>Who else did you work with? DH mentions other people were there to help with office work, people would be sent to hear about WVS if they were interested.</p> <p>In Blue to Green you wrote that there was some opposition to changes you wanted to make ... DH talks about changes from counties to districts (1973/1974) and members were resenting change. Comments on a meeting with a regional office to back up the changes.</p> <p>How did you feel about that change? DH explains it was welcomed and they were getting new people in, it was wonderful having the new organisers.</p> <p>What services were WVS/WRVS providing at the time? DH talks about started new services: children's holidays for children from London and Norfolk. Talks about how other services tied in with the holidays.</p> <p>DH comments on the county organiser starting hospital shops, hospital visitors scheme, flowers, trolley shops and home from hospital.</p> <p>How did you celebrate the 25th Anniversary in Norwich? Mentions Lady Reading's visit to Norwich for the anniversary.</p> <p>How did you feel when WVS became WRVS in 1966? DH says it was 'quite fun, talks about other names people gave using the initials. Talks about wearing the uniform and being recognised in Norwich.</p> <p>What did your uniform look like? DH describes the different uniforms she had over the years, badges and how she enjoyed wearing it as it opened doors. Talks about having new suits and berets.</p> <p>Did you notice a change to the organisation after her [Lady Reading's] Death? DH mentions she think they missed her but there wasn't a huge change and talks about having different chairman.</p>
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[00:28:10]	<p>North Norfolk District Organiser</p> <p>How did you become district organised? DH explains the county organiser was leaving and DH asked to look after North Norfolk. Talks about working from home and how she got an office in north Walsham. Mentions finding village reps again and starting WRVS work in the area again and dealing with older members.</p> <p>How would you describe the office you worked in? DH describes the office when they first moved there, who else was in the building and how they gained another room.</p> <p>What services did North Norfolk provide? DH says the same as she mentioned before in county office but on a smaller scale and knew most people already. Talks about meetings and visits from region.</p> <p>What happened at the district meetings you used to have? DH explains what happened in the meetings and using them to encourage volunteers. Talks about her first meeting and thinking it might be a one off but became a regular occurrence.</p> <p>You also had emergency teams in North Norfolk, can you tell me about those? DH talks about the training which was involved, talked about the police calling them out at Walcot.</p> <p>How did you feel about being called in the middle of the night? DH explains it wasn't a problem and how it affected her family, phoning other volunteers.</p> <p>What did you used to take with you to an emergency? DH talks about what they used to take, arrangements with local shops to open in the night.</p> <p>Also during that time you celebrated the 40th anniversary? DH talks about going to St. Pauls for the service, people's reactions, German tourists asking what was going on. Mentions the Queen Mother and the Cabinet.</p> <p>You've said that your uniform opened many doors, why was that? DH explains that the organisation was very well respected and remembered.</p>
[00:40:40]	<p>South Norfolk District Organiser</p> <p>You moved to being South Norfolk District Organiser? DH explains her husband had died and didn't think she could stay in North Norfolk. Talks about getting a young doctors wife to be organiser and training her. South Norfolk organiser retired and DH agreed.</p> <p>How were the people in south Norfolk different? DH says she doesn't know but different in outlook on things, had a local organiser in</p>

	<p>Diss and district office in Toombland, talks about getting people in charge.</p> <p>Can you tell me about the other volunteers you worked with in South Norfolk? DH mentions WRVS volunteers are much the same where ever you are, problems of being knew in the area and meetings.</p> <p>How did you increase WRVS’s role in the district? Word of mouth, giving membership talks and asking for more members.</p> <p>What services were being provided in South Norfolk by WRVS? Same services as in other areas, mentions MOW and emergency services</p> <p>You mentioned MOW how many rounds were people doing at that time? DH comments on county office but didn’t really know in South Norfolk, told people it was twofold. Mentions she helped out and nice to see people who were so grateful, always had to make time for a chat.</p> <p>Were you just providing hot meals or did you start providing frozen ones? DH says only hot meals, explains where they used to get meals from.</p> <p>DH talks about children’s holidays and hospitals</p> <p>How did you celebrate the 50th Anniversary? DH talks about going to Westminster Abbey and the county organiser being a flag bearer.</p> <p>Mentions the 40th again and being told that they were celebrating it because ‘a lot of you might not be alive when we get to it [50th]’.</p> <p>How did it feel to attend the Buckingham Palace Garden party? DH talks about it coming out of the blue; just a few went in uniform. Mentions the rail strike and being taken by the county organiser and being stuck in traffic on the way home.</p> <p>You also received your British empire medal, how did that feel? DH talks about it being very secret and not being able to tell anyone and how she broke the rules.</p> <p>How did the give you your medal? From the Lord Lieutenant and the regional office giving a citation of her work. DH describes what the medal looks like.</p>
[00:54:44]	<p>Acting Training officer 1989-1990</p> <p>DH talks about thinking it was time for her to retire from WRVS because she wanted younger people to take over. Comments on what was involved with training.</p> <p>How would you describe the role? DH comments on the role and making members aware of how WRVS worked. Gives</p>

	<p>an account of meeting to hospital volunteers who knew nothing about WRVS, as hadn't had a membership talk. More people were coming in at that time who didn't know the organisation we.</p>
[00:58:30]	<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Why did you decide to retire from WRVS in 1990? DH explains she was getting older and felt younger people should be encouraged to come in. Talks about being a verity of people.</p> <p>Between 1958 and 1990 how did your opinion of the organisation change? DH says it never changed, explains what she liked about it. Comments on the element of comradery</p> <p>Apart from administrative changes in 1970s, were there any other changes to the organisation? DH mentions changes in chairman but principles stayed the same. Comments on dropping the W and having men before dropping it, thinks it a big mistake and changing the uniform.</p> <p>Where would you say is Royal Voluntary Services place in society today? DH says she doesn't know, noticed on the local news during recent flooding no mention of WRVS.</p> <p>What would you like the future to be for RVS? DH says you can't go back, but the way it used to be worked.</p> <p>What is your fondest memory of your time with WRVS? DH mentions receiving her long service medal and service awards, remembers the friends she made along the way.</p>