

# Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

## Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

Ref. No.: JONM

**Collection Title:** Voices of Volunteering

**Interviewee's Surname:** Jones

**Title:** Mrs

**Interviewee's Forenames:** Maureen

**Gender:** F

**Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:**

Volunteer (1968-2013)

1968-1972 – Meals-on-Wheels, Halstead Essex

1972-1980 – Meals-on-Wheels, Books-on-Wheels, One-in-Five, Emergency Services, Hounslow Essex

1980-1984 – Guernsey Meals-on-Wheels, Guernsey Bailiwick Organiser

1982-1992 – Information Desks for Wimbledon

1984 – Children's Department, London Headquarters

1984-1988 – County Organiser for Meals-on-Wheels, Essex

1988 – Meals-on-Wheels, Monmouth, Monmouthshire

1989 – Head Office Cardiff

1990-1995 – Trustee

1997-2013 – Meals-on-Wheels, Limington, Hampshire

**Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To):** 08/05/2014 (Track 1)

**Location of Interview:** Interviewee's home, Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire

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

**Name of Interviewer:** Jennifer Hunt

**Type of Recorder:** H4nZoom

**Total no. tracks:** 1

**Mono or Stereo:** Stereo

**Recording Format:** WAV 44.1/16

**Total Duration:** 01:41:10

**Additional Material:** Recording Agreement, Biography Sheet, ACC20140027

**Copyright:** Royal Voluntary Service

**Clearance:** Yes, this is an edited version restricted content has been removed

**Interviewer's Notes:**

Maureen Jones (MJ) talks about her time as a WRVS volunteer after she returned from Solonge in 1968, starting with Meals-on-Wheels (MOW) and Books-on-Wheels (BOW). Then MJ comments on being a District Organiser and how she moved up the ranks of the organisation, eventually as high as Vice-Chairman of Wales and a Trustee. MJ also gives her opinions on the Royal Voluntary Service in its current form and her memories of working on the Information Desks at Wimbledon in the 1980s and 1990s.

Time (HH:MM:SS)	Synopsis
[00:00:12]	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>Maureen, can you tell me a little about yourself?</b> MJ introduces herself and talks a little bit about her family, mentions starting married life out in Solonge and coming back in 1965 and becoming involved with WRVS in Halstead</p> <p><b>Why did you decide to join WRVS in 1968?</b> Talks about seeing an advert in the local paper and looking after the children and enjoying meeting people.</p> <p><b>What did you know about WRVS before you joined?</b> MJ knew very little but was aware of them giving out stirrup pumps during the war (World War II), collecting pots and pans to make air planes.</p>
[00:02:03]	<p><b>Meals-on-Wheels, one-in-five and emergency services (1960's-1970's)</b></p> <p><b>What are your earliest memories of MOW rounds in Halstead?</b> MJ mentions going out in pairs and collecting MOW from a school and how the hot locks worked. Round of about 15 people, also comments on the conditions people lived in and taking her children on rounds.</p> <p><b>How many meals were you delivering per week?</b> MJ talks about three rounds in Halstead and outlying countryside</p> <p><b>And did you work with other volunteers?</b> Comments on having to go in in twos because they were not sure of the conditions also 'some of the men were a bit naughty with us'. <b>How were they naughty?</b> MJ comments that they were not actually 'pinching your bottom or anything like that' but having to go in in twos was the order which they had to follow.</p> <p><b>Can you describe some of the people who received MOW?</b></p>

<p>[00:07:45]</p>	<p>MJ talks about the recipients being very poor, and one instance when she took her children and the man was dead and how she dealt with the situation. Comments how later on there were worse conditions when she was in Harlow and even in 2013.</p> <p><b>How would you describe the meals you were serving?</b></p> <p>Came from the schools or different firms who made them up, comparison to frozen meals, delivered in aluminium round tins. Talks about one individual who lived in terrible conditions and they would walk in with tops off the thermoses carrying custard and gravy to smell instead.</p> <p><b>In 1972 you moved over to Harlow?</b></p> <p>MJ talks about why she moved to Harlow and tried to join in Epping but they didn't offer MOW. Then explains that she met Harlow WRVS at a country show and joined there.</p> <p><b>Was MOW any different in Harlow?</b></p> <p>Explains the physical differences between the areas and how Harlow had no feeling of community. MJ comments that there were 20-25 on a round and only run by WRVS twice a week, eventually they couldn't get members because the council were paying people to deliver meals, MJ talks about how people felt about volunteering for free when they could be paid.</p> <p>MJ mentions having to wash the dishes after completing the rounds but she enjoyed it.</p> <p><b>How did you become a MOW organiser?</b></p> <p>'Because there was nobody else' MJ was asked to take on the role.</p> <p><b>How would you describe your role as a MOW organiser?</b></p> <p>MJ comments that she was younger than other volunteers and that they soon let her know if something was wrong but were very kind. Mentions that a meal cost 1s 6d and collecting the money and banking it, seeing the customers to see what meals people liked and that it was much more individual, they knew the people's birthdays and at Christmas gave each one a drop of cherry.</p> <p><b>Do you have any memorable moments of MOW?</b></p> <p>Mentions a woman overrun by mice and having to get members who didn't mind mice. Also comments on a memory of Guernsey WRVS and a woman having money (old black and white notes) a gun and 20 rounds of ammunition under her bed.</p>
<p>[00:14:28]</p>	<p><b>How was BOW started in Harlow?</b></p> <p>They just had one round of BOW, they were struggling for volunteers MJ suggested to expand BOW transferring MOW volunteers. Talks about how popular it was because it</p>

<p>[00:18:31]</p>	<p>was less restrictive and not knowing about Mills and Boon.</p> <p><b>How where you involved in BOW?</b>  Talks about going to the Library, visiting the people and finding out what books they liked reporting back to the library who selected the books for WRVS to take out. MJ also bought baskets from Tesco to carry books in and collect what they had read, library service paid expenses.</p> <p><b>What was a typical BOW round like?</b>  Smaller rounds because of weight of the books, about ten rounds at a time but had to cut down on recipients because Harlow was such a big area.</p> <p><b>Did you still work with a partner?</b>  Didn't always but usually did because they became friends 'it was more social to go with someone'.</p> <p><b>And you also became involved with Emergency services, how did you become involved with that?</b>  'ES was the jewel in the crown of WRVS'. MJ talks about how WRVS Harlow became involved with three in one talks (known nationally as One-in-Five). Comments on training, same system throughout the country and that it was very interesting and exciting.</p> <p><b>You were talking about how you had to have the three in one talk ...</b>  MJ explains what the scheme was, why they had the training, what they were told to do if there really was a nuclear attack. 'I really don't think it would have worked at all, looking back on it'. Also talks about it being propaganda.</p> <p><b>Did you give any of these talks yourself? Yes</b></p> <p><b>Who were you giving these talks to?</b>  New members, MJ comments that they weren't cheery talks and alarmed new members 'and being typically British, you know, we just went through it'.</p> <p><b>What sort of advice were you giving in this talk?</b>  MJ talks about the advice they gave, how long the talk were and when they were given but didn't think it would have helped especially when she learnt more about nuclear war.</p> <p><b>You also attended some emergencies as part of ES ...</b>  MJ comments how it was exciting attending fires, going out at night and using supermarkets and local shops to call them at night to get supplies. Having emergency</p>
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<p>[00:25:33]</p>	<p>packs in the office. Also mentions helping the firemen and everyone enjoyed it because 'it was a bit unusual'.</p> <p><b>And you were also called out to the evacuation of refugees at Stansted airport, can you tell me about that?</b></p> <p>MJ talks about why the Ugandan Refugees were evacuated, sorting clothes for the arrival of refugees, school sending toys in pockets of children's clothes and another load had glass in the pockets because there was a feeling that 'we couldn't take all these refugees'. Epping organiser would not allow her members to go to Stansted. Got called in on a night shift when refugees arrived, talks about behaviour of the press and that it was a bad day but after ran like clockwork. MJ comments on the arrival of Ugandan Asians and watch the people arrive, escorting them through customs, registration, giving them refreshments and receive clothing. MJ talks about her admiration for them because they were so patient and brave.</p> <p><b>Did you have any other involvement with Ugandan Asians after Stansted?</b></p> <p>Talks about meeting some later when she was in London and being thanked.</p>
<p>[00:31:39]</p>	<p><b>You also did a nuclear bunker exercise in 1976, do you remember much about that?</b></p> <p>MJ says that it was at Colchester and was friendly with the organiser, it lasted 36 hours. MJ talks about how it felt, what happened during the exercise, the role of WRVS in the bunker. Mentions watching the operations room and what she saw and how realistic it was. MJ also talks about when the exercise had finished and how she realised that the talks (One-in-Five) were not going to help.</p>
<p>[00:34:57]</p>	<p><b>You also became District Organiser for Epping Forest?</b></p> <p>MJ explains it was when the new districts were introduced (1974) and what her responsibilities were, the opposition to the changes and having to work carefully with Local Organisers.</p> <p><b>What was your role as a District Organiser?</b></p> <p>MJ comments that it was to go and help around the district, take an interest in the clubs, Emergency services and to bring in frozen meals. Mentions changes to feeding with new kitchens and modernising the service.</p> <p><b>Was that different from being a Meals-on-Wheels organiser?</b></p> <p>MJ says that it was quite different, used to visit asylums to run Darby and Joan Clubs and managed to get them percussion instruments through the Ladies Circle. Tells a story about a dance and a Lady telling her that she lived in a flat with the Queen and Vera Lynn. Mentions clubs for adults with Down syndrome and how WRVS worked</p>

	<p>with them.</p> <p><b>Do you have any other memorable moments of your time as a District Organiser?</b> Mentions that they had their troubles but had the county to help if needed. MJ describes an incident where a WRVS member had been murdered in Epping Forest and the reaction of and dealing with the press.</p>
<p>[00:51:16]</p>	<p><b>Guernsey, London, Essex and Wales 1980s</b></p> <p><b>And then you became involved with Guernsey WRVS...</b> Mentions she was there about 7 years and went back onto MOW. Talks about starting at 10 o'clock and stopping for a cup of tea, also finished the round at twelve o'clock because members went home to feed their husbands.</p> <p>We did Emergency services as well <b>and you were called out in 1980?</b> MJ talks about SAS parachute jump into the sea and WRVS would help on the Ferry. They were told 'that on no account were we to turn around while they were changing'. MJ mentions that there were quite a few fires at night, then talks about becoming Organiser in 1981 and the difficulties because she was English. Talks about opening a house for lunch when people were stranded at the airport when the mist/fog came in. some families took people into their homes, also helped helicopter people on a cruise who needed clothing and yachts that sank.</p> <p><b>How was being a County Organiser different from being a District Organiser?</b> MJ mentions the differences in size and having to be tactful because people still felt the British had let them down during the War (World War II).</p> <p><b>How were you involved with Easingwold College?</b> MJ was sent there for a middle management course, all men from the fire service were on the course. Found it very intensive, other emergency services didn't understand why they were there. WRVS members were doing homework through the night.</p> <p><b>You moved to London and worked in the Children's Department?</b> MJ mentions that she didn't really do any work at Headquarters, except for putting in orders for children's holidays. Comments on the atmosphere in the office and a woman saying to her that 'after you've been here two years you can have some birthday cake' so MJ thought she had better leave.</p> <p><b>And where was Head Office?</b> MJ says that it was in Park Lane she thinks they had it for a 'pepper corn rent' and</p>

[00:54:58]	<p>describes the building itself and where it was in London. Talks about knowing your place and rank orientated.</p> <p><b>And was the chairman there at that time?</b> Yes</p> <p><b>And who was that?</b> Dame Barbra Shenfield</p> <p><b>Did you meet her at Headquarters?</b></p> <p>MJ says yes and talks about the Chairman visiting Guernsey for two days.</p> <p><b>What was she like as a person?</b></p> <p>MJ comments on how she was different from the chairman before her and didn't have the same way with members.</p> <p><b>And then you went back to Essex MOW instead of the Children's Department ...</b></p> <p>MJ explains she worked for MOW for the county; she was pleased to be back there and went all over the county. Also mentions the European Butter Mountain and asks 'Have you heard of the European Butter Mountain?'</p> <p><b>A little, would you like to tell me about it?</b></p> <p>MJ comments about having to get rid of butter that was in storage wherever possible not just WRVS clubs but others such as the Red Cross. Talks about how much butter there was, how it was distributed, MJ couldn't account for 2lbs and explains that people were ringing up demanding their butter.</p> <p><b>Had MOW changed significantly by the 1980s?</b></p> <p>MJ thought that they had, describes using insulated containers but there was still the personal contact with the people but that change was needed. Mentions that it was becoming difficult to find volunteers.</p>
[01:00:00]          [01:03:01]	<p><b>Vice Chairman of Wales, WRVS Trust, Prison tea Bar, Meals-on-Wheels, Books-on-Wheels (1990-2013)</b></p> <p><b>In 1988 you moved to Monmouth in Wales?</b></p> <p>MJ went to MOW in Monmouth, travelled all over Monmouth. Doing the same number of deliveries and talks about an old man who was a minor who always had a bar of chocolate for them.</p> <p><b>By the late 1980s where the people who received MOW changing?</b></p> <p>MJ says yes, people were starting to have mobile phones, but still liked MOW because they (WRVS) had time to give but hadn't changed over to delivering frozen meals.</p> <p><b>And then you became Vice-Chairman for Wales ...</b></p> <p>MJ mentions working at Cardiff, being in charge of Prisons, magistrates' courts, events</p>

	<p>and personnel. Talks about visiting prisons and magistrates' courts where they gave out tea and coffee, mentions the Welsh Show in mid-wales. Moved around to visit North Wales, MJ also gave training being Vice-Chairman was really just a title for all the different things MJ did. Talks about meeting people in Wales and how they received her. Comments on starting a WRVS shop at Abergavenny (Hospital Shop) and had a recruitment drive at supermarket and an old lady asked her if her teeth were real. Mentions looking after the shop when it was first opened because members went to have lunch with Lady Elizabeth Toulson and a man buying flowers which came up on the till as £3500 instead of £3.50.</p> <p><b>Did you do any other activities as Vice-Chairman?</b> MJ explains she was 'all over the place', having a day out with the emergency service and cooking with a soya boiler for the first time. Also acted as a trouble shooter when things were strained. Also mentions looking after the lost children's tent at the Royal Show.</p> <p>[01:10:12] <b>When you resigned [from the trust] you became involved with MOW in Lymington ... what did that involve?</b> MJ comments that this was just going back to grass roots, she just served the meals and enjoyed meeting the people and working with other volunteers. Also mentions you would have thought things would have moved on but there were still cases of people living in squalor but nothing they could do except contact Social Services.</p> <p><b>So not being able to help was that very different from earlier on?</b> MJ explains that before you felt that you could help a bit and talks about what happened to a MOW recipient in Harlow who a WRVS volunteer decided to help and after he was moved by Social Services died within a fortnight of being moved.</p> <p><b>You were also involved with BOW again?</b> MJ explains it was a very small round and had time to talk to people.</p> <p><b>Between 1997 and now was that very different from when you had done it before?</b> MJ says there wasn't much change to the role of the volunteer and the people you met.</p>
[01:19:15]	<p><b>What has happened to BOW and MOW in this area?</b> MJ comments that 'we were told we were going to be made redundant by the County Council and that was it'. Also mentions an award for MOW but they were never told by WRVS what happened to it, 'left us with a sour taste'. But MJ says that she has so many happy memories.</p> <p><b>Have you taken on any other roles with WRVS?</b></p>

	<p>MJ mentions not having WRVS in the area anymore but being told they can help at Andover. Also talks about being asked to help when West Sussex volunteers went on strike last year when they were told they would be made redundant.</p> <p><b>Have there been any other changes that have affected you as a volunteer?</b>  MJ says no, she has had a wonderful life with WRVS but would have liked to have gone on just a little bit more. However MJ is not going to drive up to Andover.</p>
<p>[01:19:15]</p> <p>[01:22:46]</p>	<p><b>More recent changes to the organisation and conclusions</b></p> <p><b>Where would you say is Royal Voluntary Service's place in society today?</b>  MJ says she really doesn't know also mentions that the organisations communication of what they do has always been bad. Explains that you always used to see WRVS on the news but don't see them anymore and the magazine doesn't tell you anything. In the past they worked more as a team and a family. MJ also thinks that's the future and it's up to RVS to get it right but doesn't really know what they do anymore. MJ thinks grass root volunteers are feeling neglected.</p> <p><b>What would you say was your most treasured or memorable moment with WRVS?</b>  MJ says she has had so many happy memories, enjoyed doing Information Desks at Wimbledon, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service.</p> <p><b>You mentioned the Information desks at Wimbledon: what were you doing on those desks?</b>  MJ mentions that you went to learn how it worked, the questions they were asked by visitors. Talks about a teacher abandoning children on the bus because they went on the wrong day, a child having appendicitis and having to find the teacher who was responsible for them. After five Years, MJ was asked to be in charge and talks about the members who came to help on the desks, particularly a lady from Scotland who was very excited to be there but 'didn't quite fit in' and what she said to Mary Corser when she visited the information desks. Also comments on wearing a milometer one year and walking 67 miles to visit the desks and having tickets to watch the matches.</p> <p><b>And do you have anything else you would like to share about your time with WRVS?</b>  MJ says that it was completely different from what you did at home.</p>