

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Summary Sheet	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 Wirral's 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.	

Time (HH:MM:SS)	Synopsis
[00:00:02]	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Judith, would you just like to introduce yourself? JK talks about joining the WRVS in 1972 in the Wirral, describing that she moved over to Grantham in 1990 and joined the WRVS there. In Wirral she was MOW Organiser and local organiser and became District Secretary and MOW Organiser in Grantham. Lists the numerous services that WRVS provided in Grantham such as: MOW, tea bars and clothing department.</p> <p>Why did you join WRVS? JK, stated that she was not sure why she joined, stating that her mother had belonged to WRVS but that she did not feel this was a factor. JK said that she was not working at the time and wanted to do something useful. JK then explains that she had a local village store and post office so had to leave voluntary work for a while before taking it up again.</p> <p>How did you find out about WRVS on the Wirral? JK knew several people who were involved in some way with the WRVS and it was through them that she found out about it.</p> <p>What did you know about WRVS before you joined? Very little, explains that she didn't know that the WRVS did anything more than MOW. Explains that on the Wirral they did Hospital Tea Bar at Arrow Park Hospital and Magistrates Tea Bar. Tells a story of her friend who went to work at the magistrate's court and that everyone was terribly impressed until they said they were only going there to serve cups of tea. Also talks about there being an emergency services team and that although she was not a member of this she get roped in occasionally such as manning the tea bar as part of the Hillsborough Disaster 'together sessions' which were held to help those who had been bereaved and effected by the disaster.</p> <p>What are your earliest memories of volunteering with WRVS? Earliest memory was somebody saying to JK on her first morning that '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 the corner both of them fell over in the boot of the car'. Made an impression because she had visions of this. Also remembers being impressed by how desperately alone some of the people who she visited were and explains that they did a seven day service on the Wirral. She describes how this was funded and why volunteers were happy to provide a full weeks</p>

	service.
[00:06:39]	<p>Meals on Wheels</p> <p>How would you describe a typical MOW round? Describes that there were no computers so cards were used for each recipient, describes the difficulty of some of the recipients not being there or not answering when she arrived, resulting in having to call the police. This then changed and the volunteer had to go to Social Services to report any issues with JK giving an example of this.</p> <p>Where did you collect the meals from? In West Kirby where there was a swimming pool and adjacent complex, where there was also a large kitchen where the meals were collected from. At a later stage the kitchen at the school [Does not mention a name] was equipped so the meals could be picked up from there. JK describes the containers which were used.</p>
[00:09:42]	<p>What sort of food were you providing? JK describes that at West Kirby it was cooked from fresh but when the kitchen at the school was used it was all frozen food. This would be delivered in a metal container with a desert and a main course. JK mentions that there were complaints if the food served was a salad and that some of the recipient did not always like the choice of desert and provides examples. JK says that recipients liked their meat and two veg and their steamed puddings.</p> <p>Did you have another volunteer who went out and delivered the meals with you? Always went in two's during the week and that occasionally on weekends, as the round was smaller, people would go alone.</p>
[00:11:16]	<p>Did MOW on the Wirral change while you were delivering there? JK says that it did not change a lot apart from the kitchen moving location, but that it did change a lot shortly after JK left as it was then organised all from Wallasey and that all the cards were distributed from there. Mentions the introduction of the WRVS car instead of using their own vehicles and that the Local Authority also provided a van to work alongside the WRVS car.</p>
[00:12:17]	<p>Tea Bars</p> <p>You also mentioned that there was a Hospital Tea Bar that WRVS were involved with on the Wirral? JK states that this was at Arrow Park and that this is what she did when she first started.</p> <p>How would you describe the Tea Bar at the Hospital? JK describes it as being reasonably well equipped and basic and that there was nothing special about it.</p>
[00:12:59]	50th Anniversary of WRVS

[00:13:09]	<p>Were you still on the Wirral when it was the 50th Anniversary of WRVS? JK says yes she was.</p> <p>How did you celebrate the 50th Anniversary? JK says she thinks that they had a garden party on the Wirral and that a garden party was held at Buckingham Palace and Organisers went to that but if you were an organiser of a project you got a chance to go to No.10 Downing Street and that she was very lucky to be invited to No.10 Downing Street and that she thinks her name was drawn out of a hat of organisers for her area. Describes that the weather in London was 'Like a cauldron' but that everyone had to wear their WRVS uniform.</p> <p>Did you meet Margaret Thatcher while you were there? JK says she did.</p> <p>How did you feel about that experience? JK explains that it was great to be walking up that staircase with photographs all the way up of previous Prime Ministers and that there was a feeling of pride. JK says that Margaret Thatcher was very flattering and details what Margaret Thatcher said about the WRVS. She also mentions Sir Philip Woodfield survey of the WRVS. JK mentions that she felt the WRVS needed streamlining and that there was a lot of paper work involved in MOW.</p>
[00:15:52]	<p>Work in Grantham</p> <p>You mentioned you moved to Grantham? JK explains that her husband took early retirement and as they had lived in Grantham before he wanted to return and that JK was not particularly keen but decided that they would. JK determined that she would not join WRVS again due to the time commitment but that she eventually did.</p>
[00:16:36]	<p>What services were you involved with in Grantham? JK says she was initially involved in the Hostess Scheme at the hospital, to welcome people into the hospital. Describes this project and that it was not particularly challenging but that until the office closed down the scheme kept going. Mentions the difficulty in getting mileage expenses paid.</p>
[00:18:13]	<p>You were also a secretary in the Grantham Office, what did that involve? JK explains that the Grantham Office had been without an organiser or a secretary for quite some time until she was asked if she would become secretary and she said yes but stated that she did not want to be the organiser. Explained that the role involved producing the lists for MOW each day and contacting members to send in reports and dealing with the paper work.</p> <p>Where was the Grantham office? It was in St Catherine's Road and the WRVS, the Volunteer Bureau, CAB and the Samaritans all worked out of the same pair of houses which had been converted to make offices.</p>
[00:20:02]	<p>How would you describe the building the office was in?</p>

	<p>JK says it was not a terribly convenient building as it was on four floors which proved difficult when the new disabled laws came in as it was almost impossible to convert it. JK also describes the layout of the office which included the clothing department.</p> <p>Did Grantham have a clothing store at that time?</p> <p>JK says yes and that's where it was, and then explains how this was used both at Grantham and the one which was located on the Wirral. JK gives examples of customers and talks about a woman who brought in a very nice designer outfit which was sold to buy additional items for the clothing store which upset the person who donated it. Also describes the problem of people giving their WRVS uniform away to charity shops or throwing it away which allowed people to use it to gain access to people's houses.</p>
[00:24:22]	<p>When you found that people were using the uniforms when they had been thrown away was that on the Wirral?</p> <p>It was on the Wirral.</p> <p>Here in Grantham what services were you involved with?</p> <p>JK talks about a building which was converted in to a Magistrates Court and the tea bar that the WRVS ran there and talks about the difficulties when the staff at the Court were provided with their own kitchen meaning they no longer used the tea bar. JK describes that it was mainly successful for providing the lunches for the many training days held at the Court.</p>
[00:25:51]	<p>What did you serve at the tea bar at the Magistrates Court?</p> <p>JK describes that they sold sandwiches, crisps, tea, coffee, fizzy drinks.</p> <p>Did any profits from that?</p> <p>JK says yes, and that the profits from the Magistrates Court may have gone in to community projects or back in to the WRVS but that she really is not sure what happened to them. She then describes that the profits made from the tea bar at the Hospital always went back to the Hospital.</p>
[00:26:59]	<p>How often did you help at the Magistrates Tea Bar?</p> <p>JK says that she did not help at the tea bar except if they were very short of volunteers and that she was not on the general rota. JK talks about doing the shopping for the tea bar for six to eight weeks whilst the organiser was on leave with a broken leg.</p>
[00:27:31]	<p>Prison tea bar</p> <p>Did you also get involved in prison tea bar?</p> <p>JK says yes, in Stockholm Prison and that she thinks they worked Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday and that two people would go and serve biscuits and crisps, no fresh food, cups of tea, coffee, fizzy drinks.</p> <p>Did you have to get all of the food from a certain caterer for the prison tea bar?</p> <p>JK comments that she thinks a list was given to the Prison and they ordered the stock. JK describes an incident involving a WRVS charity box which was not locked away which the trusted prisoners who cleaned the hall felt had been left to tempt them.</p>

[00:29:03]	<p>Did you just serve visitors at the tea bar? JK says yes but that visitors could purchase food and drink for the prisoners but that the prisoners were not allowed to come up to the tea bar.</p> <p>When you went in to the prison was there a process that you had to go through? JK talks about there being a turnstile that they had to go through and describes a time when they were asked if they would take some drugs in so that the dogs could have experience of finding them.</p> <p>How did you feel about having to go through that process to get in to the tea bar? JK states that it was expected as it was a prison and therefore it would have been ridiculous if they had been let in without being checked.</p> <p>[00:30:26] Were there any other services that you were involved with in Grantham? JK talks again about the Hostess Service.</p>
[00:32:50]	<p>MOW in Grantham</p> <p>Were you also involved in MOW in Grantham? Yes.</p> <p>Was that different to MOW on the Wirral? JK comments that it was not really different expect that they had a computer by that time and that instead of using cards they had a computer print out each day. Also describes that everybody came to the office to collect their sheets for the day.</p> <p>Did you go on any deliveries? JK says yes she did and that she thinks meals were delivered five days a week.</p> <p>Did that service close down eventually? JK describes that it did close down because Lincolnshire County Council decided they could run the service themselves. When the MOW service finished the office also closed as that was the main function of the office.</p> <p>Were there any other changes to WRVS at the time when everything else was closing down? JK comments that she did not think so, not any changes that made a difference to WRVS in Grantham.</p>
[00:34:35]	<p>Books on Wheels</p> <p>You also mentioned that there was a books at home, books on wheels scheme in Grantham, how were WRVS involved with that? JK describes that they provided the volunteers and sent letter to WRVS customers making them aware of this scheme but that there was little take up. She also explains the possible reason why this was and also how the process worked for those who used the service. Mainly the library organised the service and WRVS provided the volunteers, with the library paying their mileage.</p>
[00:36:38]	<p>Did you role as secretary change?</p>

	JK talks about the organiser leaving and her therefore, taking on the role of organiser.
[00:37:12]	<p>Did you visit volunteers on their projects? JK says that yes they did, particularly MOW. She also describes that they tried once a year to have a buffet lunch to bring all of the volunteers together from various villages. JK also talks about the difficulty of contacting people via letter and phone and that they no longer have communal coffee mornings together now that the office is closed.</p> <p>Did you provide any training for volunteers? JK comments that it was largely on the job training and new volunteers were always accompanied by somebody else.</p>
[00:39:28]	<p>Did you start any new project when you were organiser? JK says that the Magistrates Court was a new service, and talks about the closing of the tea bars in prisons and magistrates courts.</p> <p>How did you feel about WRVS pulling out of a lot of services that they had done? JK talks about WRVS volunteers continuing in the tea bar at the prison as prison volunteers opposed to WRVS volunteers.</p>
[00:41:02]	<p>Did you move on to doing fundraising for the organisation? JK says no and that she has never done any fundraising for WRVS.</p>
[00:41:23]	<p>When did you retire from WRVS? JK says that she retired when they closed down the Grantham office, about ten years ago.</p>
[00:41:42]	<p>Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to mention? JK describes a story about MOW which happened whilst she was secretary which was that a volunteer had been cooking meals by herself in her own kitchen in Lancaster three times a week for ten years and had dealt directly with Social Services and that the office in Grantham had no idea. JK then mentions the Emergency Service team in Grantham and describes a fire in Goadsby Hall and how she was called at five in the morning to rally the emergency team, describing what they were involved in when they arrived at the fire. Finally JK wanted to mention Mary Willows who was the volunteer in charge of the Clothing Department and how she managed the office as well in the absence of an organiser until JK arrived.</p>
[00:47:00]	<p>Conclusion</p> <p>In your opinion what was the biggest change to WRVS while you were involved? JK talks about the increase in male volunteers and how there were very few when she started and a large number of male volunteers by the time the office closed. Also mentioned being able to stop writing narrative reports, which she says was a 'great relief to everybody'. JK also mentions the Home Office grant and also the changes after Philip Woodfield report and the effect on trading projects having to fund themselves and that non funding projects were not of interest anymore, there was a change in</p>

	attitude.
[00:48:43]	How did you feel about those changes? JK says that she can't remember but that she felt that she accepted like everybody else that the character of the service was changing and that this was inevitable.
	Do you know what Royal Voluntary Service does in Grantham? JK says no and that it doesn't do anything in Grantham and that she has not had any contact from the organisation since she retired ten years ago and that this project is the first contact she has had.
[00:50:38]	What is your most memorable moment of volunteering for WRVS? JK says that it would going to No.10 Downing Street and that her RP took her for afternoon tea at the House of Lords first, so it was a very memorable moment.