

# Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

## Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

**Ref. No.:** MILM

**Collection Title:** Voices of Volunteering

**Interviewee's Surname:** Miller

**Title:** Mrs

**Interviewee's Forenames:** Margaret

**Gender:** F

**Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:**

Volunteer 1939-Present (2015) Glasgow

War Work 1939-1945

Post-war Work (Meals-on-Wheels and Hospital Escort Service)

Lightburn Harmony Stroke Club 1973-2015

**Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To):** 02/06/2015 (Track 1)

**Location of Interview:** interviewees Home, Glasgow.

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

**Name of Interviewer:** Jennifer Anne Hunt

**Type of Recorder:** H5 Zoom

**Total no. tracks:** 1

**Mono or Stereo:** Stereo

**Recording Format:** WAV 44.1/16

**Total Duration:** 01:22:25

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

**Copyright:** Royal Voluntary Service

**Clearance:** Yes

**Interviewer's Notes:**

Margaret Miller (MM) talks about her time as a WVS/WRVS/ Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) volunteer from 1939-2015 in Glasgow. MM was first involved during the war with collecting items and distributing them to people who had been bombed out during the Second World War (the War). She was also involved with visiting soldiers in hospital and talking to them or bringing them gifts. After the War MM was involved in Meals-on-Wheels (MOW) and the Hospital Escort Service. In 1973 she was asked to set-up and run a stroke club called the Lightburn Harmony Stroke Club. MM talks about the club and the different members she has had over the years and fundraising for the club. She also comments on her Long Service medal and 2 BEMs, attending the 50<sup>th</sup> WRVS anniversary, a Garden Party at Holyrood in 2014 and her views on how RVS has change over the years.

Time (HH:MM:SS)	Synopsis
[00:00:09]	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>Please can you introduce yourself?</b> MM talks about being a volunteer for a long time and thoroughly enjoying all her work for RVS. Joined in 1939 and later became WRVS.</p> <p><b>Why did you join WVS?</b> MM talks about just coming home from holiday and seeing a barrage balloon and speaking to a lady about it as she passed and then decided to do something and join WVS.</p> <p><b>Where did you volunteer?</b> Shettleston/Springboig, group started up in school premises and they worked from there. Talks about having a store to help people who were bombed out and collecting everyday items. Does not know where the items which were not required went.</p> <p><b>What did you know about WVS before you joined?</b> Very little, herd of it but not in great detail, willing to help if people were bombed out, friends helped her.</p> <p><b>What is your earliest memory of being a member of WVS?</b> Talks about her neighbour and starting the group, collecting items, towels bedding and the neighbour gave her half a new set of china.</p>
[00:04:53]	<p><b>War Work 1939-1945</b></p> <p><b>Was there anything else you did with WVS during the War?</b> Talks about going to visit wounded soldiers at a small hospital once a week, families to far away to visit them, mentions shop keepers being very helpful. <b>Why were the shop keepers helpful?</b> MM comments on having no cream or chocolate biscuits and kept by shop keepers for special customers herself included.</p> <p><b>Was there anything else you did for WVS in the hospitals?</b> Mostly just talking to soldiers and staff, providing what people needed</p> <p><b>Did the soldiers come from different areas?</b> Yes, talks about families not being able to travel to see them</p> <p><b>Did you wear a uniform for WVS?</b> Yes MM describes the uniform</p> <p>MM mentions the stories of the orange and the stirrup pump, trained by the fire brigade to use a stirrup pump to put out small fires.</p> <p><b>Do you have any other memories of volunteering during the War?</b> MM talks about going to a vegetable shop and asking for something different so the shop keeper gave her to large Jaffa Oranges, nurse gave it to a patient just coming out of chloroform.</p>

[00:11:01]	<p><b>When the War came to an end did you stay a member of WVS?</b> Still a member</p> <p><b>What did you do with WVS after the War?</b> Started the first Stroke Club in Scotland and now being running for 40 odd years (1973), way back in membership now as want more than one day a week and prevision to get them to the club.</p>
[00:18:16]	<p><b>Lighburn Harmony Stroke Club 1973-2015</b></p> <p><b>When it started was it just one day a week?</b> Yes, still is – showed some pictures of the stroke club – talks about losing all the paper work in a fire. Easter bonnet parade, talks about other activities in the club.</p> <p><b>What is a normal day in the club?</b> Starts at 12 o'clock with a light lunch, then talk among themselves, personal news. MM talks about making a big mistake by not allowing bingo. Prof Isaacs would bring in doctors from all over the world to see the club. Had people to come in and play the violin and piano and had a sing song before they went home.</p> <p>MM comments on it being more like a family than a Stroke Club, talking about their own families. Went Christmas shopping with the members and one man's experience of Christmas shopping with the club, to get a purse for his wife and then missing out on Christmas shopping the next year and so MM took him separately. One store in Glasgow would open at night for the club members to go in and shop.</p> <p>MM talks about a man who fell at home when his wife went out to work but got back up because he was thinking of what Mrs Miller would say if she saw him lying on the floor. When his wife got home the lunch was ready and he was smiling because he knew that was why he was a member of the club. Comments on the purpose of the club to give them back their confidence.</p> <p><b>Is that why you set the club up?</b> Mentions it was Professor Isaacs who wanted to start a club and wrote to all the local churches but nobody would help, MM was going on holiday and could not start the club immediately so the hospital started it and then she took it over when she came back.</p> <p><b>Did you have other volunteers who helped you at the club?</b> Yes had friends, who made tea, treasurer and secretary, really just a family club for years, have not got the same number of members.</p>

<p>[00:21:58]</p>	<p><b>WVS/WRVS work before the Club</b></p> <p>MM talks about MOW in Glasgow, outlying districts in from where MM lived.</p> <p><b>What was a typical MOW round like?</b> Talks about the meals being delivered to the people hot, good meals.</p> <p><b>What sort of food did you serve?</b> Soup, main course and a sweet, three course meal, plate and cutlery all laid out and MM served the meal to them.</p> <p><b>Who did you deliver the meals to?</b> People social workers had recommended to WVS had to go and pick it up from the Hospital. Talks about taking the containers and washing them up before going home.</p> <p><b>Did you have a hot lock to keep the meals warm?</b> No, had to find out ways of keeping them hot in ordinary vans to be delivered and most of the people were very grateful to get them, just come through the rationing period.</p> <p><b>Do you remember how long you delivered meals for?</b> No, (daughter said five or six years) then asked to do escort work in the hospital. Talks about going with a patient in an ambulance and being stranded at the destination.</p> <p><b>Do you have any other memories of the escort service in the hospital?</b> MM says the one she will never forget is when a girl came into an abortion and taking her mother to the ward who was in a dreadful state.</p>
<p>[00:28:04]</p>	<p><b>Lightburn Harmony Club</b></p> <p>MM talks more about the stroke club and Professor Isaacs, Easter Eggs and being given extra one year, delivered them to people who would not get any. One lady cried when she gave her an Easter egg, MM thought there was a lot of people who got nothing and tried to pick them out.</p> <p>Talks about her daughter going to a warehouse and the manager asking her why she was buying different items and are you interested in some other stock, she said no but thought MM might be so the manager said to come on Thursday night and speak to him. Putting things in big trolley for MM and MM was thinking she thought she would not be able to pay for it and she said she could not afford it and the manager gave it to her for free for the Sale of Work they had for the club every year. This is what helped to fund the club every year. The neighbours knew MM had toys to sell for Christmas and they would buy them and pay a bit each week until they had paid for them then they collected them for the children's Christmas presents.</p> <p>MM talks about a lady who was not going on holiday one year and asked MM if she was the lady who did all the charity work and gave MM the money she would have spent on holiday, would not give MM her name.</p>

[00:35:15]	<p><b>What did you do with the money you raised for the club?</b> MM used it for the club members to take them out in the summer and at Christmas for a Christmas dinner and they never had to pay for anything. MM talks about a man who did not mix with members or try and get out of his wheel chair. She asked if he would like to go with them for the Christmas dinner and did not want to go if they were going to a café, MM decided to ask again later and he replied 'if you'll go with me hen I'll go anywhere' after that he was more sociable in the club.</p> <p><b>Have you had a lot of members over the years?</b> Yes talks about being in hospital two years ago and staff saying that people had come to the stroke club and it was good for them. Members only really stopped coming when they died. MM mentions them being regarded as forgotten people when she started the club. As people got their confidence they got the benefits of the stroke club.</p> <p><b>Have you had a long service medal for your work with WRVS?</b> Yes, as does her daughter, has every bar that it is possible to have, talks about getting the BEM and Bar. MM talks about getting a shock with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> BEM. Her daughter talks about writing MM's life story and trying to get it typed up and finding the letter on the table for MM to say she had the first BEM.</p> <p>MM talks about being at Holyrood, for a garden party and her daughter asking the police if she had parked properly and the police coming down to talk to her. Arranged for MM to go into Holyrood without any fuss, then spoke to someone about wheel chair access and found out about the BEM and Bar and went to his boss to tell him who came to ask questions eventually the Queen's Equerry asked if MM wanted to greet the Queen as the Queen was interested in MM's volunteering work.</p> <p><b>Is there anything else you remember about that day and meeting the Queen?</b> MM talks about it being wonderful and talking to Prince Phillip.</p>
[00:49:21]	<p><b>Did you meet Lady Reading?</b> No never did, had a letter from her, talks about being invited to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of WRVS and the Queen Mother visiting it.</p> <p><b>Did you do anything in Glasgow to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup>?</b> No, all celebrations were down in London</p> <p>MM talks about being told she would not get anything form WRVS to run the club so she ran a sale of work once a year. Knew someone who was employed in ladies wear and needed to pick some bra cuttings to make different items for the club and took the car out. Then someone higher up wanted to use the car and could not because MM had it. Mentions what they made from items she was given for the club. Comments on making draught excluders out of the bra packing.</p>
[00:55:01]	<p><b>Did you do any other fundraising for the club/WRVS?</b> MM talks about the receiving of a mini bus, not having full use of it as it was for everyone in WRVS, made Dougals with hanky boxes and material. When the club started all WRVS gave them was a tin mug and a kettle, Miss Johnson saying you are</p>

	<p>on your own, everyone in those days was exceptionally kind, someone kept samples for them, being given a return order of wax jackets to raise money for the club at £20.</p> <p>MM comments that while Professor Isaacs was in the hospital they had the space for free and when he left had to pay rent (1976).</p>
[01:00:01]	<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p><b>Do you think that WRVS has changed?/How has it changed for you?</b>  Not the closeness among all the clubs, talks about the group in the prison canteen and not being able to put the profits back into the prison. Had meetings every month and you knew what other groups were doing, MM does not think this happens now. MM had people come to see how to run a stroke club, talks about a man coming and asking how to run a club if you did not have certain things and was told to ask MM because 'she just runs it her own way'. MM took Miss Johnston and Mrs Bonfur (WRVS organisers) on a trip, when they asked her 'Mrs Miller do you know that your members are drinking alcohol on the prom'. Talks about someone being late to get back to the coach, could not let people go too far on their own.</p>
[01:05:20]	<p>MM comments on collecting broken goods from a shop to mend and then sell to raise money for the club. Mentions the other week someone talking about the sales which they do not have now.</p> <p><b>Do you fund the club in different ways now?</b>  MM talks about people having more opportunities to relearn skills and having to get food from other places. MM says she was always accused of flirting with men from the club.</p> <p><b>Is there anything which we have not mentioned that you would like to discuss?</b>  MM comments that she has not</p> <p><b>What has been the most significant change to WRVS since 1939?</b>  MM mentions a lot of Scottish members because they have not had anywhere to meet as all the offices disappeared and now to far apart and now you do not know what is happening. Mentions stepping outside the rules occasionally for the good of the club.</p>
[01:10:23]	<p><b>What did you think when they changed the name to RVS?</b>  MM does not think the name change made much difference, mentions only being involved in the stroke club and not really being involved in as much anymore</p> <p><b>Where do you think RVS belongs in Society today?</b>  MM says she really does not know, talks about coming through the War in this district which is one of the poorest in Glasgow and shown a lot of kindness there for the work done with WVS/WRVS.</p> <p><b>What do you think is the future for RVS?</b>  MM says she would not like to offer an opinion, does not think it will ever be the same family service it was when she joined, talks about publicity by word of mouth, does not</p>

[01:16:32]	<p>think she ever got a refusal.</p> <p>MM talks about going to see a man to get samples of things she could sell on to bring money into the club. Talks about a lady being sent a thank you letter for sending items.</p> <p><b>What has been your most memorable moment?</b></p> <p>Greetings from the Queen at the Garden party at Holyrood, MM talks about going to London for VE Day celebrations in May 2015. Talks about the Stroke Club and a man having orange and changing it to lemonade when MM was not looking.</p>
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