

## Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

### Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

**Ref. No.:** STAB

**Collection Title:** Voices of Volunteering

**Interviewee's Surname:** Statham

**Title:** Mrs

**Interviewee's Forenames:** Barbara

**Gender:** F

**Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:**

Volunteer 1965-Present (2014)

1965-1969 Meals-on-Wheels Driver Bedford

1969-1979 Meals-on-Wheels Organiser Bedford

1979-1996 County Hospitals Bedford

Boys Holidays, Housemother

Emergency Feeding

1996-2001 Helping in the Office, Bedford

2001-2012 Social Transport, Bedford

2012-2014 Befriending/Good Neighbour Scheme

Bedford

**Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To):** 08/07/2014 (Track1)

**Location of Interview:** Interviewees home, Bedford, Bedfordshire

**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:** 01:32:19

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

**Copyright:** Royal Voluntary Service

**Clearance:** Yes

**Interviewer's Notes:**

Barbara Statham (BS) talks about her time as a WVS and WRVS volunteer from 1965 to 2014. BS started with Meals-on-Wheels (MOW) in 1965 as a driver and went on to be MOW Organiser. Talks about working at the local office in Bedford and the other activities which took place there such as emergency services (ES) and finding work for young offenders in the office. Comments on moving on from MOW to

County Hospital work, starting off as an assistant and then taking over dealing with profits. Talks about opening South Wing at Bedford Hospital on the day she retired from hospital work. Also talks about the roles of volunteers in the different hospitals. Involved with children's holidays from 1980 for under privileged boys as housemother. Also mentions working in court canteens, contact centres working in the office answering enquiries and talks about moving offices to Rush Court. BS talks about taking on Social Transport from home and how the work diminished. Comments on the good companions work, how it started, how she became involved, over sixties clubs and how they have diminished. Talks about more recent changes to the organisation with the loss of MOW. In 1994-1996 WRVS started to disappear in the Bedfordshire area when the offices closed. In 1998 BS took on publicity for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in the local museum. Currently (2014) BS visits an elderly woman to help with correspondences as a good companion. Discusses here opinions on the current organisation Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) and how wonderful it was in the past.

Time (HH:MM:SS)	Synopsis
[00:00:09]	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>Barbara, would you just like to introduce yourself?</b> BS talks about becoming a member in 1965 through being asked to be a helper and MOW driver. Comments on not really knowing about WRVS but within four years becoming MOW Organiser.</p> <p><b>What are your earliest memories of WVS?</b> BS talks about meeting people, how the work was appreciated, mentions the office being awful and moving to the Kimbolton Road office. Talks about the different offices, the number of MOW rounds, how many people they visited and dealing with Social Services before it became Social Services as each round had a welfare officer. Talks about managing the recipients, where the meals were collected from, the vans which were used to deliver the meals and how this changed.</p> <p><b>Why did you decide to join WVS and MOW in 1965?</b> BS comments that a friend asked her to help when her partner couldn't go on a round.</p> <p><b>What was your opinion of WVS when you joined?</b> Did not know much about it not even what they had done during the Second World War until BS was in it.</p>
[00:04:58]	<p><b>Meals-on-Wheels</b></p> <p><b>Your first role was a driver for MOW</b> BS says she was a driver or a helper and did two days a week</p> <p><b>Who else did you work with on your MOW rounds?</b> Comments on having one or two permanent helpers, when taking over as organiser had three drivers who came in regularly and others were on a rota to help once a month. BS talks about the Vans which were given by the Round Table; the Van was</p>

<p>[00:11:05]</p>	<p>donated to WVS. Mentions entering vans in the Boat Festival procession in Bedford.</p> <p><b>How would you describe a typical MOW round?</b>  BS talks about when she was organiser and having the lists sorted out, visiting people who were ill, people who shouldn't have been on the list. Gives an anecdote about a lady who moved areas but had to come off at one point because she was discovered cooking her own meal. BS comments on other things they used to do for MOW recipients such as posting letters, ringing the doctor, sometimes they were the only contact for some people.</p> <p><b>What were the meals like that you were serving?</b>  BS 'on the whole they were pretty good'. Talks about the type of food which was served.</p> <p><b>How did you become MOW organiser in 1969?</b>  No one wanted to take on the role so BS volunteered</p> <p><b>What is your earliest memory of your role as MOW Organiser?</b>  BS talks about having to be responsible for money and moving into decimal currency, banking, problems of drivers and volunteers not turning up, talks about duties, before the time of thermometers.</p> <p><b>Can you tell me about the WVS centre?</b>  BS talks about Kimbolton Road, conference room, offices, having a desk in the local office. Mentions storing Soya Boilers and practicing for emergencies, keeping two vans there, making sure vans had MOTS, getting involved with finding work for young offenders in the office.</p> <p>Talks about finishing with MOW and being asked to consider taking on other work for WRVS.</p>
<p>[00:18:32]</p>	<p><b>County Hospitals</b></p> <p><b>Why did you become involved with Hospital work?</b>  Edna woods (county organiser) asked BS if she would enjoy working with hospitals. BS had no idea what it involved, started out as an assistant for a year then took over. Responsible for the profits of all hospitals in the counties including Fairfield and Bronham Psychiatric Hospitals. BS was involved for 13 years giving £265,000 back to hospitals, comments on some of the gifts they gave and getting permission from Headquarters. Talks about having to retire because of age and retiring on the day she opened the new shop at South Wing Hospital Bedford.</p> <p><b>Who were the volunteers you worked with in the hospitals?</b>  Talks about working with local people, talks about the services provided by Luton Hospital. Also comments on volunteers in Bedford Hospital and the services it provided and BS talks about having the shop enlarged and employing someone to work in the shop. In 1993 they opened a baby shop in Bedford Northwing Hospital which moved to maternity at Southwing Hospital.</p>

[00:24:12]	<p>BS discusses Fairfield's shop, electric trolley shop, talks about volunteers having to go onto locked wards, dedication of volunteers. Mentions Bronham hospital closing in 1996, WRVS had been there for 30 years. Talks about working with her husband in the shop at the weekends. In 1989 had a fire at the Hospital, BS talks about what happened and building a new shop and canteen.</p> <p>Mentions about the hospital closing and how the patients were moved around into smaller places which were very different. Other hospitals also lost their shops to retailers. Comments on not volunteering for WRVS but as a hospital volunteer instead.</p>
[00:34:30]	<p><b>Other WRVS work between 1979 and 1996</b></p> <p><b>You also worked with children's holidays, can you tell me about the children's Holidays ...</b></p> <p>BS talks about being asked in 1980 to be housemother in a house in a village for boy's holidays for two years. Mentions having to search through the boy's luggage, what was given to them on arrival and outings funded by Bedfordshire Round Table. BS comments on being with them at night and the difficulty of getting the boys to go to the sleep, the Emergency Team providing the meals. Talks about the trips they went on in more detail and behaviour of the boys. Then BS went to Del Farm for two years to help on the holidays for boys, outings funded by Luton Round Table, talks about one boy who would not go to Bed so BS made him write down why he didn't want to go to bed. The same boy came the next year and told the other boys they had to go to bed or Barbara would make them write something.</p> <p>[00:42:03] Comments on helping with girls holidays at the same time, helped in Northampton on a narrow boat trip, different attitude of the girls and the journey back with some of the girls.</p> <p>[00:44:23] BS mentions working in the courts and arranging flowers in the prison chapel. Also mentions the family meeting centres where the children could meet with parents who didn't live at home.</p> <p>[00:45:42] <b>At the same time you were also in the Bedford Office answering enquiries ...</b></p> <p>BS talks about interviewing, answering the phone, having lunch with other members while the County Organiser told them about her holiday in Barbados. Mentions moving to Rush Court for four years and when it closed taking on social transport. BS worked from home running the service but over the years it diminished. Occasionally met the people using in the service but usually a voice on the phone. Ran social transport for 13 years and told abruptly that she was not needed anymore. Mentions being a good companion for a woman now and who it was set-up by, some of the other services which have diminished including over sixties clubs.</p>
[00:51:14]	<p><b>WRVS work from 1996-2014</b></p> <p>Comments on the office in Kimbolton Road closing and having to sell lots of things they didn't need and giving curtains and carpets going to Homeless and Rootless.</p>

	<p>Rush Court disappeared after four years, not having an office and having a new office in Milton Keynes. Mentions MOW went to Apetito because WRVS lost the tender.</p>
<p>[00:53:26]</p>	<p><b>You said in your letter you were also involved in Emergency Feeding ...</b>  BS talks about going to feed the fire brigade at the fire and one time having to find the fire by looking at the light in the sky. Mentions training at RAE feeding the SAS, making hot meals in the soya boiler, someone put pearl barley in the boiler and it burnt on the bottom. Comments on making breakfast for someone having a party and used a cross trench cooker to make a full English breakfast. BS describes being called out to Yarleswood and feeding the police who came from all over South England (4 years ago). Talks about Edna woods going to meet Ugandan Refugees and taking them to Bedford. There was a clothing appeal for the refugees, invited to have a meal with some people when they had settled in England.</p>
<p>[00:59:42]</p>	<p>BS comments more on what was sold in the hospital shops and trolley shops. WVS/WRVS took a lot of money for the Hospital, also the shop was closed two years after a refurbishment, staff were very upset when it closed. Volunteers worked in three shifts to run the shop.</p>
<p>[01:03:30]</p>	<p><b>How did the centres closing affect you as a volunteer?</b>  BS comments on how everyone seemed to disappear in 1996, had village reps, people working in village halls, talks about helping the county MOW organiser with the administration, mentions area office for three counties. Mentions going up to Park Lane (National Headquarters) also visited Brixton.</p>
<p>[01:07:36]</p>	<p><b>You helped publicise WRVS in 1996 ...</b>  BS was asked to take on publicity and ran a display in the local library for four years, in 1998 she had six weeks in the Museum for 60 years of WRVS. Talks about leaving a book and getting nice comments. Mentions leaving material for people to take so they could become volunteers but only four or five each time. When medals were given out they used to invite people who were high up such as the Mayor and local MPs. Talks about providing lunch for events from a horrible little Kitchen for anyone who visited.</p>
<p>[01:11:45]</p>	<p><b>You now visit people as a volunteer what does that involve?</b>  BS explains that she visits one person every week who did have a visitor before her who 'dropped out'. Comments on helping the woman she visits with correspondence and having a chat. BS has been asked to do other things but she is not able to and feels sorry about this because she would like to help, still gets the odd phone call about social transport because people can't get hold of anyone at the Milton Keynes Office.</p>
<p>[01:14:06]</p>	<p><b>Tell me about receiving you BEM?</b>  Received in 1991, got a letter from the Prime Minister to say it would be awarded, given to her by the Lord Lieutenant. Talks about going to services celebrating those who have been awarded medals such as BEM.</p>

[01:17:22]	<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <p><b>Is there anything else you would like to share about your time with WRVS?</b> BS talks about getting used to talking about different cars which they used, being supported by her Husband with Bronham and Social Transport.</p> <p><b>Since you joined in 1965 how has your opinion of the Organisation changed?</b> Talks about WRVS taking on too many properties, visiting Milton Hill where the Garden party took place for the Queen. Talks about being sorry that WRVS decided just to focus on older people, not helping with children’s holidays and meeting with Association members at the retirement lunch in 2013.</p>
[01:22:33]	<p><b>What is the biggest change you have experienced during your time with WRVS?</b> ‘The Finish in 1996, it was devastating, we were all devastated’. Talks about the rally for members to say what they did. Mentions having very few people left after 1996, people not knowing WRVS now.</p> <p><b>Where would you say RVS’s Place in Society is today?</b> BS says she doesn’t know, used to be fourth from bottom on social services list, talks about getting volunteers from other groups.</p> <p><b>What do you think is the future for RVS?</b> BS says she hopes it will carry on, talks about not receiving magazine from Cardiff. Talks about people enjoying the Magazine, problems of the area being large for people to visit volunteers. Compares changes in RVS to changes in Red Cross services. Talks about volunteers going to Lord Mayor’s procession, Wimbledon and how she would not change her experiences.</p> <p><b>What would you say is your most memorable moment of being a WRVS volunteer?</b> BS mentions her retirement party at Southwing Hospital and her BEM, also mentions the Christmas parties, performing sketches, eating Christmas lunch.</p>