



WVS/WRVS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter No. 6

ROYAL
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Message from the Chairman of WRVS.

We hear these days of so many depressing events, both nationally and internationally, which added to the dreary wet weather we have had, bringing its special problems, all tend to make us feel that good cheer has ceased to be and that there is nothing we can do about it.

For me at least, this is not so, but then I am particularly fortunate, I have the great joy and privilege of reading the Narrative Reports which come in regularly from all over the country and at this time of year as well as the Annual Reports from the Regions.

If you had access to these reports, I know you would share the sense of inspiration I get from the record of splendid work which helps so many hundreds and thousands of people in need.

Of all the splendid things our founder Chairman arranged for WRVS, surely the Narrative Reports were one of the very best. The idea that the woman doing the "Job that Counts" should write the details of her work rather like a letter or a story and without the restriction of formality, has released a whole wealth of information which would delight and encourage all of you who yourselves have played such a great part in our Service.

So impressive are these Reports that I have arranged that extracts from some of them - only a few, alas - should be incorporated within the national Annual Report which I hope will be available within a few weeks.

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Perhaps the fact that I have mentioned the pride and joy which we at Headquarters have in the knowledge of the work being done will help to cheer you as much as it does us. I was reading the book "Majesty" which has been specially written for the Queen's Silver Jubilee Year and some of the words from it come to my mind very readily in the context of the Narrative Reports - diligence, duty, faithfulness, and humour. Whatever it may look like in the Daily Press headlines, there is still plenty of all four around, especially where WRVS is at work.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND
NATIONAL REUNION

The next A.G.M and Reunion will be held on Tuesday, May 24th 1977 at Church House, Holy Trinity Brompton Road, London, S.W.7.

Full particulars will be sent individually to each member.

"The Job that Counts"

Whenever W.V.S/W.R.V.S. Members meet together they mourn the passing of the W.R.V.S. Magazine (or Bulletin as some of us still call it.) We hope that the enclosed copy of the fourth issue of "The Job That Counts" and news of what is happening in some of the Regions will keep us in touch. Please, please send items of interest from Counties and Districts for inclusion in the next Association News Letter, to be published later this year.

Membership of the Association

Some W.R.V.S. Members still regard the Association as for "Old Girls Only". This point was raised at the last Annual General Meeting and the Chairman of the Association, Miss Halpin, promised that a note of clarification would be included in this Newsletter.

The W.V.S./W.R.V.S. Association has always been open to all who have been active members for five years. That is the reason for our somewhat clumsy name. Members who joined the Service after the "R" was conferred upon us are as welcome as those whose work was done while we were still plain W.V.S. Although the majority of Association Members are semi-retired, most give some form of regular service and among our members are Regional Administrators, County and District Organisers. You can't be much more active than that.' So please bring this Five Year Rule to the notice of your W.R.V.S. friends.

Ex-Overseas Members

As the result of a suggestion made at the last A.G.M. steps have been taken to bring the Association to the notice of overseas members. News has been received from one such member which may interest any who served with her. Miss Lorna Vere Hodge served in the early days of W.V.S. Overseas. She started in India, was posted to Burma, Japan and finally B.A.O.R. She had a major operation last year and is now the proud possessor of a fibre glass valve in her heart. Better still, she is back with us and helping with W.R.V.S. work in Guildford where she is now living.

ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

News of Members

We are delighted that our Hon. Secretary, Doreen Harris has made a good recovery from a bad heart attack and after many weeks of enforced idleness is back at work at Headquarters with the Archives and work on our behalf.

Many will remember Pearl Lawson Johnston a W.V.S. Member from the beginning and for many years County Organiser for Bedfordshire. The following appeared in the "Peterborough" column of the Daily Telegraph on 25th October 1976:-

"Pearl Lawson Johnston, sister of Lord Luke of Pavenham, has just been appointed the first woman Deputy Lieutenant of Bedfordshire.

She has been named for the traditionally male-held post after years of service to the County. Since 1941 Miss Lawson Johnston has been a Magistrate and is a former Chairman of the Bedford and Sharnbrook Petty Sessional Division. She is County President of the St. John Ambulance Brigade, and once served on the County Educational Committee."

Mrs. Payze M.B.E. former C.B. Organiser for Southend and now living in New Zealand, would like to hear from former friends and colleagues.

Mrs. Bishop for many years in charge of the London Regional Clothing Depot at Kew, is now living in Wiltshire. She says "Give my regards to all friends at H.Q. and Region. I often think of you all and miss the work and fun we had over the years. I often wish I was back despite my 81 years."

Many members will be interested to have news of Miss Crombie who was Centre Organiser of Camberwell, London, during all the war years. On retirement she moved to Hurstpierpoint where she lived for several years. She then decided to go to Rhodesia, but did not feel settled and was homesick for England. She has now returned here and has been living at the W.R.V.S. Residential Club at Hove, but has recently had to go to a Nursing Home in Haslemere. Any letters from people who remember her would, we are sure, be very welcome.

Obituaries.

Alice C. Johnston, C.B.E., who died on October 8th while on holiday in Malta, is mourned by her many friends and colleagues throughout W.R.V.S. Dame Mary Smieton who knew her well, writes:-

" Alice Johnston had her upbringing in Edinburgh. She was the daughter of a Scottish Judge, Lord Sands, well known also for his work for the unity of the Scottish churches. Her school and college life was passed against a family background of public service with its regular intermission of the long vacations spent in remote West Highland houses, for her father was an ardent stalker and shot. The steady pattern gave Alice a stability and poise which contributed much to the success of a career that comprised much contact with people, a good deal of public speaking and considerable administrative responsibility.

Coming down from Oxford in 1925 with an Honours Degree in Modern History, taken at Lady Margaret Hall, she started her career by training and working as a speaker and organiser for the Conservative Party. This led to a tutorship at the Bonar Law College at Ashridge where she began to develop her specialised knowledge of the social services and her capacity to deal with people.

The War introduced her to the work which was to be her main occupation for over 30 years, until she retired just two years before her death. She joined the Women's Voluntary Services Headquarters Staff in 1939, to take charge of its children's evacuation department and remained to become one of Lady Reading's most senior and trusted administrators, specialising in all of those activities by which the WVS has supported, and helped to develop and on occasions, initiate the social services provided by the Local Authorities.

Alice developed a quality which is rare and much to be prized. She was a good case worker in the field but she had also an administrative capacity which made her a competent head of department, an excellent negotiator with government departments and Local Authorities and a constructive "committee woman".

Her expertise was publicly recognised by her appointment in 1947 as a part-time member of the Assistance Board to which she gave many years of service, becoming subsequently, its Deputy Chairman. Later she served as a member of the Royal Commission on Local Government in London. For this and her work for WVS she was awarded the CBE.

Alice Johnston was tenacious of old friendships and will be deeply missed. We loved her for her sterling character and loyalty, her humour and art and for a certain elegance and quiet charm."

Diana Radford, C.B.E., who was well known to so many members in all parts of the country, we are very sad to have to record, died suddenly on Thursday February 10th.

The following is a copy of the Bidding prayer used at her Cremation Service which was attended by a great many members of Headquarters and other friends.

"We give thanks for Diana Radford's dedication to the development of WRVS Housing Association - her compassion and care for all concerned - for her creative genius and sensitivity to circumstances of environment and especially for her spontaneous and artistic talent in the use of colour"
Above all we give thanks for her faithful and loving devotion to the work and ideals of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service."

Eastern Region

There is little to report. It was hoped to organise a Luncheon Party and Any Questions Session, but this had to be cancelled owing to lack of support.

Now that the Region has been broken down into Areas it is hoped that more interest will be shown in the Association as distances will not be so great.

South East Region

The second and final "Get Together" was beautifully organised by Hastings members and held in the All Saints Hall, Hastings, on the 21st September. 43 Members (9 of whom joined at the party,) enjoyed the delicious food, a glass of wine and a good gossip! Our Guest Speaker was Miss Hawthorn Barnes, Regional Emergency Services Organiser who brought us up to date with outstanding events in the Counties and Districts during the past six months. There was also a speaker from the Old Hastings Preservation Society who gave us a fascinating talk on the Old Town.

South East Region(contd.)

Please note

Miss Wright, Regional Administrator has invited us to hold our next Reunion at the Regional Office, 6 Galverley Park Gardens, Tunbridge Wells, on Tuesday July 28th. at 12.30pm. Please contact Miss Barnard,

During the year, there have been additional demands on our Service. We are encouraged that our membership has increased.

The underlying theme of all our Trainings, Workshops and Information Days this year, has been to give our members a wider knowledge, not only of our Service, but also of the Statutory Authorities and Voluntary Organisations concerned with welfare. This closer understanding is already being shown in new work and 'caring' groups.

A National Survey of our work in hospitals is already resulting in expansion of service for the patient and the family both in hospital and on return home.

A new Club for Stroke victims has been opened and in another district, under the guidance of the Speech Therapist, members give individual help to patients overcoming speech difficulties.

Work for Young families continues to grow and the six new Mother and Baby Clubs are providing new friendships and interest.

Lunch Clubs too are increasing and we now have 67 in this Region, eleven in one rural district alone!

As new work grows we recognise gratefully the firm foundations on which the work is built by members, many of whom are now members of the Association.

South Western Region

Everyone will have heard of the gas explosion in Park Street, Bristol on 29th December 1976, which demolished shops and offices, blew the windows out of the Council House and disrupted the business life of the area for some considerable time.

Immediately the incident was made public, we offered our services and a WRVS team was called out to supply hot drinks, soup and sandwiches to the Gas Board men, the Firemen and the Police. WRVS members were on duty from 10 a.m. on the 29th until 7.p.m on 30th December, with 20 members working on rota.

Letters of appreciation were received in due course from the Chief Constable, the Chief Fire Officer, the Gas Board and the Local Authority. As Bristol WRVS had not been called on for many years to help in an emergency, we were very pleased that they had done the job to everyone's satisfaction and shown that WRVS teams have a real and necessary function in a serious emergency.

We were very pleased with the initiative shown by our Regional Old People's Welfare Organiser who, as Chairman of our Residential Club in Exeter, applied to the Manpower Commission for help under the Job Creation Scheme to decorate the interior of the Club. As a consequence, work to the value of £3,000 was carried out at a cost to the Club of about £500 and gave employment for 4 months to 4 skilled men who would otherwise have been out of work.

South Western Region (contd.)

A Reunion of Association members was held in Bristol at the Regional Office on Thursday, November 18th. Mrs. Tuckett, the Regional Administrator, welcomed all those present but, unfortunately, had to leave because of pressure of work. The Regional Representative then took over as Chairman.

A few comments on the last Annual General Meeting were given for the benefit of those who had not been able to attend, and possible dates for the next A.G.M. were mentioned.

Members were reminded that notification of any change of address was important, and that news of members would be very much appreciated, especially in cases of illness, removal to Hospital or Homes and if there was knowledge of any financial difficulties. In this latter case, attention was drawn to the WRVS. Benevolent Trust.

It had been arranged that a talk by the Administrator of the Bristol Victims Support Scheme would now be given. Unhappily, the Speaker went down with 'flu at the last moment, so the Chairman had to 'deputise' off the cuff!

Tea was now dispensed and a very convivial 'get together' became the order of the day.

WALES

- 1) Evening Centres, which include activities out of working hours, are now flourishing in three Wales Counties and there are 340 members engaged in a variety of activities. These include duties at Family Planning Clinics (Tea Bars) Remand Homes (outings) C.C.Childrens Homes (putting to bed and reading).
- 2) Canteens in the Magistrates Courts. Very Popular WRVS work in Wales and much appreciated by Witnesses, the Clerk's Department and Police, as well as the Magistrate's themselves.

The Prince of Wales visited Wales several times in 1976, and a highlight was to open the Houseboat on a Mid Wales Canal (cleared under the Award scheme) which is for severely handicapped children who are taken there by ambulance from Hospitals for the day. Special beds and apparatus enable the child to lie or sit comfortably and view the countryside, the banks and the wild life for a few hours. The Variety Club of Great Britain provided the specially fitted boat and WRVS are on rota to care for the children each day in the Summer months.

WEST-MIDLAND REGION

The WORCS/HEREFORD members of the Association are arranging a Theatre Party to the Swan Theatre, Worcester, on Saturday, 19th March. This Branch of the Association met in the Autumn for a Buffet Lunch at Miss Pollard's house and we all much appreciated her - and Nancy's - hospitality. We had hoped that Mary Holdsworth would be able to join us on this occasion but, unfortunately, she was not able to come at the last moment.

WEST MIDLAND REGION -Contd.

It is entirely due to Miss Pollard's good offices that this branch of the Association meet up regularly twice a year and we are all most grateful to her.

We are hopeful that Warwickshire will soon be increasing its members and holding one or two Reunions of their own. We have persuaded Kay Fensom and Mrs. Pritchard Gordon to look after this as they are situated North and South of the County.

Readers may like to know that Mary Gray's address until further notice is:-

and her private telephone number is

NORTH WEST REGION.

This year contact has been maintained solely by correspondence. The Reunion planned for last May had to be cancelled owing to lack of support.

A circular letter was sent out with Greetings for Christmas, together with a suggestion that the active members be paired with those who are retired to form a closer link and to ensure more up-to-date news.

We are hoping to try two venues to get together this year, one in Chester in May and the other in Manchester in the Autumn. This is a rather wide area, but by this method we hope to reduce travelling distances.

SCOTLAND

A very successful coffee morning on Thursday 17th June 1976 held by Mrs. Crabbie, Chairman, Scotland, and Staff at Scottish Headquarters for members of the WVS/WRVS Association and retired WVS/WRVS members. From all accounts everyone had an enjoyable time.

The Staff prepared and served savouries and coffee to about forty members.

COMPETITION WITHOUT A PRIZE

One of our oldest members suggested that we should try to find the oldest member of the WVS/WRVS Association:-

1. Full name and address(block letters)
2. Date of Birth
3. Date of joining WVS
4. Centres worked in and type of work done.
5. What you enjoyed most and why.

Send to the Hon Secretary by 31st August 1977.

The winning entry will be published in full in the next Newsletter.

WOMEN'S ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

NEW YEAR HONOURS, 1977

- C.B.E Mrs. Veronica Crabbie
Chairman, WRVS Scotland
- M.B.E. Mrs. Marjorie Freeman,
Head of Refugee Department Headquarters
- Mrs. Dorothy Hallatt
Regional Clothing Organiser Region 3.
- Mrs. Edna Woods
County Organiser, Bedfordshire. Region 4.
- Mrs. Beatrice Bruges
Lately County Clothing Organiser, Wiltshire. Region 7.
- B.E.M. Mrs. Winifred Lewis
District Organiser, Southall London
- Mrs. Anne Davies
Lately Local Organiser
Wetherby, Met. Dist. Leeds. Region 2.
- Miss Ellen Griffin
Local Organiser, Grantham. Region 3.
- Mrs. Frances Mitchell
Old People's Welfare and
Luncheon Club Organiser,
Tonbridge & Malling District Region 5.
- Mrs. Ivy Lloyd
Member Banwell, Avon County Region 7.
- Mrs. Elizabeth Baker
Member, Colwyn Bay, N. Wales Wales
- Mrs. Dorothy Jackson
Leader, Blind Club, Cheadle,
Cheshire. Region 10