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WVS/WRVS ASSOCIATION

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Newsletter No.9

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FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

1978 will long be remembered as a very special year with celebrations everywhere to mark 40 years of WVS/WRVS work. Services were held in Cathedrals and Churches and thousands of members re-dedicated for "Service Beyond Self".

The highlight of course, was the National Service in St. Paul's Cathedral on April 25th, when London was filled with green uniforms; some the familiar "Spinach and Best" and many wearing the 1978 version with its attractive green checks and jaunty berets. A generous allocation of seats went to WVS/WRVS Association members and most went on to the meeting in Central Hall, Westminster and over lunch were able to find many old friends and had the privilege of hearing the inspired speech by Cardinal Hume which was followed by a spontaneous standing ovation. An Association member has written an amusing account of two incidents that befell her on 25th April.

I was taken out to lunch by an old friend and as we were leaving the hotel dining room we noticed three middle-aged gentlemen sitting at a table by the door, obviously celebrating a birthday. As we passed their table one of them commented "Ah, a little WVS lady". I flashed my teeth in a winsome smile of acknowledgement and the eldest of the three enquired "is it not your Anniversary ma'am?" I replied that this was so, whereupon he raised his glass and said "Congratulations, and well done!" and to my astonishment he and his friends rose and applauded as we left the room. I think I will never make a better exit!

"Later the same evening while waiting for a taxi at the station in Birmingham, a similar incident occurred. The taxi-driver leapt out of his cab and held the door open for me, an almost unknown courtesy these days, and asked "Meals on Wheels me darlin?" in a rich brummie accent "No" I replied, "I'm not 'ON' until tomorrow morning" He talked continuously on the drive home about his army service, and asked if I had gone down to the East Coast Floods. I said 'Yes and he remarked that his aunt who lived there 'remembers you lot'. When I offered him his fare he said "Oh no, me darlin" - I'm not taking nuthin' from you today - it's your Anniversary, and I've not forgotten how good you girls were to us in Cyprus - let me make your day a happy one - God bless you". He shook me firmly by the hand and drove away very quickly, leaving me standing in the rain and snivelling rather idiotically."

Another extra-special occasion was the reception given by our Chairman, Lady Pike, at St. James's Palace which Her Majesty the Queen honoured with her presence and a number of WRVS members were presented to her. Association members were included and at least three from each Region received invitations.

Mrs. Doreen Harris, Hon. Secretary of the WWS/WRVS Association was selected by the Chairman to present a bouquet to Her Majesty.

The "no longer active" members of the Association, take this opportunity of expressing their thanks and appreciation for being included in all the parties and celebrations throughout the summer.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 25TH MAY 1978

It was feared that very few Association members would travel to London with all the other excitements and the date clashing with the Chelsea Flower Show;

but these fears were unfounded and the usual friendly Annual General Meeting and Reunion took place once again in the delightful Hall of Holy Trinity Church, Brompton. After the business meeting was over (with Miss Halpin re-elected our Chairman with acclamation) we enjoyed an excellent lunch produced by Mrs. Wilkinson, London Region Emergency Service Organiser, and her team. There was time and space to meet old friends and renew memories.

Mrs. Doreen Harris

All will want to join in expressing our gratitude to Doreen Harris, who has resigned as Hon. Secretary of the Association after giving five years wonderful service in this capacity. When Doreen took over the Secretaryship, the foundation had been laid and there were 157 members. One of Doreen's last task was to put our 1000th subscriber on the register. During the years she has been Secretary, the Regional, Area and County Organisation has grown rapidly and steered by Doreen, the pattern has been allowed to remain flexible so that the Association could be adapted to work alongside the changing WRVS pattern in order to bring members of the Association into touch with the younger active membership of WRVS.

Doreen's knowledge of the country, its machinery and differing needs, have been an immeasurable asset during this period of expansion and in thanking her for all she has done we are looking forward to having her wise advice and help on our Committee of which she will remain a member.

RANDOM EXTRACTS FROM REGIONAL INFORMATION SHEETSLONDON

This has been a busy summer for the London Members helping with a variety of special requests. In May 300 Dunkirk Veterans were served with tea following their annual re-union. On Wednesdays in June, members assisted with late-night stewarding in Westminster Abbey. In August, refreshments were served from the Mobile Canteen at the rear of St. Paul's Cathedral following lunch-time performances of American bands and the Police were fed at their National Sports Day in the City.

NORTHUMBRIA AREA - NORTHERN REGION

1978 started with severe snow storms in the North of England and for some time, Northumbria Area was cut off by road to all points North and West. Notwithstanding the deep snow, all Meals-on-Wheels were delivered, helped by the local Police, a member on horseback and the use of a child's sledge. Even skis were offered, but not, in the event, used! A Speech After Stroke Club has been started at Wansbeck District in Northumberland. The WRVS Shop/Canteen at Prudhoe Hospital in Tynesdale District have paid off the large loan within four years, and the Area Health Authority received the building from the WRVS on June 7th, almost four years to the day of this enterprise beginning.

CUMBRIA, DURHAM AND CLEVELAND AREA NORTHERN REGION

Members of Windermere, South Lakeland District and Cumbria County Staff were called out early in February to feed the Mountain Rescue Teams who were out on a search for injured climbers. Unhappily there was a

fatality in this emergency which required six Mountain Rescue Teams. Thanks to the most wonderful all-round co-operation our equipment in Grassmere area is now being stored in a heated garage which is easily accessible to our call-out teams.

NORTH YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE AREA NORTH EASTERN REGION

The valiant members in Osmotherly, North Yorkshire, were determined that the heavy snowfall, which made it impossible to use their cars, should not cause their homebound to miss their meals, so the food went on a sledge through the village streets. Someone dubbed it "Snacks on Sledges" but the meals were hardly snacks - they suffered nothing in their quality and were most gratefully welcomed when they reached their destinations.

South Humberside had a very real emergency early in the year when tidal flooding overtook the town of Cleethorpes and WRVS was required to open a Rest Centre and to supply hot drinks to the Police and rescue workers, also clothing to a number of people. Emergency plans worked really splendidly, 32 members being involved and everything going "according to the book".

WEST MIDLAND REGION

BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN DISTRICT NARRATIVE REPORT - Extract

In winding up this narrative report I would like to mention that something new has been added to Birmingham Metropolitan District, a branch of WVS/WRVS Association. Mrs. Elizabeth Kenrick held the first meeting at this office some two months ago and since then a most enjoyable morning was spent, helped by glorious weather in the garden of Metchley Abbey - Mrs. Kenrick's home. Plans are being made for further

events and I for one, have been extremely pleased to see that so many people share the pleasure I have experienced in being given the opportunity to meet many friends with whom I had lost contact. Long may it continue.

NORTHERN AREA EAST MIDLAND REGION

More than 100 members who help to run the Nottinghamshire Housebound Readers Service (Books on Wheels) were given an official reception at County Hall to acknowledge their work. This service financed by the Council and run by WHVS has been working for 16 years, with more than 40 schemes in the county, 1,750 elderly, housebound and handicapped people use the Service regularly.

SOUTH EASTERN REGION

In Surrey the police are working in co-operation with local Meals on Wheels rounds by sending constables on the delivery rotas. In this way they get to know the elderly people who are at risk; mutual trust is established, and warnings given for door chains to be fitted where this has not already been done. There is always a publicity campaign in the local paper before the visits start, so that old people are not startled by the sight of a policeman coming to their door.

SOUTHERN REGION

When the oil rig went aground off Guernsey early in February, several members were on duty for many hours serving hot drinks and soup to the rescued men and the police, in appalling weather conditions.

SOUTH WESTERN REGION

The February blizzards, which affected most of the Region highlighted the value of our Emergency Services.

Two of the most dramatic incidents were in Wiltshire - at Warminster and Wylve, about ten miles to the east on the Salisbury road. The police sought the help of the local Emergency Service team on the night of February 19th when motorists became stranded by the blizzard. A centre was open and ready for them when the first eighteen arrived about 10 p.m. They were given refreshments and settled in for the night and, shortly after midnight, another six motorists arrived. About two hours later the police asked if the Warminster Centre could take 40 people who were on a train stuck in the snow drift. As it happened, only seven passengers had to be brought in by the police, as a relief train arrived and took the rest on their way. By morning, conditions had improved sufficiently for all the rescued motorists and train passengers to set off for their homes.

Near Wylve, WRVS help was called for when 31 children and six adults were found marooned in a coach in deep snow at 2 a.m. on Sunday, February 19th. They were returning to Castle Carey from an outing to London. The police got them to the Village Hall at Bapton, a hamlet about half a mile from Wylve, and asked the WRVS at Salisbury if they could help. But it was impossible to get through the snow, so the County Emergency Services Organiser for Wiltshire organised things by telephone via a neighbouring farmer and his wife and six local volunteers - none WRVS but all trained by us in Emergency Service work. The villagers were able to supply the marooned tourists with bedding and food and drinks until the farmer reported by telephone that supplies of bread had run out. The County Emergency Services Organiser was able to arrange with British Rail for a supply of bread to be sent up by train the next morning. British Rail rose to the occasion a second time when it was suggested that the marooned people might be rescued if a train could pick them up at a level crossing in Wylve - not a

normal stopping place - and take them to Westbury for a connection to Castle Carey. This was done, and, shortly after 10 a.m. on Monday, February 20th, the farmer at Bapton was able to report "mission completed".

ASSOCIATION NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

LONDON

Membership has risen steadily during the past year, the total in July being 136. In October another Buffet Lunch was held in the Regional Office, at which Dame Frances Clode and Miss Halpin were present.

SOUTH EASTERN REGION

A successful re-union took place in August, this time at Oxted in Surrey, giving members from Kent, Sussex as well as Surrey the chance to meet. The Local Organiser and her admirable Luncheon Club members produced a delicious, hot lunch for 42 members, and Miss Sylvia Wright (the recently retired R.A.) gave news of WRVS activities in the Region. The Regional Representative gave a report of the Annual General Meeting in May and noted those who would like to attend the Service in Canterbury Cathedral in October. Twenty-five association members applied for tickets, and several met at the Canterbury District Office afterwards for a quick cup of tea, where we had the added and unexpected pleasure of being joined by Lady Pike and Dame Susan Walker, as well as Miss Halpin. Our special thanks to two of our Canterbury members and the District Organiser for making this tea party possible.

Will members please note that the next "Get-together" will take place in Hastings in April 1979. Please send suggestions for another re-union for South East members during next summer.

SOUTH WESTERN REGION

A most successful re-union was held in the County of Gloucestershire on Monday June 19th.

Forty-three Association members were present, the majority of whom hailed from Gloucestershire, but there were also some from Wiltshire and Avon.

The meeting opened with a welcoming speech from the Chairman. Then the Regional Representative gave a report of the recent Annual General Meeting in London. Next she outlined the purpose of the Benevolent Trust Fund and drew attention to the many homes owned by WRVS, including the one recently purchased and situated near Calne in Wiltshire.

The highlight of the whole proceedings was a talk from Dame Frances Clode on 'Royal Occasions'. Everybody present listened in fascinated silence as she spoke of her various contacts with Royal personages and numerous events, amusing and otherwise in which WRVS had played a part. A number of photographs were displayed for all to see.

WALES

There have been a variety of events during the year, the most recent being a dinner at Llangollen for thirty-eight Association members. The Wales membership has increased in one year from eleven to sixty-seven.

WALES - NORTH

On Friday 6th October 1978 the third meeting of the Wrexham Maelor Group was held in the George Edwards Hall, Cefn Mawr. Mrs. Louvain Greenway kindly made the arrangements, and the splendid tea which followed the meeting was provided by members in the Cefn Mawr area.

Miss D.G. Turpin, MBE, one time County Organiser for Denbighshire, was the guest speaker and many of the twenty-nine members present were much amused by her reminiscences having been working with her all those years ago.

Everyone present enjoyed the re-union, and it was decided to have the next meeting at Cefn Y Bedd on Friday 23rd February 1979.

WALES - SOUTH

On Monday 9th October 1978, a meeting of members WVS/WRVS Association in the Glamorgan/Gwent area of Wales Region was held in the Wales Office, by kind permission of Mrs. C.M. Stampa, OBE, JP, Chairman for Wales.

Twenty members, plus a few friends, assembled at 11 o'clock, and Mrs. Stampa welcomed us, and after the business of the day, gave an interesting report on the "40th" in Wales.

She then introduced Dame Frances Clode, our guest speaker. Recalling some of the highlights of her early experiences in WVS, Dame Frances kept us all attentive and amused, and then drew reminiscences from other members.

The buffet lunch which followed, prepared by Mrs. Stampa and Mrs. Mowat, was served by members of Wales staff and much appreciated, and we hope that, as a result, the membership of the Association will increase.

WEST MIDLAND REGION

The inaugural meeting of the Birmingham Branch of the WVS/WRVS Association was held in the Birmingham Metropolitan District Office on Wednesday 19th April and was attended by thirty-two people of whom twenty-three joined the Association there and then.

Mrs. Kenrick thanked Mrs. Dixon and the Metropolitan District staff for their help and hospitality, and introduced Miss Lamb, whom many knew from the time she worked with Miss Gray in the Regional Office, and who had been a member of the Association since its start; who then told the meeting about the Association. Some discussion about the future role of the Birmingham Branch followed. It was agreed that we should run a welfare service among ourselves, and that the Association should meet every two months, initially on the second Wednesday of the month, in the morning. The next meeting was planned as a Garden Meeting on July 12th at Mrs. Kenrick's home to be followed by one on September 13th.

NORTH WESTERN REGION

We are trying to arrange a member in each district to act as a helper to the Regional Representative, to supply information and to do local visiting and promotion of the Association.

SCOTTISH SECTION - REUNION MEETING

On 20th April 1978 the first re-union of the newly formed Scottish Section of the Association was held at Scottish Headquarters.

The Chairman for Scotland, opened the proceedings by welcoming the forty-six members past and present. She was delighted to see so many of both those who were still serving as well as those who are no longer active.

Miss Heaney conveyed Mrs. Crabbie's apologies for her unavoidable absence and her best wishes for a very successful day. She felt sure that there would be much discussion regarding WRVS activities, which would be more entertaining than a lengthy formal report from her.

She asked if there was anyone present who had joined WVS in 1938 and two of several who had, gave impromptu accounts of the way in which this had come about. Miss Mackie explained that she had been "drafted" and had fairly complicated administrative duties in those early days. Mrs. Tully (who is still serving as Clothing Organiser, Lothian Region) recalled how her response to an appeal to join plunged her into preparations for and reception of Refugee Children. The Emergency Services film strip was shown and Miss Heaney outlined the continuing importance of the Emergency Services role in WRVS but added that more work was being planned for both Old People and the Young, especially the under five's.

SERVICES WELFARE

The 40th Anniversary Year saw virtually the end of thirty-four years of WRVS Services Welfare Work for the troops serving overseas, starting in Algiers in 1914, and going on to Italy, France, Belgium and into Germany, by 1945 WVS members were posted out to India, Burma and eventually members were working in the whole of the Far and Middle East.

After the war the decision was taken to continue WVS Services Welfare, indeed WVS had an important role to play then and for many years to come with the young National Servicemen overseas; WVS/WRVS were to be found in all the "hot spots" in Korea, Malaya, Cyprus, Aden, and more recently, Borneo, and Northern Ireland, to name only a few, in fact they have been in almost every corner of the world where British Servicemen have been posted.

Now due to financial stringencies and changes within the Army and the areas of operation, WRVS work with the Services has shrunk to about thirty members, eight of whom are doing Gurkha Welfare in Hong Kong, Brunei and Nepal. As for the work with Servicemen, with the exception of the last tropical "outpost" in

Belize, this is confined to Northern Ireland and Junior Soldiers Units in this country.

The WRVS Overseas Association has now been wound up and it is good to know that many of their members have joined the WVS/WRVS Association, where they are most welcome.

110TH ANNIVERSARY TILE

Enclosed is a notice about these attractive tiles which would make a very useful birthday or Christmas present for use as wall plaques or for hot plates etc. Wire frames for wall hanging are also available, price eleven pence.

OBITUARIES LADY LUCAS TOOTH, OBE

Dame Frances Clode, writes as follows:-

"Those members of the Association who were friends of Lacta will need no words of mine to remind them of her sterling worth, her gift of friendship and her sense of fun. It is not the story of her WVS/WRVS work, (though she was one of the earliest members,) because such a story would not conjure up the picture of her as most of us knew her. I did not know her until about 1950, and we laughed many times at her dismay when told by Lady Reading that she was to work "to" me (an unknown person) in the Civil Defence Department. It soon became clear that with her family grown-up she had more time to give to WVS, and her gifts were quickly realised when she became Head of the Training Department. Here, I believe she was supremely happy till the new One-in-Five Department was formed, one of the most important projects in post war WVS. She accepted rather sadly this new challenge, and I am sure never regretted it, as she must have known that it was her example and enthusiasm which carried it through in such a triumphant way at a moment in history when the women of

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