

ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

WVS/WRVS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER NO. 14 - MAY 1981

Last autumn we asked our President, Lady Pike, the Chairman of WRVS, to be our chief speaker at our Eighth Annual General Meeting, which is being held in London on Wednesday, 3rd June. This was fortunate, as in the meantime she has announced that she would be retiring on 31st March 1981 as Chairman. Mrs. Barbara Shenfield, one of our Vice-Chairmen, has been appointed as Chairman of WRVS with effect from 1st April. We would like to take this opportunity of welcoming Mrs. Shenfield, who will automatically become President of the Association. We are, however, looking forward to having Lady Pike with us on 3rd June when we will have an opportunity of expressing our regret at losing our first President and our thanks to her for the interest and support she has always given to the Association.

We must apologise to members for the fact that the November Newsletter was delayed and was probably received almost with the Christmas post. This was unavoidable owing to pressure of work in the Department which has heretofore done the printing for us. In view of the lateness of the last Newsletter and the fact that it was a bumper issue, it has been decided to circulate this short News-Sheet, instead of the usual Spring Newsletter. It brings with it full details of the arrangements for the Annual General Meeting and Reunion on 3rd June, and features two highlights of recent months.

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER, PRESIDENT WRVS - 80TH BIRTHDAY

How difficult it is to give any 80-year old a birthday present - even more so when the birthday was that of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

WRVS decided at the beginning of 1980 that the Service nationwide would try to start during the year 80 new projects and schemes of community help and to ask the Queen Mother to accept them. By the end of the year, Her Majesty was sent a record of 88 new schemes of the widest variety and location, all of which are now well founded and flourishing.

All the projects were listed but full details were given of 28; these included -

- Scented garden in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland;
- Clothing and laundry service in Manchester M.D.;
- Hostel for homeless men in Cleveland County;
- Youth Club in Nottinghamshire;
- Wheelchair service in South Woodham Ferrers New Town, Essex;
- English language class for Indian women - Brent London Borough;
- Granny holidays in East Sussex, Kent and Surrey;
- Children's barbecues in Somerset, and
- Libraries for the disadvantaged, Dyfed, Wales.

The scented garden for the blind and disabled was the result of the Chairman for Scotland challenging WRVS members of Wigtown to find a use for a piece of derelict land at the back of the WRVS Office in Stranraer. This soon became a co-operative effort, in that young people, working under the Youth Employment Programme, cleared the site of weeds and debris; a plan of the garden was drawn up by the Director of the District Parks Department, who also promised to

give some plants, and the Round Table volunteered to do the heavy work of preparing the ground. Rosemary and ivy (rosemary for remembrance - ivy for steadfastness) are to be planted first, and the gardens will be open in the afternoon, with a WRVS member in attendance, so that visitors can not only enjoy the scents but can meet each other there - in fact, a kind of "outdoor club".

PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO WRVS CONFERENCE

On Monday, January 19th, WRVS was honoured by the presence of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, at a Conference, "Facing the New Challenge", held in London and attended by WRVS Organisers from England, Scotland and Wales, representatives of many national voluntary organisations and of the WVS/WRVS Association.

In the course of her talk Mrs. Thatcher said she considered that the contribution voluntary service made to the volunteers was very important, enabling as it does "the individual to express her personality, imagination and ingenuity", adding that "voluntary service was far from dull - it was lively, creative and full of fun and honour". Nevertheless she realised that continuing care was difficult and demanding, and depended on the willingness of the volunteer to stick it out. WRVS, in her opinion, had a striking record of dependability and continued service; it was clear from the exhibition of WRVS work that was on show in an adjoining room, that its members were always ready to respond to new challenges.

Mrs. Thatcher concluded by saying that "If we want a nation distinguished by the quality and depth of its life then we are asking for a nation distinguished by the quantity and range of its voluntary service. And the true reward of voluntary service is that you really do gain more than you give".

Illustrating the Prime Minister's remarks, it seems appropriate to quote a footnote to a recent Narrative Report from the Huntingdon District, Cambs. regarding "the personal reward volunteers receive from their efforts on behalf of the community:- the expression of pride on the face of a young mother walking her baby home in her newly acquired pram; the excitement in young Johnny's eyes as he shows off his football boots from the clothing store before boarding the coach to his holiday home; the warm appreciation of old folks for their meals service and their acknowledgment that "someone cares". These are the rewards that make our voluntary service worthwhile and gives substance to our motto 'not why we can't but how we can' ".

REPORTS FROM AREAS

1. North West Division - Area 4 - Cheshire and Merseyside

A successful Reunion, attended by 22 members was held in the Area Office in Chester on 25th March. A very warm welcome was given to the guest speaker, Mrs. Lola B. Lewis, a past Regional Administrator, who gave us some helpful suggestions for future events. Our Area Reunion in 1982 is planned to be held in Southport; in the meantime a concerted effort is to be made to raise the membership from the present total of 37. Mrs. M. Preston - Area Representative

2. Midlands Division - Area 1 - Warwickshire - Warwickshire Annual Report 1980

Membership of the Warwickshire Group of the WVS/WRVS Association is increasing, though more slowly than one would wish. Only one gathering took place in 1980, when a very happy get-together was held at the White Lion at Pailton; a good number of members enjoyed an excellent bar lunch in pleasant surroundings.

3. Midlands Division - Area 2 - Leicestershire

39 of the 41 members in Leicestershire attended a coffee/sherry morning at the Leicester office on 17th December 1980. This was a Christmas get-together and to meet expenses, the members were given the choice of putting a contribution into a "begging bowl", donating an item for the "bring and buy" table or some food to be pooled for the refreshments, and one member organised a raffle. The morning proved to be most successful and everyone enjoyed chatting to friends and reviving memories of work done in the past. Mrs.H.Cooper - Area Representative

4. Midlands Division - Area 3 - West Midlands Metropolitan County

The Birmingham Group is flourishing. A New Year's lunch and a coffee morning were held and plans have been made for 1981. These include:- a party to the Birmingham School of Music's performance of Verdi's Falstaff; an expedition to the National Trust's Hanbury Hall and a garden sherry party.

As an economy I am posting only the 'faithfuls' and leaders of the other Metropolitan Groups, I hope anyone left out who reads this report and would like details of any activities will let me know. As the first event was arranged at short notice, it is available only to those who attended the coffee morning.

As far as the Metropolitan Districts are concerned:- Solihull is doing well with 20 members, who enjoyed a small buffet lunch; Walsall and Wolverhampton are arranging their own social activities. Mrs. Kenrick has been invited to speak at meetings in both these Districts. It is hoped that the other Metropolitan Districts in the West Midlands will organise Groups later on.

Mrs. E. Kenrick - Area Representative

5. Midlands Division - Area 3 - Wolverhampton Metropolitan District - Annual Report

Our new scheme, which incorporates our retired and operational members, has proved popular and we look forward to carrying out our plans for outings and meetings, designed to bring friends together.

6. South East Division - Area 1 - Hastings District Narrative Report

We now have a flourishing Group of the WVS/WRVS in Hastings. One of our members runs this, and they meet every two months for a coffee morning. These Association members have agreed to organise a "get-together" for other members from East Sussex and Kent in April or May.

7. South East Division - Area 2 - Fareham, Hants. Local Narrative Report

On 18th November the WVS/WRVS Association (Fareham Group) held a luncheon party in the Fareham office. About 20 people attended and enjoyed the meal provided by the County staff. Slides of WRVS in action were shown during the afternoon and it was a thoroughly delightful Reunion.

8. JERSEY - Annual Report 1980 - The Retired Members Association

This entirely new department is to be run by Mrs. Ruth Fisher. The idea is to hold regular afternoon sessions at the new centre, when members who are no longer active can meet and chat over old times with their contemporaries. Transport can be arranged if required and tea will be served.

9. South West Division - Area 1 - Gloucestershire

36 members attended a meeting in November which was addressed by Mr. F. Morris, J.P. the husband of the County Organiser, who gave an interesting talk on his work as a Magistrate and of the Magistrates' and Juvenile Courts. There are now 74 members.

Mrs. M. Littlewood - County Representative

10. South West Division - Area 1 - Wiltshire

Mrs. D. Tebbs and Mrs. J. Gardner, both ex-County Organisers, ably organise the WVS/WRVS Association in Wiltshire. There is a membership of 69. During the year coffee parties held in Kennet, W. & N. Wilts. were much enjoyed. The Annual Lunch of the Association, held in Malmesbury, was very successful in spite of some difficulties with transport. The venue of this lunch is changed each year to give the maximum number of members a chance to attend. A member of the County staff, Mrs. J. Wicks, gave an interesting talk on "The Changes in WRVS."

Mrs. K.M. Barker - Area Representative

11. WALES - Wrexham Maelor, Clwyd

Lively meetings of this Group were held in October and March, with guest speakers, Mrs. Glenys Howell-Jones, who gave an illustrated talk on her holiday in China and Mrs. G.M. Myers, an ex-Mayoress of Wrexham on her interesting year in Office. At both meetings excellent refreshments were served by the local WRVS. This Group meets regularly at different places in the locality.

Mrs. K. Mowat - Area Representative

12. SCOTLAND

Scotland now have 144 members of the Association and we are looking forward to our Annual Reunion on 9th April. Strathclyde and Tayside had Regional Reunions before Christmas, with the Tayside one including members from Fife. Rather naturally the majority of our members come from the Central belt of Scotland and we are sorry for those in the North and South who are rather cut off.

Mrs. V. Crabbie - Chairman, Scottish Section

NEW YEAR HONOURS

Congratulations are extended to the following:-

O.B.E. Mrs. Irene THOMPSON - Area Organiser, Durham and Cleveland.

M.B.E. Mrs. Ann ROCKALL - Borough Organiser, Wandsworth, London Region.
Mrs. Eleanor Annie McLEOD - County Organiser, Hertfordshire.

B.E.M. Mrs. Ellen Enid HURST - Area Welfare Co-ordinator, Northumbria.
Mrs. Alice Beatrice CROSLAND - Hospital Welfare Organiser, S. & W. York. Counties.
*Mrs. Kathleen Blanche Mabel BARKER - Assisting Prison Welfare and Escorts, Avon County.

Miss Doris Hilda CHAMBERLAIN - Member Bullington, Oxon.

Mrs. Eleanor Agnes DOHERTY - District Staff Hospitals, Newport, Wales.

Mrs. Mabel STACEY - Member Solihull, West Midlands Met. County.

Mrs. Iris Florence RUSHTON - District Organiser, North Bedfordshire.

Mrs. Margaret Gwynn MATTHEWS - Joint County Emergency Services Organiser, East Dorset.

Mrs. Gertrude CLANCY - Leader, Coal Emergency Team, Inverness-shire, Scotland.

*This award will give particular pleasure to all members of the Association as Mrs. Barker is on the National Committee, representing the South West Division.

SERVICES WELFARE

The members of the WVS/WRVS Association who are ex Services Welfare will be interested to know that Jose Duke has retired from Headquarters and is now living in Ilminster, Somerset. She has been succeeded by Mary Riddell, former Area Organiser in the Eastern Region. Although the work with service men and women has been curtailed, members will like to know that the WRVS are still working with junior soldiers, Gurkha families and with soldiers in Northern Ireland and Belize.

OBITUARIES

Mrs. M. Freeman, M.B.E.

Members will be saddened to hear of Marjorie's sudden death early in January. She will be remembered in WRVS for her work at Headquarters; firstly in the One-in-Five Department from 1963 until she transferred in 1968 to the Refugee Department, from which she retired in 1979. Although Marjorie joined WRVS in 1941 as a Village Representative, she held a variety of appointments at the Headquarters of the National Federation of Women's Institutes from 1941 until 1961. She will be sadly missed not only by her many friends but also by a number of displaced persons in Germany.

We are sorry to learn since the publication of our last Newsletter of the deaths of the following members -

- Miss S. Annesley - ex-South East Regional Organiser
- Mrs. J. Gardener, M.B.E. - ex-County Organiser, Wiltshire
- Mrs. S. Kanga - ex-London Region
- Mrs. M. Keating - Gloucestershire
- Miss Hope Melhuish - ex-H.Q. Staff, Health & Hospitals

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting and Reunion
Holy Trinity Church Hall, Brompton Road, London SW7

Wednesday, 3rd June

Invitation with full details enclosed