



WRVS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No 46
Spring 1997

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Cover Picture by Mrs M.H. Wilkinson. Nottingham.

From the Chairman. WRVS Association

Dear Member,

As I write this the days are getting longer and I am sure we are all looking forward to warmer weather and some sunshine, to compensate for some of the particularly virulent viruses that seem to have been around this winter !

I had the great pleasure of attending the WRVS Annual General Meeting, held at Milton Hill House, Oxfordshire, last November. Meeting WRVS colleagues and hearing about the on-going work of the various projects is always informative and interesting.

Milton Hill House, the new Head Office and Conference Centre for WRVS, is very attractive, surrounded by lovely grounds and WRVS became the new owners in October 1996.

Style Conference Ltd., are tenants, operating the training centre. Head Office will be fully located there, from Brixton, in March 1997. This means that the Association Office will also move, together with WRVS Trust, to new accommodation.

Our new address, as from March 24th 1997 will be:

151 Clapham Road, Stockwell, London. SW9 0PU.

The telephone number will be 0171 793 9917

As you can imagine, this move entails a great deal of work for our members in the Association office and already the "weeding" out of files is taking place.

I look forward to meeting some of you at our A.G.M. on July 15th in London. Details are enclosed with this Newsletter.

Sheila Mc Cormack

It is with very great regret that as this Newsletter is being printed we have learned of the death, on Wednesday 23rd April, of Mrs Daphne Maisey, Hon Secretary of the Association, we send her family our deepest sympathy.

News from the Divisions

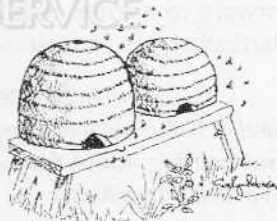
NORTH EAST DIVISION

Headquarters Newcastle

Northumberland, Tyne & Wear.

Div.Rep. Mrs M. Doyle.

Mrs Doyle has taken over Mrs McCormack's duties as Div. Rep. and says she has had great help from the Divisional Committee and is enjoying learning about the groups. The closure of the Met. Office makes these contacts more difficult but this ill wind has helped them as it has brought new members.



In their impressively printed Newsletter for their own members, this division gives all their news and we are sent a copy. It is an excellent publication. However with the change-over of Representatives they missed their last issue, and so their news passed our deadline for the Autumn issue and did not get included. This was unavoidable and we all apologise. The news we missed included a report by Newcastle's group of a talk by Mrs Walers in June, recounting her experiences of teaching English in China. On her return to England she found it difficult to see the need for all her possessions after her Chinese experience. On one beautiful day in June this club chugged slowly through the countryside on the Heatherslaw Light Railway which links the two very pretty Northumberland villages of Etal and Ford, and they felt that time had gone backwards.

In September they learned about the origins of Methodism which was followed at the next meeting by a talk from a member who is a Methodist lay preacher. They celebrated Christmas three times; first by a Christmas lunch, then by the Area Carol Service which is always followed by a buffet lunch, and then by their own club celebration. Their visit to the Sunderland Glass Trail was a great success. They travelled on a Sunderland Tourist Board coach with a courier and the tour was well organised and interesting.

Sunderland group also went on this tour and give further details of the trip. It took them back 1,300 years into the history and skill of Sunderland glass making which dates back to 674 AD when the first stained glass in the country was made at St Peter's Church Monkwearmouth. The tour visited Harley Wood Glassworks, world leaders in the field of stained glass, making windows for The House of Commons, St Paul's Cathedral, etc. They really recommend this visit to any other group who can get there as it is very worth while.

Mrs Lister says that although the WRVS Area Manager, Mrs Somers attends their meetings once a year, many members just cannot get used to the changes in WRVS. However they do enjoy the Group's activities and they flourished last year with four new members.

We reported in the last Newsletter that this group organised a superb buffet lunch for Christmas 1995, with little effort, by visiting Marks and Spencers a couple of days before the date of the lunch, choosing the food and on the day of the lunch going to the store at 9-0am to find it ready and packed for them. They repeated this lunch for Christmas 1966 and again thoroughly enjoyed it. (It would be interesting to others, I am sure, to

know how much per head this sort of lunch costs and how many were catered for in this way. It sounds an excellent idea. Ed). They have lost three valuable members, Mrs Gray, Mrs Casselle and Mrs Brown who had all given many years of service and were good friends as well as colleagues.

North Shields/Whitley Bay group, organised by Mrs Dawson, miss their work on the Meals on Wheels service on which many of them helped. This has been taken over by Social Services.

This group are sad to report the deaths of Mrs Burn, a dedicated worker and of Miss Crowther, who worked in clothing and was for many years their treasurer.

They have given a warm welcome to one new member, Miss Keady but have said goodbye to Miss Lessner who now lives in Berwick on Tweed.

This group made £586 for their Hospice. Several members attended a WRVS tea in North Shields and twenty members had tea together at the Assembly Rooms.

The year's final get-together was at the Area Carol Service and buffet which twenty members were able to attend.

Although Mrs Sealey says that Ponteland group is small and many members are still active on WRVS duties, yet Association meetings are well attended and two members planned to attend the A.G.M. in Cumbria.

They have met on three occasions at the homes of Mrs Barrons, Mrs Kendal and Mrs Sealey.

They sadly record the death of Mrs N.Hope. On Armistice Day Mrs Barrons laid a wreath on the War Memorial. They too enjoy attending the Area Carol service when they meet members and friends from other groups.

Durham, Cleveland, N. Yorks. Div.Rep. Mrs R. Thompson OBE

Mrs Thompson wishes to record the very sad death of a well-loved member, Mrs Doreen Laing who died on Christmas Eve. Mrs Laing was District Organiser, Emergency Services Organiser and then County Organiser for North Yorkshire. Her bravery in facing cancer in a completely matter-of-fact way was exactly what those who were privileged to work with her would have expected and she is being sorely missed.

All branches have had regular meetings which have been well attended.

But in October, for Mrs Thompson and all the members attending the annual Luncheon, held at Hartlepool's Historic Quay, disaster struck ! It was a splendid venue, but the caterers were quite unable to cope with the unprecedented number of members who attended, (One third as many as on previous occasions !). It was such a pity as there was an excellent address from a speaker from the Tees Development Agency, with a very good slide show, telling about this fantastic project to attract tourists and clear up a devastated area. Mrs Thompson says that they were the victims of their own success, but

in future she will certainly make sure that the venue is large enough for everyone to sit comfortably and the catering organisation one that is able to cope to serve a good meal.

There have been several new members in the Division whom Mrs Thompson hopes to meet when she visits the branches.

Humberside.

Div.Rep. Mrs D. Price

Humberside members have enjoyed their pub lunches, a strawberry tea and fund raising activities.

During the cold winter months they have been saddened by the deaths of Miss Wilson and Mrs Golding of Pocklington, Mrs Fussey of Hull and Miss Balmforth of Beverley. They are planning an annual lunch at South Cave in April.

South and West Yorks

Div. Rep. Mrs L. Ziegler MBE

Lincs, Notts, Leics.

Div.Rep. Mrs J. Newman

While the Association is active in all three counties, Mrs Newman reports that Lincolnshire does need new members. She says that she enjoyed being invited to Christmas lunches with all groups but although very enjoyable they played havoc with her waistline!

A small group meet in Lincoln every two months, have had a lunch together and when they wrote were planning meeting in December.

Newark group show signs of a return to childhood. At their Christmas lunch they all received a gift from Father Christmas in person ! After this they had a delicious meal and then enjoyed two films, one an old Abbott and Costello movie and the other made during the war, to teach American soldiers something of the British way of life. This was particularly interesting to Newark members as Newark had been the town chosen to illustrate what a British county town was like. Members had great fun comparing Newark then, 50 years ago, and now.

Leicestershire have welcomed a few new members and their monthly coffee mornings have been well attended. At these events they arrange their outings. Their visit to Buckingham Palace was a great success. These members receive a birthday card and if they are ill a card and flowers are sent to them to remind them that the group cares.

The Ashfield group is again active and they have a new secretary. They had lunch together in November before holding their AGM in the afternoon. In January they met for a social afternoon when "games", (they do not specify what kind of games ! Ed.) and tea were enjoyed.

They have a problem for Sutton-in-Ashfield members who find it difficult to get to meetings due to lack of transport.

Bassetlaw enjoyed a successful Bring and Buy in September at the Home of their Chairman. They ended the year with a well-attended lunch at the local technical college. Their AGM was held before a buffet lunch.

A "do-it-yourself" ploughman's lunch in Broxtowe branch is an annual event and always enjoyed.

Question - Do groups find their members forget, when the day arrives, what choice they made from a menu many weeks earlier? For this group's Christmas lunch, at a new venue, the manager printed each person's choice on a card, which was handed to them at the start of the meal, so avoiding all hassle and argument! (A brilliant solution for anyone who has met this problem? Ed).

In January they enjoyed "shortbread, sherry and coffee", giving 40 members a post-Christmas fillip.

Mrs Cramp, from Gedling branch reports, sadly, that they have lost their secretary, Miss Barbara Noon, who has died suddenly and unexpectedly. She was most respected and efficient and they miss her greatly.

On a brighter note Mrs Cramp says they have welcomed several new members. Tea in a village farmhouse was much enjoyed. Their coffee morning and Bring and Buy raised £103, and they have sent £50 to Leukemia Research, £15 to Macmillan Nurses and £15 to each of two churches. They had two novel quizzes; one where the answers were all Christian names or surnames of members; the other the names of items sold in their tea-bars.

A talk on "Parks and Gardens" taught them:-

1. Why some trees have bands around their base.
2. Why Lime Tree Avenues were planted in country manor houses and
3. Why Royal Oak Trees are never felled.

This group celebrated the festive season in two ways, with coffee and mince pies at a social club and with a Christmas lunch at a local hotel.



NORTH WEST DIVISION

Headquarters Manchester

Cumbria, Lancashire.

Div. Rep. Mrs M. McCambridge BEM

Greater Manchester.

Div. Rep. Mrs E. Collier

Forty members of the Bury group enjoyed lunch at the Rhinewood Inn at Glazebrook and afterwards visited Mount Pleasant farm, a craft centre, home to every craft imaginable.

Sadly they record the deaths of Mrs Horrocks, and Miss Rotherham and they miss them both.

A new group has been formed in Metro Rochdale. A warm welcome to them and we wish them every success.

Mrs Collier says that transport difficulties make it impossible to get the five localities together, which is a pity. In December however, in spite of the cold weather, 13 members

met in the Town Hall and thoroughly enjoyed seeing each other again and reminiscing, while enjoying mince tarts and coffee. At this meeting, members discussed how they could improve communications with retired members and give support to the housebound.

Romiley group have a new leader. Mrs West has taken over from Mrs Hulse who was presented with gifts in recognition of her work. Among excellent speakers, they found a talk on local history so interesting they have asked the speaker, Mr Frost, to come again to talk to them. A Christmas meal at Wye Vale Garden Centre was very much enjoyed.

Mrs Grimshaw reports for the active Sale group. They showed their ignorance, (as I am afraid we would all do ! Ed.) when they had a quiz on the Common Market. They found there was a lot they did not know about our European allies.

In October they had a talk on "Canals". The speaker, Mrs Morewood and her husband are members of the Sale Cruising Club and she gave details of the charges involved and the many trips they have made. (This brings back many happy memories of a lovely holiday I had on the Oxford Canal many years ago. Ed.)

In November they raised club funds by a Bring and Buy sale and in December enjoyed their Christmas lunch at Manor Court Residential Home, where two members, Mrs Tedham and Mrs Meadowcroft prepared a super turkey dinner. (After this, Mrs Grimshaw says, "they had games". No racing about after such a big dinner I hope ! Ed.)

Merseyside, Cheshire.

Div. Rep Mrs P Linton MBE

Mrs Linton says there is one worry affecting all groups, which is the difficulty of contacting their members now that there are no local WRVS offices. This is a great problem

The AGM was held at Blakemere Craft Centre and attended by 67 members. The speaker was WRVS manager, Mrs Jarvis who has visited several groups and whose support is greatly appreciated.

St Helens, their newest branch, are able to meet in the same building as their Area office, by kind permission of Messrs Pilkington Glass. This group change their management regularly, and this is proving successful as it spreads the load. They also make a point of inviting WRVS members to their meetings. (A good idea for other groups which might encourage new membership ? Ed)

Bebington and Wallasey are the two Wirral groups and they meet regularly with meetings and lunches and enjoyed a good Christmas lunch together. They manage to afford Birthday and Get Well cards for the sick or housebound by running Sales tables and Raffles, and so keep in touch with less fortunate members who cannot get to meetings.

There is now no WRVS annual "get-together" in Wirral, which they greatly miss. (This is sad news. Ed). However many WRVS members join the Association group for their meetings, outings and pub lunches and are made very welcome.

Nantwich group, always on the look-out for new members, attended the Annual Meeting of present serving members and gave out Association leaflets. They hope that this will bring them in some new members.

Staffs. Shropshire, Derbyshire.

(Appointment Pending)

A report from Rushcliffe branch tells us that they had an outing to Willersley Castle in Derbyshire for 52 members and friends. En route, they visited the Arkwright Museum showing many cottage industries and the old time skills people needed before the age of machinery. After tea at the castle they were given a talk on the Arkwright family.

This group hold their meetings and lunches at The Willow Tree where the landlady lets them have a room for their meetings. In appreciation, at their Festive lunch, attended by 42 members, they presented her with a poinsettia plant with their thanks.

They have to record the deaths of six members, all long serving and hard working and all sadly missed.

SOUTH EAST DIVISION

Headquarters St Chads St. WC1

Cambridgeshire, Northants.

Div.Rep. Mrs B. Titcomb.

Mrs Titcomb reports that Daventry and South Northants group meets regularly for lunch. She is sad to report that Mrs Merriman died in December. A long-serving member of WRVS, and one time County Meals on Wheels Organiser, Mrs Merriman attended the group's lunches until shortly before she died.

Also we have had a letter from the daughter of the late Mrs Davenport, telling us of her mother's death, aged 85. She recalls as a child, visiting the gloomy Carlisle office where her mother enlisted for WVS in 1939 and worked until they moved to Shropshire. She worked then in County Office as Deputy to Mrs Wilson teaching Emergency training and later became County Organiser, until a move to Northamptonshire and a car accident, forced her to retire. She was awarded the BEM. In 1995 her daughter brought her to the Leicester AGM which she enjoyed very much.

Due to restructuring in Age Concern, the Peterborough group have had to change their meeting place and inevitably, costs have risen. In spite of this they enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch together.

They have been saddened by the death of Mrs Milner in December, after a short illness. Having joined WRVS in 1965 Mrs Milner soon took over as Organiser and continued until her retirement in 1994. Caring for the elderly in Residential Homes and hospital wards and equally for helpers, as a trained Emergency worker she could always be counted on for extra duties and to help Association members with transport and visiting. She was a kind and compassionate lady.

Huntingdon group had a most interesting talk on Australia in September given by an enthusiastic holiday-maker. However in October they got down to more serious thought when the Director of Social Services gave a vivid and understanding talk on the problems of the young. He was obviously totally committed to their welfare.

One of their members celebrated her 90th birthday in a pleasant old, timbered, riverside cafe in Godmanchester. Both she and her friend also over 90, attend the meetings.

Mrs Watson, who Chairs this group reports the sad death of three of their oldest members; Mrs Payne from Sawtry, Mrs Gill from Huntingdon and Mrs Birkhead from Godmanchester. All were well-loved members of the Association.

Norfolk, Suffolk.

Div. Rep. Mrs S. Scholey.

Mrs Scholey reports that Norfolk and Suffolk branches have met fairly regularly. North Norfolk branch held a very successful lunch at "The Manor Hotel" Mundersley and they plan a coffee morning in the spring. There have been two lunches at "The Pier Hotel" Gorleston and lunch for all the county members in Norwich in October.

Great Yarmouth members, who had continued to keep in touch with an elderly member who moved to N. Ireland some years ago, are sad to learn that she has recently been bereaved and are arranging a delivery of some flowers for her.

At their coffee morning (they do not say when ! Ed.), they were fortunate to have the T.V. Weatherman, Mr Jim Bacon as a speaker and he gave a most interesting talk. They also enjoyed a fish and chip tea after visiting the historic market towns of Beccles and Bungay.

The autumn lunch attracted a record number of 76 members, some were invited members from other Norfolk branches.

This winter they have lost several older members and their thoughts are with their families.

A late, sad note from Mrs Titcombe records the death of a committee member, Mrs Harvey. She says the church was full at her funeral where her favourite things were represented, a British Legion banner, a Red Cross Banner and a box of Black Magic Chocolates !.

Beds. Bucks and Oxon

Div. Rep. Mrs J. Callaway

Southend branch had a talk in September from the Head Administrator of Southend Hospital to speak about his work in that large hospital.

Their members have been busy knitting Teddies for Bosnian children. There were rules for these teddies; they all had to be the same size, all have happy faces and all to be dressed in bright colours. They were given a temporary home in the organiser's lounge before being dispatched and when they eventually left for Bosnia she missed their smiling faces very much!

Bedfordshire group were pleasantly surprised that a meeting at a Garden Centre proved 60% more popular with members than meeting for a pub lunch. (I wonder if this would be the case with other groups. ? Ed.)

There was enthusiastic support too for their Christmas Buffet lunch when Mrs Woods, one-time Area Organiser for Anglia Div. 1, proposed the toast to WRVS. They are all indebted to Mrs Woods as she started the branch in WRVS Golden Jubilee year and set it off on a sound footing.

Three Buckinghamshire members have offered to deliver WRVS Action to other members who cannot otherwise get their copies.

Mrs Callaway attended a WRVS meeting in High Wycombe and was dismayed that it turned into a protest meeting by WRVS members, against the changes in WRVS. She said she munched her sandwiches amidst the heckling of the Area Manager and his Area Care Manager, (hospitals) and she found it a disturbing meeting. She says she fears they will have little hope of new members from that quarter.

In July Oxfordshire members met in Drayton Village Hall and discussed possible new fund-raising projects. Mrs Bayliss told them about new WRVS activities in Meals on Wheels, Family Welfare and Emergency work and answered questions.

One member at this meeting was wearing the WRVS rose, "Royal Volunteer" and Cockers of Aberdeen, who grew it for us, received several new orders from members who had attended that meeting and had admired it.

Essex and Herts

Div. Rep Mrs P. Copping

At the well-attended Christmas lunch of the Maldon branch, Mrs Berridge celebrated 22 years as an Association member. (Is this a record ? Ed).

At this lunch too, members congratulated Mrs Cousins on winning this year's Citizen's Award, the third member of their branch to receive this, and the sixth WRVS member in the last ten years. She received her award from the Mayor of Burnham-on-Crouch at a civic reception attended by the many town's organisations. The work that has gone into Mrs Cousins success has included being a loyal and hard-working member of WRVS, a treasurer of Burnham Darby and Joan Club, treasurer of Two Rivers Age Concern, Committee member of Burnham Community Care Committee, Vice-Chairman of Age Concern and a member of the Community Health Council of Essex.

Maldon branch sadly record the death of Mrs Tostevin, who even aged 92 and blind still managed to be a local reporter for the Maldon and Burnham Standard. She was a lovely lady who will be sadly missed.

Oxon, Bucks, Berks.

Appointment Pending

Hampshire, Isle of Wight.

Appointment Pending

Surrey, E.& W. Kent, E.& W. Sussex.

Div. Rep. Mrs G. Bright

In her report, which she describes as "scrappy", but which is beautifully typed and full of information ! Mrs Bright says that all branches had Christmas lunches before their activities were curtailed by January snow. (Having lived in that area for 20 years, I know full well how deep that snow can be, while strangely here in Humberside, much further north, we get very little. Ed).

In Hove twenty-two members, almost their whole membership, attended a lunch, and W. Kent were able to use the WRVS Weald office for their party. At this event Mrs Bright made her most dramatic entrance yet, falling full length on the floor while still

safely holding aloft her bowl of trifle ! (Such athleticism ! Ed.). Mrs Cooper has taken over this group.

West Sussex now has over 70 members.

Greater London

Div. Rep. Mrs A. Christophersen

London N.E./City.

Mrs W Taylor DL London S.E.

London N.W.

Mrs D Stevens

A letter from her niece tells us of the passing of Miss Blanche Chaplin who joined WVS in 1939 and retired aged 90 ! She worked on the evacuation of children, then in Kensington and then overseas and later did prison work, enjoying all that she did.

London S.E.

Div. Rep. Mrs G. Block M.B.E.

London S.W.

App. Pending

SOUTH WEST DIVISION

Headquarters Exeter

Hereford, Worcester, Gloucester.

Div. Rep. Mrs J. Connop

Reminiscences of being evacuated to Canada as a child, given by Mrs Cummings, entertained the Gloucestershire group at a lunch prepared by members. At this lunch they welcomed Mrs Taylor, WRVS Area manager and Mrs Pearce, Projects Manager from Cheltenham as well as other visitors.

The Cheltenham group's October meeting was attended by 25 members when Mrs Connop brought them up-to-date on the WRVS Service and they then had an interesting talk by a speaker from The Samaritans

West Midlands

Div. Rep. Mrs J, Smith BEM

The Birmingham group visited Weston Park during the summer and in October went to Blenheim Palace, where they had an excellent guide. Association members and WRVS Divisional Office helped Mrs Banks celebrate her 90th birthday. She is still an active member of WRVS.

Solihull members regret that Mrs Oswald has had to retire as group leader, but pleased that she is remaining as a member of the group. These members meet for coffee in their own homes.

Mrs Wortley, who sent in West Midlands report, says that they await members' comments on the new WRVS Action magazine. (Perhaps we could have all our reader's comments for our next edition. I have not had the opportunity to see the magazine myself yet but we would like to know what all our members who have seen a copy think of it. Do write! Ed.)

Warwickshire

Div. Rep. Mrs J.B. Rose

Mrs Rose writes, just before leaving for the Isle of Man to celebrate her mother's 100th birthday. Her mother was a member in Bury in 1941, providing a Rest Centre for refugees. She later started a canteen for soldiers billeted in two empty cotton mills in their isolated village where the young soldiers had only the village pub to go to when off duty. She and other members provided a blazing fire, easy chairs, table cloths and pretty china. Sandwiches at 1d each had fillings provided by members from their own rations and from "under the counter" by the kind village grocer !

She says that although Warwickshire is not "the Jewel in the Crown" of the Association, nevertheless the two little groups generate a good deal of internal support and she tries to attend their activities to give them her support.

However, "Jewel in the Crown" or not, the two groups are flourishing, thanks to their leaders. Mrs Shaw and Mr Harris have jointly run the Kenilworth group since Mrs Harris's death and in Nuneaton, Mrs Fidgett arranges the meetings and at least one pub outing a year.

The Kenilworth group meet monthly at the De Montford Hotel and here, joined by Mrs Fidgett's group, they all enjoyed a Christmas dinner "with all the trimmings".

In June the Nuneaton group had a summer outing to Shotton, enjoying lunch and the charming garden. But the high spot for us, could we have seen it, would have been the sight of several members venturing into the children's play area and trying their skill on the equipment there. They have photographs to prove it !

We are glad that at other times these ladies act their age and simply enjoy meeting together for coffee, to chat together nostalgically.

They are grateful to husbands who, apparently willingly, (Mrs Rose's words ! Ed.), provide much appreciated transport.

Avon, Wiltshire, Dorset

(Appointment pending)

Somerset, Devon, Cornwall.

Div. Rep. Mrs M. Parrish

WALES*Headquarters Cardiff* Div. Rep. Mrs E. Edwards BEM

Mrs Edwards reports that a new group has been started in Dyfed by Mrs Jill Walden Jones and Mrs Elizabeth Edwards. We wish them every success.

Over 40 members met in Llandudno in September for a meeting whose theme was "Then and Now". A Llandudno member spoke on "Meals on Wheels from Haybox to Hotlock", another related her "experiences in Emergency exercises in Civil Defence up to 1974". A third member then added an interval of humour to the meeting by reciting her monologues. Mrs Edwards then continued the theme by bringing members up to date with WRVS recent changes. Mrs Hodson, Divisional Director for Wales, then spoke about

the present new WRVS projects and their progress. They went home feeling that there is continuity in WRVS and that the Service is still going strong.

Conwy members, first mentioned as a new group in the Autumn Newsletter of 1996, now feel that they are "on the map" and ask us to say that the group is thriving. They look forward to celebrating their second birthday soon.

Their September meeting consisted of a "Competitive Exhibition" of members' paintings, embroidery, tapestry cookery etc., and much hidden talent came forward.

At a lunch at the Sandringham Hotel in January they invited possible new members and friends.

They are upset at the closure of the Conwy WRVS office and can only hope that this closure will benefit the Service as a whole. It could, possibly, bring them new members.

Colwyn Bay members enjoyed an afternoon's entertainment by the Chairman of the Colwyn Bay and District Musical Society and then enjoyed delicious sandwiches and scones made by members.

Mrs Edwards enjoyed an extra Christmas dinner with the Wrexham group and most of all, "a nostalgic chat".

Ruthin members meet at each other's homes, but treated themselves this Christmas to dinner at the Castle Hotel.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

Guernsey. Assoc.

Rep. Miss E. Robilliard

Jersey.Assoc.

Rep. Mrs D. Jennings

Mrs Jennings writes of the "welcome" the weather gave to 1997, with deep snow on New Year's Eve and very cold temperatures. (Not what we expect to hear from Jersey, somehow. Ed.). Eight members met for lunch on a better, clearer day with the Bailiwick WRVS Organiser as their guest. Three members attended the WRVS afternoon tea in January. One very active 80 year old, Mrs Broughton, still runs the WRVS car service. These members enjoy the Newsletter which, they say, helps to keep them in touch with the mainland.

Note to all Div. Reps (or group leaders who send their news to the editor.

Could you please keep to two dates as deadlines for getting your news to the editor.

1. For all news, dealing only with activities from February 1st to August 31st, please send in **by August 31st.**

2. For all news, dealing **only** with activities from September 1st to January 31st, please send **by January 31st.**



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR.

Dear Members,

This letter is a plea, a moan, a disappointment or perhaps all three !

I think that you have all, as I have, found that coping with this awful winter tired you out so much that it was hard enough just to cope with everyday matters. Whatever the reason, you have not been sending me the number of contributions you sent last year. Could I make a plea therefore for everyone to send me something, however brief, a memory - funny or sad, a poem from the budding poets among you or from your favourite anthology, a handy hint, a cartoon or a drawing from the artists, (sorry we cannot reproduce photographs), or a wish. Otherwise we will have no Newsletter ! After all, in January I had two letters from members aged over 90. Well done to them and I hope their much younger fellow members will be shamed into action !

There is another competition printed below. This time it is more of a challenge and something for you all to think about. One thing is certain; you all have the necessary experience to enter. But don't just think. Do send in your entries. In spite of not hearing from as many of you as I could have wished, I have had letters which say how much you enjoy the Newsletter. Since this enjoyment is due to those who have contributed, I pass on these appreciations to all concerned.

Do please keep your contributions coming. I, personally, would like more memories of childhood. Another idea would be "The day that changed my life".

As I write in mid-February, the crocuses and snowdrops are all out in my garden and after such a winter it is lovely to see them. I hope you all have a lovely summer and enjoy all your activities. We can then read about them in our next issue.

Ness Venables

NUMBER OF PANTS SOLD BY M AND S IN ONE YEAR

I only had three guesses, from 4,500 of you !, estimating the number of pairs of ladies pants sold by Marks and Spencers in one year.. The correct number, which I got from M. and S. in London, so it is official ! is fifty-two million per year! Mrs Mary Craven of Poole, who guessed 13 million, 310 thousand and thirteen, was nearest, (though a long way off !), so a Marks and Spencer's gift token will be winging its way to her as soon as I can get into York, my nearest store, to get it. Well done Mrs Craven and the other two members, for joining in. Thanks to those who did join in. I wish more had done so! Ed.

EDITOR'S COMPETITION

Here is another competition. I do hope that more of you will take part. You may write under a nom-de-plume if you would rather. Three Association Committee members will be asked to be the judges.



It is 1997. Imagine as a mature woman of 50 plus with many years of WRVS experience behind you, that your daughter finds that now her two children are at school all day, she has some time to spare and is thinking of joining the WRVS. She comes to you for advice.

Write down as briefly as possible what your advice will be and why.

The best replies will be printed.

To the Editor, on reading the letter from Mrs Robinson of Morpeth in the Autumn 1996 Newsletter

I was interested to read Mrs Robinson's letter. I was born in 1925 and was at Sanawar in 1936-38, so possibly there at the same time as Mrs Robinson. I have happy memories of the school and would be delighted to get in touch with Mrs Robinson. If she would like this, do write to

Mr F.R. Thorp,

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

My First Encounter with WRVS. Aged 14 years.

We were in the train at last, several hundred girls and our teachers. The day had been very long and it seemed hours since our sandwiches had been eaten. We were waiting our turn to be taken to "a place of safety"; hopefully, somewhere exciting like the wilds of Wales or romantic Scotland. In no time at all the train stopped - at St Albans.

There was much confusion. Worried adults looked at lists, but eventually we were divided up and put in charge of a WVS lady. She marched us off to collect our emergency rations. To our dismay, they consisted of a tin of corned beef and another of condensed milk and little use to us and our hunger. This was all that was left, we were told, as they had been doing this all day and they hadn't expected any more of us, but our train driver who had also been "doing it all day", had refused to go further, to where we were really expected. He was just too tired.

It started to rain as we trudged along, the lady's list and out paper bag of rations looking the worse for wear. My turn came at last and I disappeared into the light and warmth of my billet. I was an evacuee.

For the next three years, until I left school, I was treated with love, kindness and understanding and so were most of my school. Often in retrospect, I feel quite sorry for my foster parents, having to cope with a rebellious, opinionated adolescent. After all, I was going to change the world, stop all wars and eliminate poverty wasn't I? Alas, what a failure I have been!.

From Beryl Burkett. Darlington

(Beryl adds in a letter that she is glad she wasn't on duty that day, having to cope with hundreds of girls completely unexpectedly. Some girls spent their first night there sleeping on the floor of a hall, probably also looked after by WVS. Are there any readers who helped in St Albans that day? If so do write! Ed.)

I remember my parents taking me to London for the day and we walked down Whitehall to see the newly built Cenotaph which had just been unveiled.

From Mrs Spivey. Guildford

I was born in Manchuria in 1913. My earliest memory is visiting the remains of the Summer Palace in Peking. By then only a heap of stones where once courtiers, eunuchs and gorgeous concubines had lived in lavish style, clad in



gorgeous silk robes, making music, painting and ruling the country, this once royal palace filled me with a doomful sense that nothing lasts.

Our summer home was on a pine clad hill near the sea, a magical place for this little girl. Down in the valley, donkeys brayed, cocks crowed, temple bells rang, a timeless way of life in the quiet countryside. Friendly villagers brought us goods for sale, conjurors performed extraordinary feats and always the smell of pines and wild flowers. The view behind the hill extended to the great Mountains of Shankaikwan and you could see the white streak of the Great Wall.

Later in Shanghai I was the little Girl Guide who put the wreath on the new British Cenotaph (in 1923 ?). Union Jacks were everywhere and we were proud of being British. But soon another war came. My father had been through the Boxer rebellion and in 1900 had seen the end of the Empresses reign and the coming of the republic under Sun Yat Sen. Now two armies were fighting outside Shanghai and we were in the first house inside the city boundary. One day this little girl climbed the garden wall and watched hundreds of refugees pour into

the town, a deeply impressive sight, pathetic in its poverty and anxiety. Men pushed wives in wheelbarrows, poles over the shoulders of others bore bags of rice, cabbages, babies, bundles. I still see these homeless people in my dreams and homelessness has since been my horror. My father helped disarm the defeated men and support the wounded, frightened people. They were people just like "our" villagers.

Perhaps these memories are what made me aware that you can never count on the future, but must always prepare for emergencies and why I got so involved in WRVS.

From Mrs M. Cahill. Northwich Cheshire.

(The Chinese symbols are Mrs Cahill's family name GAN and LIN)

甘
林

I was about seven years old. After my weekly bath I was duly dosed each week with a spoonful of Syrup of Figs. On this occasion however I created a fuss, spat it out and spluttered and my mother was very cross and told me so., Then there was a pause as she looked at the bottle and said "Oh Mary, I am so sorry, I have given you gravy browning !"

From Mary Craven Poole

My school was evacuated, but my father refused to send me with the others since the venue, he said, was surrounded by aerodromes and would be an obvious target. As it was my school certificate year it was important that a school was found quickly. We had the address of one, a convent. We found it a very grim, forbidding building. After being shown around its dark corridors we got very depressed and gladly leaving by a back drive, we passed a long washing line of white ladies bloomers blowing in the wind. Our depression was quickly relieved by my father's remark of "Nun's veiling I suppose". This reduced us all to hysterical laughter and our gloom lifted. A new school was found and I spent a happy year gaining 7 credits in my school certificate.

From Mrs Margaret Spriggs. Hale. Cheshire.



— "I KNOW YOU CAN'T DO THE JIGSAW, BUT I'M READY FOR YOU
THIS WEEK, MISS JONES!" —

Cartoon by Penny O'Brien

MORE MEMORIES OF WARTIME GUERNSEY.

There was a shortage of teachers for those children who remained on the island as most had accompanied the children to the mainland. I was a clerk, but was accepted as a teacher with absolutely no qualifications. I found it was all very different to my own schooldays. For instance, children did not learn the alphabet.



The Germans commandeered the school, so we had to make do with the church hall. With so few schools remaining and no transport, some children had a very long walk to school and those with bikes were the fortunate ones. The Germans had bought up all the toys and trinkets from the shops so at Christmas we had a problem. What could they have as a small gift? We made a collection of anything anyone could spare, mementoes of holidays, toys their children had grown out of, anything to put into Father Christmas's sack, (acted by my fiancée who agreed to take on the role). They were hard Christmases but people grouped together and put on entertainments and plays. Many islanders gave time and talent to these entertainments, not made any easier either to rehearse or attend by the Germans, who would unpredictably change the curfew, punishing those who did not obey.

Eventually, fuel was unobtainable to heat the church hall and the school had to meet in people's homes where wood fires kept us warm.

From Mrs Joyce O'Toole Vale. Guernsey

In the field near my home the Germans had dug slit trenches. One day allied planes came overhead and anti-aircraft shells and shrapnel rained down. As our parents had told us, we went to lie close to the hedge and to stay there for several minutes after the firing ceased until the last shrapnel had fallen. But this day we were a long way from the hedge and a German orderly came running towards us, pointing to the trench nearby. We dashed down the wooden steps and were soon below ground. With us in the trench there was no room for the orderly who crouched on the steps keeping his head low. The noise of the guns was awful. When it stopped the orderly peered into the dark, and said to us "Kom". Later we found a very jagged piece of shrapnel just where we would have been and had just missed by being in the trench.

From Miss Cheminant. Guernsey.

On a summer's day in occupied Guernsey, my friend Paddy and I were floating toy boats in a sunken concrete reservoir near the hospital. A stream ran through, making a current and we guided our boats with long sticks. But the reservoir concrete surround became wet and slippery as we played and Paddy slipped into the water. As his one arm clung to the edge I hauled him out, dripping with water. Crying, he said he could not go home as his mother had an awful temper and would be angry. I decided we would have to dry him somehow and I helped him take off his sodden clothes and we hung them on a tree to dry. As we lay together in the long grass a German in jack-boots appeared. He looked in horror as I told him what had happened, telling us just how dangerous that water was. He then removed the clothes from the tree and beckoned to us to follow him. He took us to a tin shed where machinery was working and the machine casing was warm. Spreading the clothes over the warm metal, he also spread an army cape over two boxes for us to sit on. Then he departed. When the clothes were almost dry, Paddy put them on and we hoped his mother would not notice.

From Miss Cheminant. Guernsey

FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words.

George Eliot

An ardent American Union supporter, protesting to Abraham Lincoln for his speaking kindly of the South after the Civil War protested "Why try to make friends with your enemies ?. You should destroy them". Abraham Lincoln replied gently "Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends with them" ?.

One who looks for friends without faults will have none.

Hasidic saying.

Good words shall gain you honour in the market place, but good deeds shall gain you friends among men.

Lao-Tse

What do we live for if it is not to make life less difficult for others ?
Tell me with whom thou art found and I will tell thee whom thou art.
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

A drop of honey catches more flies than a gallon of gall.

Old saying quoted by Abraham Lincoln.

Sent by Joan Sadler. York

POETRY CORNER

The Darkling Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate,
When Frost was spectre-gray
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seem'd to be
The Century's corpse outleapt,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seem'd fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carollings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessèd Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

Thomas Hardy



ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE IN CHURCH



Tonight's sermon will be "What is Hell"? Come early and listen to our choir practice.

Ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind. They can be seen in the basement on Friday afternoons.

This afternoon there will be meetings in both the south and north ends of the church. Babies will be baptised at both ends.

SOME FURTHER RESPONSES BY PATIENTS TO A CIRCULAR ASKING WHY THEY REQUIRED TRANSPORT TO A CHIROPODY CLINIC.



My wife must have transport as she is over 80 and drives me mad".

"My husband who is dead will not bring me"

"If my mother goes out alone she gets into trouble".



"I must have your man as I cannot go out alone or do up my suspenders."

"I suffer from thyroid and cannot climb as I don't have a car"

"I have not got a bus or a husband and my home help comes"

"I am unable to walk now as my dog has died"

"I am blind in one eye and my leg".



SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

(The Editor takes absolutely no responsibility for the authenticity of any of this material!)

Notice in a Bucharest hotel lobby

The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret you will be unbearable.

In an Austrian hotel

Not to perambulate the corridors in the hours of repose in the boots of ascension.

On the menu in a Swiss restaurant

Our wines leave you nothing to hope for.

On the menu of a Polish hotel

Salad a firms' own make; limpid red beet, soup with cheesy dumplings in the form of a finger, roasted duck let loose, beef rashers beaten up in the country people's fashion

In a Norwegian cocktail bar

Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar.

In the office of a Rome doctor

Specialist in women and other diseases.

In an Acapulco hotel

The manager has personally passed all the water served here.

In a Tokyo shop

Our nylons cost more than common, but

you will find they are the best in the long run

From the brochure of a car rental firm in Tokyo

When a passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigour.

Signs in a Majorcan shop

English well talking
Here speeching American

Outside a Hong Kong tailor's shop

Ladies may have fit upstairs



THE WRVS MOVES ITS HEAD OFFICE FROM LONDON TO OXFORDSHIRE

In 1938 Lady Reading and the three founder members of WVS were housed in a room at the Home Office, Thorney Street, London. Later that year they moved to offices at Tothill Street where they remained throughout the war and until 1966. They then moved to 17 Old Park Lane. In 1987, now with the accolade "Royal", the WRVS moved to Stockwell Road, Brixton. Now, in 1997, the Service is to move again and for the first time since 1938, its Head Office will be based outside London.

Its new home will be Milton Hill House, a former Georgian manor house, set in 53 acres of parkland with extensive conference facilities. The house once belonged to W.H. Smith, who used the main building for a training establishment. This building has been leased to Style Conference Ltd., who will continue to operate it as a commercial training centre for WRVS, W.H. Smith and other parties. There is also a purpose-built residential block with 75 bedrooms.

WRVS staff will be housed in Garden House, a detached, modern office building on two floors, 200 metres from the main building. The Association wishes them well in their new home.



Conference centre Milton Hill House

WRVS ASSOCIATION

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Lady Toulson

Chairman. WRVS

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Hon. Treasurer

Mrs M.D.S. Maisey BEM Mrs M Davies

Hon. Editor

Mrs N. Venables

The 1997 Annual General Meeting

will be non residential and will be held in

The Great Hall

North Wing

St Bartholemew's Hospital

West Smithfield London EC1A 7BE

on

Tuesday July 15th

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Do come if you can.

Details are enclosed with this Newsletter

Reminder.....Dont forget your Annual subscription. Now due.

Please send to the Association Office. London.

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