

WRVS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER



No 52 Spring 2000

Letter from the Chairman

13 January 2000

Dear Friends,

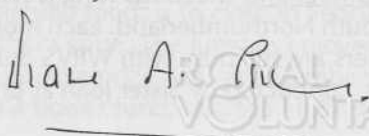
We are now happily re-housed in York. We have a bright office on one of the main roads leading into the City. As I write this letter, in early January, the Millennium celebrations are still fresh in my mind. I hope you were all able to enjoy the New Year fun. My husband and I enjoyed a splendid party in our small village, the church bells were rung by the children, we drank fizzy white wine!! ate part of a super cake and then there was a very colourful display of fire works.

Jean Pickard and the office members are doing very well; we are putting the entire members names etc, on a database, a long job. When complete it will make an enormous difference to the office routine.

The plans for the Millennium Reunion at Milton Hill in June are progressing well. I hope we will see you there. There is further information regarding the programme for the weekend in the Newsletter.

I hope you will enjoy a good summer in some warm weather.

Yours sincerely,



MILLENNIUM EDITION

News from the Divisions

NORTH EAST DIVISION *Headquarters Newcastle*

Northumberland, Tyne & Wear.

Div.Rep. Mrs S. McCormack BEM

Group leaders have met every three months in Newcastle to organise the two annual events and exchange news of group meetings.

Mrs Doyle reports that Newcastle had a retired Vet. as speaker in September, full of funny stories of his work. In October a speaker read from her mother's journal and came again to tell of her mother's life as a young army wife in India. The story is still to be finished.. In November a member took them back 100 years to a very different Newcastle. They enjoyed the Christmas lunch and attended the Assoc. Carol Service and buffet lunch, from which the caterers used the profits to send needy children on holiday. In spite of a 'flu epidemic, the January meeting was well attended and they enjoyed a quiz called "Name that Face". Mrs Doyle reports great excitement... two members won the WRVS lottery, one won £10, the other £1000!! (I too have won, twice with £10 each time. Has anyone else been lucky? !Ed)

Sunderland members enjoyed lunch at the Sixth Form college. They met for coffee and in October, when Mrs Ridley recounted her experiences as an evacuee. This brought tears and laughter! Sainsbury's food and wine was enjoyed for their pre-Christmas buffet and their final meeting of the year was a sherry and mince pie get together. Guests were invited and Mrs McCormack and Mrs Beckwith were there too., but getting there they found themselves in the middle of a murder enquiry, the death having occurred at the station the night before..

They have been saddened by the death of Mrs Parker BEM, a staunch supporter of WRVS.

They look forward to 2,000 and more good fellowship together.

Mrs Davison, reports that North Shields/Whitley Bay held two coffee mornings in September and December, neither well supported which was disappointing. They hope the March one will be better. Twenty two members attended the Carol Service and buffet. They welcomed a new member, Mrs Carr, who has worked for WRVS for many years. Sadly Mrs Weallam is now too ill to take part in any future activities.

Northumberland meetings have been held in Ponteland as most members live in South Northumberland. Each month they hold a coffee morning, but many members are still busy with WRVS duties. In December they enjoyed the Carol Service, conducted by Sister Joan at Brunswick Methodist Church and the

buffet which followed... a happy occasion for all the area's members to meet and chat. This group wish all Assoc. members a happy and healthy New Millennium.

Durham, Cleveland, N. Yorks, E. Yorks and Hull

Div Rep. Mrs R. Thompson. OBE

Mrs Gostick reports that two members of Middlesborough group have become stars. Mrs Bregazzi told of her work as a trainee nurse, District nurse and Midwife on the N. E. TV programme depicting life through the century. Also the Evening Gazette featured ten people aged from 10 years to 100. Mrs Ditchburn represented the 80 year olds and each spoke about shopping. The group took a trip to Helmsley on market day and, in spite of a wet start they enjoyed it. In October Mrs Griffiths talked about buttons and brought a large display to show. This group hosted the N.E. AGM and after the lunch enjoyed an entertaining talk by a River Pilot. They all came away saying they had not laughed so much for ages. They are grateful to the South Cleveland Hospital who gave them the meeting room, coffee room and dining room free and cooked a lovely lunch. The business matters followed.

Mrs Fick spoke, in November, about her early married life under the title "The King and I". In early January they had lunch at Middlesborough college. At other meetings they have played Bingo, amidst laughter !

They are sad to record the death of Mrs Wagstaff after months of painful illness. With Mrs Edwards, she had worked for 25 years in a lunch club and was a regular Assoc. member.

Although Harrogate Branch have only 20 members they average 16 at monthly meetings. These vary, sometimes just a coffee, a raffle and a chance to chat, with the occasional Bring and Buy. At the Harvest Festival sale, they sold fruit, vegetables, and home made apple pie. Several members are now too infirm to come to meetings but are not forgotten. At the Christmas lunch they welcomed Mrs Thompson and Heather Bailey and a new member Mrs Towns. They also attended the Christmas performance of the Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band. Lady Laycock who recently broke her ankle is progressing well and celebrated her 92nd birthday in January but missed the Christmas events. They welcome the Headquarters' move to York which they say is central for all the UK.



The Selby Branch have had bad news. Their favourite meeting place, serving splendid food, is to close in February and Mrs Altass has had hurriedly to find another venue. The lunches enjoyed for so long were of exceptional quality at a reasonable price, (as York members, often their guests, will agree). The branch has a flower fund, started at £1 per head, but

continued at 20p monthly. This money pays for flowers and cards to any member who is ill.. At the November meeting, when 10 York members were guests, they had an interesting talk, after a lovely lunch, by Miss Darcy on the Galapagos Islands. (Your editor attended this lunch and thoroughly enjoyed it.) At the Christmas meal Mrs Haffenden was their guest and they had a very amusing talk on The Pennine Way by Mr Atkinson and Mr Hodgson. Mrs Altass wants to acknowledge the great support she gets from all members and especially Mr Kay, Mrs Watson, Mrs Bell, Mrs Knowles and Mrs Lock. They were disappointed to cancel the minibus for the Middlesborough and Durham meetings but they hope to attend the Milton Hill meeting.

Mrs Smith reports that Hartlepool branch have regular, well-attended monthly meetings with a variety of speakers. In August after morning coffee and then lunch at the Blakey Ridge Inn, they took the steam train to Pickering and Grosmont and then went on to Whitby for tea. One speaker who had spent time in Africa and was involved with an orphanage there showed them slides of the work; a husband gave them a quiz and another speaker spoke about the Galapagos Islands. Twenty-seven members had an excellent lunch at the roof top restaurant of the Hill Carter Hotel with a panoramic view of the town and the sea., Mrs Stamp has been under the weather; a hip replacement, shingles and a gall bladder operation, but hopes to be back soon. (We send her our best wishes .Ed). Mrs Thompson, who had to dash off to Australia to help her family, writes that Mrs Smith has been a good "holder of the fort" during Mrs Stamp's illness.

The E. Yorks group have had popular local lunches In the autumn, they had a well attended visit to Flamborough and enjoyed the best fish and chips at the "Seabirds Hotel". Their Christmas lunch broke all records for attendance, the staff at the Ferens Hall Hotel in Cottingham making it a most festive occasion. Mrs Price, Mrs Thompson and three WRVS Managers joined them. They announced the winner of the 1999 quiz, with all but one answer correct. They have welcomed one new member from Hull. They are sad to record the death of Mrs Gould, MBE, not an Association member but a long serving WRVS worker, for many years City Organiser for Hull.

Presenting a cheque for £100 to St Teresa's Hospice, the Darlington group were shown round and given tea. A coach took them to the Area lunch in Middlesborough at S. Cleveland Hospital where a good lunch finished with Millennium pudding! and the River Pilot talk was enjoyed.. They used Area office for two coffee mornings and a Christmas tea and in January student waiters served them a delightful lunch at the College of Technology.

York's October meeting was addressed by Mr Thompson who showed slides of York long ago. This revived many memories as new buildings have altered the City. A successful cake stall raised much-needed funds. Four members attended the Middlesborough reunion and enjoyed the lunch. Several members volunteered for "stuffing" Newsletters into envelopes to be sent to all mem-

bers of the Association, a job London staff have done for many years. They enjoyed the job which was done most efficiently within the time set. This will be a twice-yearly job for York members. Selby members again invited York to their November lunch and ten members travelled by the convenient service bus.. The Christmas lunch at the York College was a disappointment. The food was not hot and the service slow, but they enjoyed meeting old and new friends. Twenty lengths of scarf have been completed. The most difficult job for the York Chairman was finding the WRVS Area office to deliver them. It took her three attempts.

South and West Yorks

Div. Rep. Mrs June Pitts BEM

There is good news from Mrs Pitts; they have managed to form a new group in Halifax. The first meeting was in January and Mrs Pitts acknowledges the help she received from WRVS Administrators, Mr Macmillan and Mrs Greenwood. The group plans to meet six times a year and at the first meeting new members told each other of their WRVS work. Mrs Mackie showed great initiative by contacting the local branch of Tesco who donated generous gifts for the refreshments. Mrs Pitts adds that they stopped short of asking for loyalty card points !! (We wish the new branch well. Ed)

They are sad to record the death of Mr Malcolm Foster, MBE, husband to Helena Foster OBE, an Association Vice-President. He had worked on Meals on Wheels in Brighouse for many years and will be greatly missed. Sincere condolences have been sent to Helena.

Wakefield members visited the Leeds Grand Theatre (they do not say what they saw) and also enjoyed a Christmas meal at Wakefield Catering College. Eleven WRVS members came as their guests which made the occasion a success. This group generously sent £20 donations to Samaritans, NSPCC and Wakefield Blind Society and £30 to the WRVS Benevolent Trust.

Lincs, Notts, Leics.

Div.Rep. Mrs J. Newman

Mrs Newman writes that she has visited most Districts and they have made her most welcome. The N.E. Lincs group visited Tetbury Water Gardens on a warm September afternoon, followed by a delicious tea. In November they met for their well-attended Christmas lunch which Mrs Newman was sorry to miss as it clashed with that of another group.

Although Lincs member's numbers are few, the few have met several times for lunch.

In Nottinghamshire, Ashfield members met for a "Faith Tea" in November, another clash of dates for Mrs Newman who travelled to York that day for the Div. Reps. meeting.

In September Bassetlaw members indulged in a shopping spree to a large

precinct, Downtown, near Grantham. In December one member, Mrs Wooley-Ford hosted a Sherry and Mince Pie meeting and this was well supported.

Nottinghamshire's County Hall stands in a commanding position on the banks of the river Trent, and Broxtowe members met there for lunch and to have a conducted tour of the building. In October they had a coffee morning with a raffle. Their Christmas lunch, held at a Derbyshire hotel was tragically marred when one of their members collapsed and sadly died later in hospital. (All our members will sympathise with this sad occasion. Ed) After meeting for a "Sherry and Shortbread" morning in January they are looking forward to a happier New Year.

Mansfield are busy on WRVS duties and have little time to meet. They did meet for their Christmas lunch which Mrs Newman enjoyed too.

At Newark two lunch meetings were held, one in September and one in December when Father Christmas joined them. They report sadly that their numbers are diminishing.

Gedling is a busy branch. Having neglected their own local history for so long, they decided it was high time they visited Nottingham Castle and Museum, and they enjoyed the visit. They were surprised at the large turnout when they visited a Garden Centre, and had a lovely tea with cakes.. A Bring and Buy sale raised £65, which they are donating to the M.S. Society. They had an excellent flower arrangement demonstration and five lucky members took home flowers. won in the raffle For the festive season they had a lunch and a "coffee and mince pie" meeting..

Rushcliffe branch are to lose their meeting place for a few months as the pub where they meet is closing for extensive renovations and they are looking for an alternative venue to start the New Year when a speaker Rev. May Gee will be recounting her experiences as a hospital chaplain. In September they met for coffee and a chance to catch up with old friends. In October their treasurer, Olive Humm showed them how to make "little boxes". In November they hit the big time when the BBC came to film their speaker, Sally Nears from the Lincs and Notts Ambulance service. Some members were filmed in the background. The LNAAS were launching a new helicopter that day and the BBC filmed all aspects of the work, including the fund-raising talks. The whole thing was reported in the local news. (Such excitement ! Ed). In October Mrs Nancy Hill celebrated her 90th birthday. A very special person, Nancy had been District Organiser in West Bridgford and later County Organiser and founder of the Association's Rushcliffe branch. She has not been able to attend meetings lately but members keep in touch with her and visit her regularly. For Christmas, 44 members enjoyed a Christmas lunch at the Willow Tree.

The Leicester branch report, sent by Mrs Russell says that new members continue to join them, which is good news. Occasional day trips and monthly coffee mornings suit their members and have been well supported. One trip last autumn was to the Black Country Museum in Dudley. (York members will re-

member visiting it on one of our holidays together and the men of the party "legged" the canal barge through the tunnel as they used to do in the old days. Ed.) They have also visited the Caithness Glass works and Peterborough for shopping trips. They were pleased to welcome Mrs Newman to their December coffee and mince pie morning who told them about the new York Headquarters she had just visited. Four members contributed "knitting" to the "longest scarf".

As we go to print we have learned of the death of Mrs Conway once local organiser for Ashfield District, and leader of a 50 strong Meals on Wheels team for many years. She was a kind and thoughtful lady who will be sadly missed by all her friends.

NORTH WEST DIVISION *Headquarters Manchester*

Cumbria, Lancashire. *Div. Rep. Mrs M. McCambridge BEM*

Greater Manchester. *Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Matthews*

The Bury branch travelled to the Moorcock Inn, Clitheroe, an idea taken from a previous Newsletter. This brought back memories of 40 years ago to one member who had last been there with her young man whom she later married. She had intended to return there, but could never remember where it was. After a lovely meal the coach took them on to Barley where they strolled through the village and found an interesting craft shop. (My memory of Clitheroe is of a renowned sausage shop. I wonder if it is still there? Ed.) This group celebrated the Millennium with a meal.

Mrs Barker reports that Romiley have had a musical afternoon with the music of Ivor Novello in September, a disappointing Bring and Buy in October only raised £15 and fourteen members enjoyed a talk about the Holy Land by a member, Mrs Hulse. They rounded off the year with a Christmas lunch with all the trimmings.

Their retired Div. Rep., Mrs Collier, with 47 years WRVS service, had been to the Palace Garden Party and at their September meeting, told Sale members about the occasion. Another member, Mrs Brocklebank spoke about her holiday in Italy and others told about their summer holidays. In October they held a Bring and Buy sale to raise money for the Christmas lunch. Mrs Grimshaw read a story she had written, entitled "CV. of a Seventy-something".

Sale and Bury held a joint meeting in November with guests Mrs Spriggs, Mrs Allmark, Mrs Cooper and some still active WRVS members all made welcome by Mrs Matthews.. Lunch was prepared by the Methodist Women's Fellowship and a display of WRVS Memorabilia brought back many memories. In December, Mrs Tedham the Sale leader arranged a buffet Christmas lunch with

Divisional Food Organisers as their guests, followed by music and verse of the last century .

Mrs Grimshaw wishes the Association well in their new home in York. She says they enjoy the Newsletter.. In November Salce members held a Millennium Memories event to which they invited Bury and Trafford members. Photographs and other memorabilia went back to 1953

Merseyside, Cheshire (Appointment Pending)

Shropshire, County Rep Mrs P.M.Roscoe

Staffs., Derbyshire. (Appointment Pending)

Mrs Wortley has sent Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield news for the whole of 1999, not the half year. She records a lunch at Westfield Court, Sutton Coldfield, joined by friends who helped fill the coach. In June they visited Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire , the home of Lord Curzon, 19 C Viceroy of India. The museum held many treasures from the Far East. In October they visited Baddesley Clinton in Warwickshire. They also had three coffee mornings in member's homes.

They sadly report the death of Mrs Kenrick last March. Aged 90, she started the Association in Birmingham when County Organiser. Four years ago she suffered a stroke, since when her son Philip had kept in touch and read members letters to her. A truly remarkable person who had coped with many tragedies with great courage.

Mrs Smith reports that Solihull is still without a leader. (Would it be possible for two or three members to form a small committee. Sometimes a good solution, which we are hoping to try in York, but perhaps they already do this. Ed.)

SOUTH EAST DIVISION Headquarters 99 White Lion St. N1 9GF

Cambridgeshire, Northants. Div.Rep. Mrs B. Titcomb.

Mrs Titcomb reports the sad fact that fewer and fewer members are able to come to events. When visiting a member recently another visitor there had been a member who had lost contact for several years. One sad side was to attend three WRVS funerals in eight days. Mrs Titcomb joined Cambridge members for their lunch in December and Huntingdon in January. On this latter occasion the leader, Mrs Watson and her husband were celebrating their Golden Wedding. Two members provided the tea and splendid iced cake and they welcomed several new members.

Mrs Charnley's Cambridge group enjoyed a day trip to Bury St Edmunds and also a talk by Mr and Mrs Last about Chester

Peterborough heard about the Library Service, still taking books to the housebound, on which a few members still work. At the November tea the Area Manager for Anglia spoke about WRVS changes. and are sad that her appointment has now been discontinued. They also enjoyed a Christmas lunch. Mrs Adam, once Community Services Manager for Peterborough is now Board of Trustees Manager for Cambs. and Beds. Peterborough are sad to record the deaths of two valued members, Mrs Sillick who joined WVS in 1938 and Miss Jary.

Huntingdon enjoyed a "Wildlife at Grafham Water" slide talk in September and one on "Cambridge Colleges" in October. Women's Institute members cooked their Christmas lunch at the W.I. Centre and after a most enjoyable meal Ms Dyke, WRVS Area Manager gave a talk. Huntingdon numbers were declining and Mrs Watson had a bright idea. She wrote to ten WRVS workers at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital who were eligible to join the Assoc. and six came along to join. She now means to write to the others and feels the branch will now flourish. (Perhaps other groups could try this method of attracting new members. The committee have felt for some time that active WRVS members are not always aware of the Association's existence, or that they are eligible to join if they have served for five years.. Ed).

Norfolk, Suffolk.

Div. Rep. Mrs S. Scholey.

Norfolk members held an enjoyable lunch at the City Training School in November joined by members from Gt. Yarmouth and N. Norfolk groups and it was good to see more Norwich members present. Mrs Scholey hopes they will join them for other events, as they will get a warm welcome.

Gt. Yarmouth is a very active, dedicated branch with many members and the caring side is not forgotten. Mrs Jackman reports that in September they went by coach to King's Lynn where they had lunch. They then visited Castle Acre and the ancient Priory and were reluctant to leave this charming village. In October they held a successful Bring and Buy and "Mince Pie" morning. In November fifty-four members enjoyed lunch at the Pier Hotel, Gorleston and later in the month they held a discussion meeting to plan a full year of activities. In January fifty-seven members braved the 'flu epidemic and enjoyed lunch again at the Pier Hotel when Roast Lamb or Fish and Chips was much enjoyed.

Mrs Spink of Gr. Yarmouth asks why there were no comments about Books on Wheels in the latest Newsletter. (This is because no one sent any news about it. I can only put in what members send so do send some. Ed). North Norfolk held a Christmas lunch at Mundesley where they always get a warm welcome from the staff. We are very glad to hear that this branch has been revived after being closed for three years, run by Mrs Gilderson and her capable

team. They have kept in touch by attending the Christmas gathering and the Cromer Pier show, and have a full summer programme planned.

Beds. Bucks and Oxon

Div. Rep. Mrs J. Callaway

Inspired by Mrs Wilkinson's talk at the 1998 AGM and with her kind support Beds. and Oxon members enjoyed lunch at Mansfield College and then toured some of the colleges on a route specially thought out to save ageing legs. They were pleased that Ms Goulding who does so much work to keep in touch with members in the county was able to join them. It was an interesting day and they thanked Mrs Wilkinson for her help.

Bedfordshire Christmas lunch was well supported. The "bring a friend" and half-price ticket for husbands worked well and it is amusing that each year more husbands come. Hurrah for Bedfordshire husbands ! Sadly they lost two enthusiastic members, Mrs Faulkner and Mrs Hobson in 1999 and this year Mrs Howe, whose talks on WRVS Overseas interested them so much and Mrs Mosley who looked after Association interests when working at County Office. She later became a supportive Association member. They will all be missed.

Essex and Herts.

Div. Rep. Mrs P Copping

Southend group and the WRVS Organiser Mrs Tytherleigh are overwhelmed by the support given to the "scarf making" project. They have contributed an incredible 1,144 five feet long scarves.. (Incidentally the same length as Southend Pier, the longest in the country!). Mrs Tytherleigh started by contacting stores, schools, post offices and churches back in February but she never in her wildest dreams thought they would get such an amazing result.



Only when she received 100 scarves from Sainsbury's staff did she begin to realise what a success it would be. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress were at St Michael's church hall in December to congratulate them. The photograph shows Assoc. members with the Lord Mayor, stitching pieces together. (Well done Southend ! Ed)

The small group at Castle Point continue to meet in each other's homes to keep in touch.

At Maldon the Organiser, Mr and Mrs Perks arranged a finger buffet instead of the usual Christmas lunch and 32 members enjoyed it. In this busy District WRVS staff told Assoc. members what they each do. (This sounds a good idea. Ed)

Herts is a relatively new group who continue to meet regularly and 22 members enjoyed a super lunch at Ware College cooked by trainee chefs.

Hampshire, Isle of Wight.

Div. Rep. Mrs Beryl Adams

(The active Mrs Adams dashed her report to us before leaving for a skiing holiday in the Alps. Such energy! Ed). Sixty members met for their autumn reunion at a Hall in Petersfield. Each member arrived carrying "goodies", a prize for the raffle and something for the sales table. This always produces a marvellous selection and the money collected boosts the bank balance and subsidises the Christmas lunch. Their annual lunch has been deferred until February. For the autumn gathering a librarian talked on "Whatever happened to Elegance" and the speaker took them back to their younger days and reminded them how wonderful they looked.

Surrey, E.& W. Kent, E.& W. Sussex. *Div. Rep. Mrs G. Bright*

Most groups met during the Christmas/Millennium period, for lunch or tea, the latter becoming increasingly popular, when no transport is available.



After previous dates had been cancelled through lack of support, Mrs Troup bravely invited members of West Kent to her house. They were delighted to greet Mrs Hall, aged 103 and she was given flowers to mark the occasion.

East Sussex report a fall in numbers attending meetings, but lunch in an Eastbourne hotel proved popular.

Hove have a strong group with members keeping in touch.

In Surrey the Woking and Epsom members are very supportive of group activities and have well organised AGM's.

Mrs Cooper has recently resigned as leader for W. Kent and they thanked her for her work. Fortunately Mrs Dyer has already taken over; many members will remember her at the Tunbridge Wells Office.

As the Newsletter is being prepared, we have just received news of the death, in Margate, of Mrs Dora Corner, OBE.. A lifelong worker for WVS/WRVS Mrs Corner did many jobs in different places as she followed her army husband on his work.. This summer she was photographed with Her Majesty the Queen at the Royal Garden Party, an occasion she treasured greatly, which crowned a long life of work for the service The collection taken at her funeral was earmarked for the WRVS Association. Many members will remember her with affection.

London N.E./City *Div. Rep. Mrs W. Taylor OBE DL*

London N.W. *Div.Rep, Mrs D Stevens*

(Mrs Stevens is looking forward to enjoying a well earned rest after working in the Assoc. London office for many years, but not quite yet, as she is helping Mrs Price with the Milton Hill arrangements for the Millennium meeting..)

Mrs Vivienne Johnson's daughter wrote to inform us of the sad death of her mother, aged 92. A devoted mother, grandmother and great grandmother and a long time member of WRVS for which work she received the BEM, she will sadly missed.

London S.E. *Div Rep. Mrs P Cleverly*

London S.W. *Div. Rep. Mrs A. Christophersen*

SOUTH WEST DIVISION *Headquarters Exeter*

Hereford, Worcester, Gloucester. *Div. Rep. Mrs J. Connop*

The Police Helicopter Service was the subject of an interesting talk by Police Sgt Sweet at the lunch in Cheltenham in November. The Filton team was shown on the T.V. programme "Chopper Copper". The next lunch will be in June.

Avon, Wiltshire. *Div. Rep. Mrs B. Williams.*

(We warmly welcome Mrs Williams as the new Representative to this Division and sincerely hope that WRVS members who have worked for WRVS for many years in this area will renew old friendships and join the Association.. One member has written bitterly regretting that there is no Association activity, after so many WRVS worked hard in the past in so many clubs, and other schemes. We hope that now things will get going with Mrs William's help and perhaps WRVS in the area will also help to spread the word.. Ed.)

Dorset. *County Rep. Mrs H. Grimsdell*

Somerset, Devon, Cornwall. *(Appointment Pending)*

WALES *Headquarters Cardiff*

Div. Rep. Mrs E. Edwards BEM

Mrs Edwards writes to record the death of Mrs Guest, leader of the Colwyn Bay group and previously District Organiser for Colwyn. Many members attended her funeral on Christmas Eve, showing how popular she was. They remember her special teas.

Mrs Bocking, chairman of the Conwy group writes that their members continue to enjoy their monthly meetings. At one of these a member recounted her visit to a Royal Garden Party and at another the Regional Welfare Officer of Sidmouth Donkey sanctuary told of the work done there. They enjoyed a shopping trip to Chester and their usual Christmas social and New Year lunch at a local hotel. They then had a talk about work with disturbed children in a residential home. They are looking forward to another successful year.

We have just heard of the sad death of Mrs Cox who will be remembered by many. One outstanding work she did for WRVS was helping at the Aberfan disaster and many South Wales members will have known her well as County Organiser for Glamorgan

CHANNEL ISLANDS

Guernsey.

Assoc. Rep. Miss E. Robilliard

On a sunny Sunday in September, Association members joined a large congregation in St Peter Port Parish Church for a Golden Jubilee Celebration Service. November brought a new experience for some when they joined WRVS for an evening of line-dancing. With a little guidance and some lively music they were soon on their feet, some a little hesitantly, others displaying a real aptitude and all had a great evening. At the carol service for WRVS, all who go to the day-centre and Darby and Joan Clubs were included and they sang the well-loved carols, followed by a delicious tea made and served by WRVS members.

Jersey.

Assoc. Rep. Mrs D. Jennings

Mrs Jennings has sent a lovely New Year card from all Jersey members. Many thanks. This group's last "get together" of the 20th Century was an Advent lunch at the Pomme d'Or Hotel, St Helier when seven members enjoyed a fine lunch on a lovely day. Over Christmas and New Year Jersey members braved all that the elements could throw at them and they did not meet. Then they spent a very happy afternoon at the home of one of their members to celebrate the 90th birthday of Mrs Morden MBE to give her a special afternoon. The sky was blue and the sea calm. Mrs Morden has given a lifetime of service to WVS/WRVS from 1938, first in North Kensington and then to many parts of the world

for the Services Welfare Department. She also spread her talents to many other sections of public life.

Scotland *Chairman Lady Mackintosh*

No news from Scotland. Perhaps we will get some for our next issue as our members like to get their news.

DO YOU KNOW HOW THE WRVS BENEVOLENT TRUST CAN HELP YOU?

Here are some examples of the way help is given:-

1. Convalescent care.
2. A burglar alarm system.
3. Help with removal expenses.
4. A new cooker.
5. Help with expenses in keeping your car on the road.

Consideration will be given to all WRVS members with five years or more service.

You should write to your Divisional Representative or direct to the Trust. The Trust is here to help but must know who needs help.

Consider the turtle.

He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.

From Mrs Thompson. Darlington.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Member,

While working on this edition of the Newsletter, I am struggling with a new computer, my husband's old one! which is much more complicated than the dear old "steam-age" one, a real "period piece", (his first one many years ago) which has served me so well through O.U. essays and Newsletters for so long. I am promised it will get easier so am still hoping ! This machine has "a mouse" which in my hand has a will of its own, while my small grandchildren direct it quickly and easily. Its sickening !

I wonder how many of you escaped the 'flu, and the other awful bug that has given so many people a painful chest and streaming nose. So far we have avoided both and I realise how lucky we are when friends ring me and sound awful. I try to console them that the snowdrops, aconites, crocus and primulas are making the gardens a delight and the days will soon be warmer.

Here in York, things have gone well, thanks to the care and hard work of our chairman, Mrs Price, and her office team, and we managed to get autumn Newsletters to the post as planned. Although new to the work, with advice from the experienced London staff, the job went well and York members enjoyed helping.

The response to my request for experiences of the evacuation show a time of great trauma, hard work and wonderful experiences. Perhaps we all learned something valuable from it. Thank you to all who wrote or sent tapes. I have had to cut them down where they repeat what others have written and I have selected pieces I think are memorable. I know it aroused many memories.

I always regret that I have to shorten things. Sometimes News is repetitious, inevitably, as most of the time we do the same things, eat, drink, chat and raise funds. But do send me your comments, good and bad. I assure you, I do try to improve when you criticise adversely.

There are not many jokes in this edition, so for next time I am appealing for funny stories, true or invented that will bring a smile to our faces. But please remember items have to be short. Some are far too long to use, good though they are. Do keep writing. I look forward to seeing many of you at Milton Hill. For those now too infirm to be there with us, we will be thinking of you. You are not forgotten.

Best wishes

Ness Venables

THE GREAT EVACUATION



By 1938, WVS was being set up and plans were already being discussed between Lady Reading, the Girl Guide Commissioners, and the Women's Institutes and at these meetings the word "evacuation" was first heard. Kathleen Halpin, our founder was Chief Commissioner under Lady Reading at this time and was one of the committee making plans for this. Plans were also made to evacuate the WVS Headquarters from London and Mrs De Rothschild offered Waddesdon Manor as its wartime Headquarters. This plan was never used, but the evacuation of children went ahead. By the first few days after war was declared, **one and a quarter million children and mothers were evacuated** to safe areas. They have vivid memories of this work and it was perhaps the most arduous time for some members, although now, in old age they make light of it. Here are a few memories of that period from those who helped and those who were evacuated.

Returning home on Sept. 2nd 1939 I found a note telling me to be at Hither Green station next morning, at 8-30am.. Wearing my WVS armband I got there in good time. The noise and confusion were terrific. A railway official handed me a note. It read "If an air-raid warning sounds, get into the train and pull down the blinds". Inside the train smelt of babies and food, men were saying goodbye to wives and children, teachers were studying lists of names and five police cadets came to me for jobs. I asked them to spread out in the train and make sure everyone was comfortable. The eating went on continuously and the train set off. After travelling for 40 minutes air-raid warnings sounded, so we pulled down the blinds



as instructed and the train stopped. There was much alarm and a pregnant woman cried loudly that her baby was coming. I had taken First Aid courses and Anti-Gas classes, but did not feel these helped!. I soothed the lady and laid her down. This involved moving fellow passengers to other carriages. Eventually the train continued to a station crowded with folk with wheel-barrows, big baskets and bags and outside the station were cars and carts and pony traps of all descriptions. We were taken to a hall and served tea and food. A doctor took charge of the pregnant lady. The teachers were marvellous and soon groups went off to find their billets. The cadets, the teachers and I returned by train to Hither Green and a kind sergeant drove me home where I sank, thankfully into my husband's arms.

From Mrs Gladys Block, London

At Peterborough station, some WVS loaded people from the trains into cars, some went on to the Salvation Army Citadel to give out refreshments and allocate people to billets. These people had travelled in old railway carriages with no toilets and after three hours on the train were a sad and sorry group. The children, with labels and gas masks, some wet and hungry and mothers were harassed. Some groups came back as hostesses changed their minds and refused to take them in. I remember that one large group who did not want to be separated were sent to the wife of the Archdeacon, who volunteered to house them at the top of her house. We WVS too were a sad and sorry bunch, from lack of sleep and sad seeing the upheaval of these poor people's lives, but we still had to face all-night duty in the ambulance station, run by WVS in those days.



Written by Mrs Sillick of Peterborough before she died

My mother Mrs Crocker, was a Billeting Officer. They were each allocated several adjacent streets to find hostesses, find out how many they could take and their preferences, boys or girls. The largest hall in the town became the reception centre and it took the whole day sorting out the arrivals. Mum arrived home in the evening with a little girl, "ours" until 1945. We only had two bedrooms, so I, a girl of ten, had to share. Throughout the next few days there was a stream of complaints, lack of clothing, wouldn't eat their meals etc., The chief complaint was "these relatives eat all our rations and don't bring any coupons or contributions." After a few months of shuffling children and hostesses things settled down and complaints were fewer.

We had to share our school, and every hall was commandeered for our use. We went to school each morning, collected all we needed for that day and learned which of seven halls we were to go to, some at least a mile apart. We went home for lunch and then went to a different hall in the afternoon. During all this upheaval we had to take the County Scholarship exams. When I arrived at the grammar school I was amazed to find we still had to share facilities.

Sent by Mrs Kirby MBE. Hampshire.

In 1940, in my last year of grammar school, living near the Royal Naval Base formed by the harbours of Harwich, Felixtowe and Ipswich, instructions were given that coastal area should be evacuated of all but essential personnel. On June 2nd, a lengthy train left Harwich, picking up children at each small station, their parents seeing them off. We six-formers had to look after the young children as the train travelled across country into Gloucestershire. We seniors

were taken to Wootton-under-Edge and after a tiring wait in a church hall, handed over to the receiving families. A friend and I were taken to a large house and given a room in a cottage in the grounds where an Austrian lady (and her Alsatian dog) lived, while working as housekeeper at the big house. In our tired state, we thought she might be a spy ! We stayed there for two months, our mothers later taking rooms in the town. Sharing schools was difficult and as seniors we were expected to get on on our own I remember sitting on a hillside, learning Latin, looking at the barrage balloons over Bulstoc. Soldiers from Dunkirk arrived, utterly exhausted, lying on pavements and propped against walls, fast asleep One of these turned out to be a recent old boy of our school. The main body of the school stayed in Gloucestershire, numbers dwindling as girls left, and we left and went our separate ways, disappointed at missing the traditional leaving service and famous hymn "Lord dismiss us with thy blessing." For many years reunions were held in Essex, or Gloucestershire and these have dwindled too, but some stayed in Gloucestershire for the rest of their lives.

From Mrs Willis. Sevenoaks

We lived 12 miles from Manchester. On September 2nd 1940 I was called to the school to help with evacuees, arriving from Manchester by buses. We had to match evacuees with hostesses! It was dreadful. Some children were stitched into their vests, some had head lice, some very shabby and dirty. At the end of a very long day Heald Green was full but still some children were left. There were two dear little girls left and I took them home to the bedroom I had prepared. Their special plea was to have my little terrier in the room with them at bedtime and not to shut the door. They were six and four and I never regretted it. We sent cards to their Mums and one came and stayed and she did my washing for months.



They got nits and so did I ! A local farmer ran a playgroup in his barn on Fridays and one day the little girls returned in a quiet mood, refused milk at tea time and next morning on their porridge. For the first time they had seen cows being milked and were horrified that it came from under a cow's stomach, it was warm and smelt funny.

After these girls returned to their homes I had a war worker and she was grand, although she used all my soap ration. Then in December 1940 Manchester had a dreadful blitz and many evacuated themselves privately. My father's lab. Assistant, was bombed out with two young children and came to me at 6-30am, the baby with her hair scorched at the front and the little boy so scared he could not speak. It was a joy to have them there.

From Mrs Stevens. Windermere

I was 13 and on a farm holiday in Derbyshire when I was recalled by telegram, to come home. It was a shock. Twenty-four hours later, August 31st, 1939 I was one of 500 girls, shepherded by "Ladies in Green", with gas masks, labels and a minimum of luggage, taken by slow train to the Rossendale Valley. There we were given carrier bags of food and dispersed to our billets. On the next Sunday, September 3rd., in church we heard the vicar announce that we were at war. We returned home that Christmas and only years later during my WRVS work, did I reflect on the poor WVS who coped with those 500 teenage girls.

From Mrs Statham. BEM Beds. Bucks. Oxon.

Just before the outbreak of war my brother aged 13 was evacuated from Dagenham, to Street in Somerset and he ended up at the home of Mr and Mrs Clark of Clark's Shoes. When the bombing started Mrs Clark wrote to my mother asking if she would like to send her other children. So we three joined my brother. I was five years old and I remember the large house, the ten bedrooms, the formal garden, vegetable garden, orchard and croquet lawn. Also Phyllis the housemaid, Rose the cook, Taylor the gardener and the lady who did the laundry. We were well cared for but had to help, clearing the table, washing up the tea things. We also had to eat everything on our plates. We walked to school across fields in all weathers and went to the Quaker meeting on Sundays as the family were Quakers, Mr Clark read the Bible to us every morning before breakfast. When I had my tonsils out a neighbour sent me some jelly. Mrs Clark had six children of her own, so it cannot have been easy to cope with four more, but we were very lucky to be evacuated to such a lovely family.

From Mrs Bellingham. Essex.

Several memories from Bedfordshire. In September 1939 I was 14. Both my father and mother worked on the billeting of evacuees. Mrs Burgess remembers lines of bewildered children struggling from the train at Biggleswade, while at St Neots, Mrs Callaway, then a schoolgirl, was putting emergency rations into bags and standing in line handing them out as children her own age filed past, too dazed to return her smile. One member was evacuated as an expectant mother but was so revolted by the conditions that she decided to risk the bombs at home. The majority of memories are lighthearted, like the uninitiated blackberry pickers who ate elderberries by mistake and then panicked that they were poison. And the attempt to remove elderberry stains from clothing with Monkey Brand, (to no avail). Mrs Callaway's mother recalled the sight of her two evacuees riding round the yard on the back of a fine pig ! Her father had to face one

hostess who complained volubly, "The cat won't come in the 'ouse, the 'ens won't lay and its making me feel real 'ill". For his daughters this became a family catch-phrase at times of stress! The first lot went home and then when the blitz really started the whole process started again. Again they received long lines of children, expectant mothers and mothers and babies, exhausted after sleepless nights in tube stations and shelters. WVS took over a village school and some mothers and babies were housed there. But the cloakrooms badly needed modernising and the smell of nappies soaking in washbasins and overused lavatories was haunting. Her parents were often distressed at not being able to house more children but one two year old boy, sent with only his 13 year old sister to look after him could not possibly be refused and they took them in. But her mother soon decided that having two daughters and no son was no bad thing.!

From Mrs Callaway and other Bedfordshire members.

The house on the Reading road was big and run down, standing in open country near the river. Evacuees and teachers came from the East London Dockland settlement, most from unsuitable billets to be rebilleted. The cook and other helpers were hardworking local folk, and the Medical Officer of Health, the G.P. and the Health Visitor towers of strength. Most children needed attention, for scabies, head lice or bed-wetting. Weekends were difficult as we had few books or games and my neighbour got some from the hospital where she worked. When these arrived our wet weekends were better. One day as the midday meal was being served a girl arrived and was hastily found a place at table. She was pale, grubby and her clothes hung on her. She looked unhappy and said "Please miss the other kids say I stink" and she did! So I took her, bathed her, washed her hair, burned her clothes and found her posh ones from our small stock. In a week she became a happy rosie-faced little lassie with many friends and full of energy.

I searched for a boy called Gerald. I asked another boy to find him. He asked "What do you want him for miss?" I told him it was for swearing. The boy was amazed. "But he only said bugger, Miss".

At bed time we went round checking, especially the bed-wetters. Teresa was an epileptic and a special case. I asked her "Do you need clean knickers?" She turned an angry face to me and said, "No, I don't come from a family what wets its drawers"!

One evening, the children in bed, the teachers out, I was alone. There was a knock on the door and a man stood there surrounded by fifteen children. He said "I've brought this party of children for you". I protested that I knew nothing about it, but the man insisted, "I've driven them from London and was told to bring them here". I rang the M.O.H. who asked me to do what I could and that he would come in the morning. The Daily kindly said she would help. We fed

these hungry children in the kitchen, gave them hot cocoa and in an empty room put mattresses on the floor, found blankets and bedded them down for the night. I said goodnight to each one and told them I would leave a light on on the landing and showed them where I would be close by. There was not a sound from them all night. I will always cherish memories of these children; they accepted the situation without question, were cheerful, polite and obedient. I often wonder where they are now.

I could tell lots of funny stories. They were getting ready to go out and I said to Jimmy "You've put your shoes on the wrong feet". He looked up at me and said "But Miss, I havn't any other feet".

From Mrs Thompson. Harrogate

In 1939 I was six years old and although I did not know it, my whole life was to change. We were to be evacuated to a place called Selby. My older sister and brothers were going to different places on different trains. We all had a carrier bag with enough clothes for a week, and we wore labels. We were given a paper bag of groceries, (I remember a packet of cream crackers). . From Selby station I was taken to a big hall and then in cars to various houses. The grown-ups knocked on doors and children went inside. When it was my turn, four of us were taken to a huge house called "The old Vicarage". I thought it was a mansion. The first thing I remember was being bathed and put into a big bed with another girl. In a few weeks the others went home and my hostess sent for my sister. We spent the whole of the war there. Imagine going from a working class home, to a family where the husband owned the factory he went to each day, from where my Mum did all the housework, to where they had three living-in servants, two dailies, a chauffer and a gardener. I was very lucky. I got the best treatment and new clothing when I needed it. When war ended I went home to my brothers whom I didn't know and found my Auntie, who had been bombed out, and her family of eight living with us, and we were seven. You can imagine the culture shock. With my "posh" accent I was made fun of. It took a few years for me to fit in with my family again, but the values I learned while I was away never left me, for my host family did a great deal of voluntary work, and were always kind to anyone in trouble.

From Mrs Hodgson Scarborough.

We lived fifteen miles out of Liverpool, in the country. A small, thin, ten year old cousin was sent to us during the Liverpool Air Raids. My mother, who

had had six children, gave him a warm welcome. We had all been taught to help in the house and one day she asked him to do something simple like making his bed. He refused, got into a terrible temper and walked out slamming the door. We were all concerned. This was not how we behaved at all! He had not returned by bedtime and had not gone home either. Frantic with worry, we called the police. All night they searched. We got no sleep and the air raids continued all night. Next morning he still did not appear. Then about lunch time he walked in, wet, dirty and crying. He was cuddled, given a hot bath and a good meal and then we asked where he had been. He was amazed that they had been looking for him. He had walked into the Cheshire countryside for miles, found a barn and slept in the hay, then, feeling very unhappy he came home, walking along main roads and side roads in the rain. It was amazing he had never been seen. The kindly policeman gave him a stern telling off and left, happy to see him safe. My mother said the episode aged her twenty years!

From Mrs Venables. York.

I was 12 and lived in Knaresborough North Yorkshire. Too young to be in WWS, as a Guide I helped with the WWS canteen, feeding Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders billeted in the town. My main occupation was peeling spuds, making evenly sized chips in an efficient machine or washing up, but we were kept well away from the troops, a job reserved for the more mature ladies ! Another school shared our laboratories so on Wednesdays we had the day off. Two unmarried sisters took in two evacuees. Next day there was a practice air-raid warning and the sisters decided they all put on gas masks. Unfortunately with these on, they did not hear the "All Clear" and many hours later, a caller still found them sitting there with their gas masks on.

We helped at a hostel for sick evacuees. One small boy was there for some time. and we were allowed to take him for walks and help at bath time, but under the eagle-eye of the matron. We also were sent to help at a convalescent home for service men. One very wet Saturday morning in awful weather, the matron sent us out to find and dig up wild garlic bulbs, presumably for the cooking! With very inadequate equipment we managed to dig some up and take them to her. I don't remember ever going there again !.

From Mrs Wilks. York.

When the bombing started in Hull, buses came out about 6-0 o'clock every night and anyone could come out to Cottingham. The buses parked overnight in the streets near us and I got people to open their houses for these people.

I never knew how many people were in my house, as I was in the shelter with the family. We gave them blankets. and I put out tea,, milk and sugar. Next morning they left my house neat and tidy and nothing was ever missing. Lots of people did it round here. It was a different society in those days. They left each morning in the buses and returned next night. We set up a church hall with mattresses, but the hall was used in the daytime, so each morning we had to clear it away and bring out the beds in the evening before the buses arrived; it was hard work. Three families were given an empty house we cleaned and helped to furnish. But three women in one kitchen did not work. We did our best, but to no avail.

From Mrs Simmonds, Cottingham (by tape).

Joining WVS in 1938, I had officers billeted on me so could not take evacuees. One day, eight boys were to arrive in Bury, so, I got the officers' breakfasts and left them to manage by themselves while I dashed off to the Palais de Danse to meet the boys. WVS had prepared an empty house for them and their two masters, begged furniture, made curtains and laid bathroom linoleum and finally got some food ready. But the sad sight of these boys, parted from their homes kept me thinking when I got home and I set to and spent all night making cakes and sweets to take next day.

Some 40 years later, on holiday in Guernsey, taking our evening stroll, we called at a hotel for a drink. The friendly barman hearing I came from Bury, told of the kindness he had been shown when he was evacuated there and about the cakes and sweets one lady had made. He said how much he would like to meet that lady, shake her hand and thank her. I held out my hand and said "You can. It was me"!

My neighbour took in a very disturbed girl, and turned to me for help. Consequently the child spent a lot of time at my house. Forty years later my neighbour got a phone call from this girl, now middle aged trying to contact us and we have kept in touch ever since.

The poor mother of one evacuee needed a warm jumper and I found her a beautiful one from stocks of excellent clothing received from America. That Christmas the boy, aged 5, secretly sent me a Christmas Card inscribed "from your boy-friend" and from that time he has sent me a Christmas card every year, with that inscription, wherever he is in the world.

From Mrs Ruth Calrow. Bury group

Finally in a long tape from Guernsey, Mrs Cheminant talks about what the word "evacuation" meant for Island children transported hurriedly to the mainland in 1940, with no chance of returning to their homes for five years. The last boat to leave was bombed in the harbour but managed to get away and make it

ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

safely to England. Some did not return but others were by then teenagers and different people with different accents some badly traumatized by the separation. The islanders got very little news of them for all that time. Another "evacuation" was more sinister and involved all men from the mainland being taken away with their wives and children and interred in Germany. Some of these, sadly, never returned. Mrs Cheminant ends her long and interesting account with the hope that with the efforts of reconciliation now taking place the Germans are now welcome on the island and those days, never to be forgotten, will never return

With every backward glance take a long look forward. "Anon"

A Prayer.

Today, dear Lord, I'm 90 there's much I haven't done,
I hope, dear Lord you'll let me live until I'm 91.
By then, if I'm not finished with all I want to do,
Would you be kind and let me live until I'm 92?
There are things I want to know about, and Oh, so much to see
Do you think that you could manage Lord until I'm 93?
The world is changing very fast, and there's so much more in store
So I'd surely like to be on hand until I'm 94.
And if by then my heart is sound and I am still alive,
I'd like to live to be around until I'm 95.
There are still so many problems and so much needs a "fix"
I'd like to live to be around when I am 96.
I know dear lord its much to ask, and mighty nice in heaven
But I would like to be around until I'm 97.
Perhaps by then I might be slow and I know its getting late,
But t'would be nice to be your guest when I am 98.
I will have seen so much by then, and had so grand a time
That I'd be willing to call it quits and settle for 99.

HELP US TO MAKE OUR MILLENNIUM REUNION A SUCCESS.

ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Book early for the proposed optional outing to the "OXFORD STORY" on Saturday afternoon 10th June 2000, The cost will be £10 to be sent to Mrs Stevens **with your booking fee for Milton Hill.**