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## WRVS ASSOCIATION

# NEWSLETTER



No. 53 Autumn 2000

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### Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

The summer months are nearly over and I hope, this year, we will enjoy a warm Autumn. The office personnel in York, have been very busy, since my last letter, we are well over halfway entering the membership details on the new Database. Although we will not be able to use this new system to send out this Newsletter, we will soon be able to enjoy the advantage of this modern equipment.

I have enjoyed visits to London and Newcastle. Each has been fun and a good time to meet many members. In April I spent two days as the guest of the Chairman of the Scottish Association, Lady Mackintosh. This was a most enjoyable and interesting visit too.

Office members and I have been working to fill the vacant Divisional Representatives positions. Mrs Edwards BEM has been looking after the whole of Wales for some time. The distances have made this none too easy a task and I have been most grateful to her, and thank her for the work she has put in. Mrs Mary Gibbons OBE has now joined the team of Divisional Representatives and will look after the South of Wales for the Association. I am delighted to welcome her, and wish her luck in the job. Mrs Ellis-Martin has taken on the Divisional Representative position in Cornwall and Devon, this has been vacant for a few years, and I wish her well. There is a notice, in this issue from Mrs Ellis- Martin for the members in the South West.

You will see in the separate notice enclosed with this Newsletter, that the AGM for 2001 will be held in Birmingham, I hope members will find this convenient and come and enjoy the visit to the city in the centre of the Country.

*Alan A. Pugh*

ROYAL  
VOLUNTARY  
SERVICE

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## NORTH EAST DIVISION - Headquarters Darlington

**Northumberland, Tyne & Wear - Div. Rep. Mrs S. McCormack BEM**

Mrs MacCormack writes that they were pleased to welcome the Chairman, Mrs Price to their Annual Lunch in June. Members from the whole area enjoyed an excellent lunch and the speaker carried on from last year telling them more entertaining observations "Through the Vicarage Window".

Newcastle members (joined by Gateshead) have spent happy months. Mrs Doyle reports that they went "Across America" in a covered wagon with a speaker in February and enjoyed a talk on "50 Doll's Houses" in March. In April they went to the Theatre to see "Out of Order", where everybody had a good laugh. In May Dr Bowler showed her beautiful slides of "The Gardens of Andalucia" and in June they had a talk on the history of the old Assembly Rooms, where the Annual lunch (mentioned above), was to be held in June so this talk was very apt. In July they went on their second outing, this time to Castle Howard and had one of the very rare days of summer! The "People's Train" there was well used to cover the grounds and the lake. Much ice cream was consumed, and all enjoyed their day. They look forward to their autumn meetings.

At the North Shields / Whitley Bay coffee morning in March, Mrs Dawson says it was decided to rest for the summer period and hold a large coffee morning in November and they held a get-together at Mrs Dawson's home to finalise arrangements. In June they attended and enjoyed the Area lunch in Newcastle. Mrs Broderick and Mrs Frew, not always able to come to meetings, are sent good wishes and remembered.

At the January meeting they had a good turn out which set the seal for the rest of the session. They welcomed five new members and Mrs Hardy thanked everyone for the work they did last session. At two meetings they looked at Sunderland WRVS archive albums and enjoyed meeting old friends and remembering past times. Mrs Oliver presented a cheque for £150 to Benedict's Hospice, raised at sales tables and collecting boxes. Mrs Somers spoke of her work on a committee monitoring the prison service at Frankland Prison. This very informative talk produced lots of questions. At another meeting Rev. D.Aldridge gave an amusing and lively talk about his friendship with Lord Tonyandy; at another Mrs Norris showed slides of "The Treasures of Durham Cathedral" giving an insight into some of the collection. To round off a good six months, they went to Sunderland University restaurant for lunch.



Mrs Sealey reports from Northumberland that they still enjoy their monthly coffee mornings and extend a warm welcome to all Northumberland members to join them. If anyone cares to they should ring 01661 - 822422 for dates and venues and all will be welcome. In March Mr Armstrong gave a talk about WRVS and told how the Meals on Wheels service was developing. They also enjoyed the tasting session that followed.! This group still hope to visit the York office before long.

### **Durham, Cleveland, N. Yorks, E. Yorks and Hull - Div Rep. Mrs R. Thompson OBE**

Hartlepool continues to have a good attendance at monthly meetings, which have varied themes. A community policewoman gave good advice about safety in the home and when walking out, and offered to provide hand alarms for £5 each. A staff member from the local Parks and Gardens dept., spoke about the care of flower beds. One happy morning was spent as members spoke about something from the past which had influenced their lives or had become precious to them. This group went on a memorable outing to Floors Castle and Hexham, and were joined by serving members.

Middlesborough say that after their hosting of last year's Annual Luncheon, seven new members joined and one "lapsed" member has rejoined as she has been offered transport to the meetings. An interesting talk on the history of buttons was illustrated by a large display of all types of buttons. At another meeting a talk was given by Mrs Flick, entitled "The King and I" telling of the time they were posted to Africa where she met a King ! The Community Police use the room next to where this group meet and Pat Gostick invited an officer to talk to them. He demonstrated all the items he carries in his bullet-proof jacket !

In July WRVS demonstrated microwave meals and everyone declared them excellent. Many members have found someone who will benefit from enrolling for these meals. The group visited Castle Howard and had a happy day of heavy showers, and hot sun.

Darlington had a successful coffee morning and Bring and Buy and the following month attended Divisional Office "Mad Hatter's Tea Party" and donated £10 from the Bring and Buy table. In April a good lunch was enjoyed at the Fox and Hounds in Neasham but a boat trip on the Wear from Durham was rained off. A coffee morning was held at Grace Evans address in early July followed by an excellent outing to Preston Park Museum in early August.



Harrogate continue to meet each first Friday of the month at which slide shows, Bring and Buys, and a variety of talks, coffee and biscuits and endless chat are enjoyed. They had a splendid lunch in the Catering College restaurant. Twenty four attended and were treated as honoured guests. Twenty members went to a matinee performance of "The Gondoliers" given by the local G. and S. Society and unanimously declared it an excellent production.

Selby had to find a new venue for their monthly meetings and were happy with their new "home". The Abbey Vaults were very kind and had done their best to accommodate the group, however, they have now been able to negotiate a reasonable rent for their "old" meeting room and a local caterer is preparing the meal, so they are happily ensconced back again. They had their AGM with a fish and chips lunch and in her report Mrs Altas repeats her grateful thanks to her very supportive members who have been so helpful while her husband, Charles has been in hospital.

Scarborough now have 65 members. Mrs Winter reports that they remain constant both in numbers and activities. Coffee mornings are well attended and a good way for old friends to meet. They had an excellent outing to Scampton Hall and were lucky with the weather.. They again held a sandwich lunch at Mrs Winter's home, an event which has proved very popular..

In York Mrs Brown gave an interesting and amusing talk on "The ABC of Embroidery" and displayed 26 examples of her work. This was followed by the AGM where everyone was delighted to hear that Mrs Marjory Brown had agreed to serve as Chairman for the next two years when Mrs Wilks relinquishes her office this October. £100 was donated to the Benevolent Fund. Mrs Venables again opened her home in April for afternoon tea to help boost branch funds and this enabled the outing to be subsidised. This year they went to Ormsby Hall, where although the weather could have been kinder, members were compensated by an excellent tea. York members were all sad to learn of the death, after many years of ill health, of Mrs Mollie Robinson who died in March. She bore her infirmity with great courage and spirit and will be remembered in her wheel chair attending National get-togethers.

The East Yorks groups have had their group lunches which continue to be well attended and are enjoyed by members. They are happy to have welcomed two new members, although sad to have lost two very elderly ones, Mrs Duck of Beverley and Miss Foxtón, who worked for many years at County Office. They are all looking forward to the Annual Area Lunch. They are hosting it this year at Beverley Racecourse in October and it promises to be a special event.

**South and West Yorks - Div. Rep. Mrs June Pitts BEM**

Due to the closure of the WRVS office in Halifax, the group has had to change its meeting place. They are fortunate to have been offered a room rent free in the Town Hall, with tea and coffee provided at a small charge. The room is very palatial and they all feel they should be discussing civic affairs rather than chatting.! They had a most interesting talk by Mrs Andrews BEM about her work with WVS in the 1940's in Portugal. On her return to England she recalled days as Local Organiser and Emergency Instructor in Homefirth. They all enjoyed her talk and her humour. This group had no bank account, so one member, Mrs Highly, showed great enterprise by collecting surplus toys and selling them in a local market, donating the money to the group to start their account, an effort greatly appreciated by all. A presentation of a tartan tie was made to Mr George MacMillan on his retirement as Area Administrator at the Halifax office in appreciation for all the help he had given to the Halifax group. They are happy to have welcomed three new members bringing their total to 19. (Well done !. Ed).

The Wakefield group, in the care of Mrs Zeigler reports happy meetings at the Salvation Army Citadel every other month. They alternate these with a lunch at the restaurant of the Catering College. They listened with interest to Mrs Zeigler's report of her flight to the Caribbean on Concorde to attend a wedding. She says she would be happy to travel on Concorde again, if they get it fixed !. Mrs Pitts thoroughly enjoyed her weekend at the Millennium Reunion at Milton Hill. She thought it was well organised and one of the best events she has attended.

Mrs Pitts remembers with sadness, Mrs Helena Foster OBE (see p. 16), who was her friend and mentor and responsible for much of the enjoyment she got out of WRVS.

**Lincs, Notts, Leics - Div.Rep. Mrs J. Newman**

Mrs Newman reports that most of the Districts in her patch have been leading a very active life. A few did have trouble finding members prepared to take on the planning for their group; however, some members were found and programmes arranged for the year, so that members keep in touch. Three members joined Mrs Newman for the Milton Hill weekend. All found it delightful, having the opportunity to meet up with members from all over the country.

Leicestershire enjoyed a special lunch in February to celebrate the Millennium. They have had regular coffee mornings and day trips have included a visit to the Potteries centre in Stoke-on-Trent, a Garden Centre in Wolverhampton and the National Trust's Shugborough Estate in Stafford. They are able to use a room at Leicester Royal Infirmary for meetings to which they invite all members.



This gives them the opportunity to keep up to date with what is happening in the Region. Having no central office for such a long time, communications are very very difficult.

Mrs Ellis, the Treasurer suggested they send a card for the Queen Mother's birthday. One member, a talented artist, produced a delightful water colour with ivy and rosemary included, which was signed by members and sent off to Clarence House with best wishes. A warm message of thanks has been received.

Several new members have joined them and during the past six months they have learned of four Golden and One Diamond wedding amongst members. "Is this", they ask, "a record"?

The ladies in the Lincoln group still enjoy their periodic lunch meetings. Mrs Birkhead says she has had several enquiries from retired WRVS members, but the lack of transport is a problem. They are still trying to work out a solution.

In N.E. Lincs in March a successful lunch with 38 members attending, was followed in July by 45 members enjoying a strawberry tea, held by the kindness of the local Abbeyfield Home. Unfortunately the weather was damp so they had to forgo sitting in the attractive garden for their tea but had to sit indoors. But the occasion was much appreciated. Mrs Blanchard reports the glad tidings that they have had seven new members. (Good news indeed. Ed).

Ashfield held a well-attended luncheon meeting in April, followed by a short AGM. This District is a rather scattered one so it was decided to vary the location of their meetings. Dates were made for the year. In July they held a "Faith Tea" in an Old People's Complex. Before the tea they had a demonstration of lace making which they found of great interest.

The Bassetlaw group have been very active this half year. Luncheon meetings were held in February and May. In March the AGM was held following a "Faith Lunch". On a perfect June day the group celebrated their tenth birthday at the home of Mrs Moore (a past Chairman). They sat either in the garden in the warm sun, or in the house and ate the delicious sandwiches and cakes made by members. The afternoon was greatly enjoyed. In pride of place were two iced cakes made by Mrs Sellars, one cake to celebrate the Royal birthday, the other to celebrate the tenth birthday. Mrs Buffrey, a co-founder of the group, was invited to cut the cake for the Queen Mother. After votes of thanks to all who contributed, each member went home with a piece of cake. In July they had tea at the watermill at Ollerton.

Broxtowe have met monthly since January, starting with their customary glass of sherry and shortbread. In April they visited Notts. County Hall and its restaurant, a popular venue in the district. The AGM was held in May. On a lovely summer day they visited Southwell, where after coffee, they had time for a leisurely look round the beautiful Minster. They then proceeded to Hockerton for lunch at Christy's, visiting the farm shop there. It was a delightful day out.





An illustrated talk on the old Nottingham Empire, interspersed with a rendering of old music-hall songs, was much enjoyed by the Gedling group, one of many interesting and fun-loving meetings.

For their spring meeting they enjoyed a video of Her Majesty, The Queen Mother shown by a member; also a sing-a-long with songs to suit their age group, was accompanied by an excellent pianist who covered up the fact that they were not always on key! The annual coach trip was to Bykerley, (Burton on Trent). The weather was reasonably fair but they did have a thunderstorm over tea time, when they were indoors.

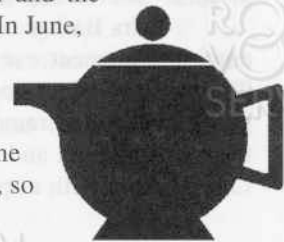
Mrs Newman attended their well-attended AGM. There was much discussion and a lively and amicable business meeting before a delicious lunch. A planned river trip was cancelled, at the "casual" meeting in its place they were all asked to bring something they regarded as precious to themselves and talk about it for two minutes. It was most interesting.

The busy Mansfield members managed to meet for a coffee morning in February and for two lunches, one in March and the other in June which gave them a chance to relax, and meet friends.

After a number of years appreciating the catering of one company the **Newark** group have had to find another venue for their quarterly lunches.. The June lunch coincided with the closing down ceremony of the Nottingham Area Office which Mrs Newman attended and so was unable to join them for this lunch. (We hope the new venue was satisfactory. Ed)

Rushcliffe have also had accommodation problems since their local pub was being renovated. Fortunately they had kind help from one of the schemes where WRVS serve lunches and they let them have a room free of charge as a "thank you" for the help they had given there. The plan has a good and bad aspect. They are allowed to make and serve their own coffee and keep the profits from it, but the downside is they, they have to do the washing up !

The year started with two coffee mornings with Mrs Bradley telling them tales of the theatre and Mrs Flinton speaking about "teapots" showing them a n enormous range of pots. The AGM was held in May and 26 members attended. This was fewer than normal, perhaps because it was held later than usual and the holiday season had already begun. This is a lesson for future dates. In June, over half the group had lunch at the lovely village of Barnstone and they all enjoyed a lovely day in the country. In July they were back in their own "pub" venue, now renovated.. However the room is now smaller and some members prefer the temporary home they had been using, so plan future meetings in both venues in turn, so hoping to please everyone.!



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In August they had no meetings. It was considered time for holidays, grandchildren and, perhaps, resting in the garden. (In the rain ? Ed.).

Mrs Phillips, WRVS Manager from Newark has written asking us to include in the Newsletter, a notice of the death in 1999 of Mrs Conway. Mrs Conway had been local organiser in Ashfield, a very kind thoughtful person who worked tirelessly, delivering sacks of coal to the housebound during the miner's strike and organising the Meals on Wheels service in the area. She is sadly missed by her friends.

## **NORTH WEST DIVISION - *Headquarters Manchester***

### **Cumbria, Lancashire. NW5 - *Div. Rep. Mrs M. McCambridge BEM***

Mrs Stevenson writes about the quiet work in Cumbria where they are knitting jerseys for the children of Kosovo for next winter. They are in very gay colours and the local wool shop is letting them have the wool cheaper than normally it should be. They visit the local Cheshire Home at tea time helping patients who have lost the use of their hands. (Keep up the good work ! Ed)

### **Merseyside and Cheshire - *Appointment pending***

### **North and South Manchester - *Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Matthews BEM***

The Bury group met in March at a new venue and enjoyed a home-cooked meat and potato pie lunch, followed by an interesting slide show of Stratford and the Cotswolds. Due to the popularity of the Belsfield Hotel, Bowness, it was decided to make a third visit there in June. Forty-nine members and friends had a most enjoyable day and spent the afternoon looking at the shops, sailing on the lake or strolling by the lakeside. Mrs Calrow, whose experiences at the time of the Evacuation appeared in the Spring 2000 Newsletter, celebrated her ninetieth birthday in August with a surprise cake, decorated with the WRVS logo, which gave her great pleasure.

Sadly in March they lost a well-loved founder-member Mrs Renwick who was also 90. She will be greatly missed.

Mrs Barker writes, (with difficulty with a broken arm!) that the Romiley group continues to meet every second Tuesday in the month at the Underhill Centre in Romiley. They have had four good speakers. They regret that the AGM was not well attended. Last year's committee remains the same except that the treasurer, Mrs Picton, has resigned through ill-health and Mrs Davies has taken her place. In May they had an outing to the Lake District with a splendid lunch at Grisedale marred only by the wet weather.



They finished the summer with a strawberry and cream tea and bring and buy sale. (We hope the arm mends quickly. Ed)

Sale group met in January - and paid their subs. ! In February they had a slide show on the Lake District entitled "Lonely as a Cloud". In March they arranged a "Mad Hatter's Tea party" as a fund raising project, the first fund raising they have held, reluctantly, they say. Mrs Tedman says that "times have changed". Mrs Grimshaw was the Mad Hatter and arranged a quiz on Alice in Wonderland. (I wonder if they had had warning and read it beforehand, for if not, how many of us could answer all the questions? Ed). They also had a fancy hat parade. There were three prizes, for the most original, the most elegant and the maddest. The maddest was made from foil M.O.W. dishes containing fish, chips and peas, won by Mrs Beverley. Also, each member spoke a few words on "Why I joined WVS/WRVS.". Twenty members attended the AGM of the local WRVS. Mrs Tedham attended and spoke of the year's activities of the **Sale** Association group. In June they had an informative talk on Aromatherapy, and in July Mrs Winstanley told them more of "her personal experiences" (This sounds intriguing ! Ed.)



**Staffs.Shropshire, Derbyshire** - *Appointment Pending*

**SOUTH EAST DIVISION** - *Headquarters 99 White Lion St. NI 9GF*

**Cambs and Northants** - *Div. Rep. Mrs Titcomb*

Cambridge, Huntingdon and Peterborough are finding it difficult to attract new members although Huntingdon has had success enrolling some serving members, but they are often working when meetings are held. Mrs Watson reports that although they had successful meetings earlier in the year, the annual strawberry tea in June only attracted 8 members (Are strawberries losing their appeal now that we can buy them all the year round.? If so it is a pity. Ed). The coach outing in July had to be cancelled through lack of support and an August outing too was cancelled. Mrs Watson has several ideas to improve attendances which we hope we will learn about in the next report.

Mrs Charnley's group at Cambridge have enjoyed their coffee mornings and lunches at the Riverside Restaurant and have had a day trip to Clacton.

Peterborough has continued its bi-monthly meetings, one of which was an evening meal at a local restaurant.

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In March a Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication of the Home Front was held in Peterborough Cathedral attended by the Mayor and Mayoress, the Lord Lieutenant, the local MP and other dignitaries. Also representatives of the Fire Brigade, The Red Cross, Land Army and WRVS and WRVS Association. The Lord Lieutenant had asked that one lesson be read by a WRVS member and the honour fell to Mrs Titcomb who read the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which she felt particularly apt for the WRVS's choice. Mrs Charnley represented the Association.

Mrs Titcomb says that the group run by Mrs Parr at Daventry and South Northants does not contact her. (Could I, as editor, try to persuade them to write and tell us if they are meeting. We would love to hear from them .ED)

### **Oxon. Beds and Bucks - Div. Rep. Mrs J. Callaway**

Many Bedfordshire members were sad to see the final closure of the WRVS office in Bedford; Area, County and District offices had evolved into one Area office, (North Chilterns) and this has now been closed. The Association has gained several new members from those who felt that this was their one hope of keeping in touch. Mrs Callaway hopes that even more will join them over the next few months. Mrs Adams, VCO for Beds and Cambs has offered to visit Bedfordshire Association and keep them in touch.

The AGM was well supported in March. In the summer members visited "Harpers" a butchers near Dunstable for a "Taste and Try session". A variety of dishes was sampled, washed down with various drinks, both alcoholic and soft. Members with cars provided lifts for those who do not drive as it has often proved too difficult to fill a coach.. Mrs Vesey's Garden Party in July is best reported by quoting some of the members' comments. "It was such a pleasure to meet again so many good friends" and "I felt relaxed and happy after such a lovely afternoon in such a beautiful garden". They all send their thanks to Mrs Vesey.

Mrs Callaway says she has no news from Bucks and Oxfordshire who keep in touch informally but do not seem to want meetings.

### **Norfolk and Suffolk - Div. Rep. Mrs S Scholey**

Members have enjoyed the summer, especially those who attended the Millennium Reunion at Milton Hill. Norfolk members enjoyed the busy weekend including the visit to Oxford and the "Oxford Story", and the chance to wander round the shops, visit one or two colleges, or enjoy a cream tea ! On the first evening a reception was held as, glass in hand, members met and their tongues never stopped. The accommodation was luxurious, as was the catering. Members thanks go to the Chairman, to Mrs Stevens and all involved in organising this happy weekend. They have had other outings including Tea at Felbridge Hall, also to Marks Hall Estate Gardens, and to Clacton's Retail Outlet Village.

Lunches have also been held. They wish a speedy return to full health to any members who have been ill during this period.

Mrs Jackman has sent a full report from Great Yarmouth branch which tells of a coffee morning in April, an outing in May with tea at a country inn before proceeding to an outlet selling luxury chocolates, where they were given samples to taste! They held their usual, successful lunch at the Pier Hotel, Gorleston and in June visited Colchester and the Arboretum. In July they all enjoyed a popular matinee at the show on Cromer Pier where they were joined by other branches.

**Essex, Herts and Bucks - Div. Rep. Mrs P Copping**

Castle Point lost a very dear colleague and friend by the death of Mrs Johnson. She had worked for WRVS for 38 years, instigating the Lunch Club, Day Centre and Meals on Wheels in an old house called Bramleys. When this became too small the proceeds of its sale, plus help from the local authority paid for a purpose-built centre which she ran efficiently until her retirement in 1997. She will be sadly missed by the whole community.

Southend on Sea continue to meet monthly with a variety of interesting speakers.

Hertfordshire held their Annual Meeting in July at a garden party, by kind permission of Mrs Betty Sewell. On this lovely day it was nice to see members of the new Hertford Branch which continues to grow. Mrs Pope gave an interesting talk about her new role as Regional Communications Manager.

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

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

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

Mrs Taylor writes that it was wonderful to see numbers of N.E. members at the London Reunion in April. They enjoyed the fine fare provided by the stalwarts, the raffle, Bring and Buy and the chance to meet up with old friends. Sadly some were missing including Mrs Doris Gross, a former London Borough Organiser and much more. (Mrs Gross edited the Newsletter before she resigned through ill health in 1992 and I took over in 1993. She was extremely helpful, to this "Rookie" at that time.. Ed). Mrs Taylor appeals to members to encourage friends to join the Association as their membership is depleting.. (I think that this appeal could go out to all our members in every town and village !. Ed). She also wants them to let her know if they have any news of Association members.. A few attended the Millennium weekend at Milton Hill.

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A card was sent to Clarence House from Mrs Taylor and all the London N.E. members wishing The Queen Mother a Happy Birthday and a reply has been received. It reads, "the Queen Mother sends thanks to you and those who joined with you, for your kind message on the occasion of her 100th birthday. She was appreciative of all the messages received from all over the world and felt grateful for the friendship and support of many people. She would like to send her best wishes and thanks to you all".

**London S.E.** - Div. Rep. Mrs G. Cleverly

**London N.W.** - Div. Rep. Mrs D. Steven

In April they had their annual re-union for all four London "areas" but owing to a change of date they had fewer members there than usual. They hope they will see those who could not come this year, at next year's event. Apart from their usual coffee get-togethers they had a very special Millennium Celebration by having tea at the Savoy Hotel, (which many groups would envy, I imagine. Ed)

**Hampshire, Isle of Wight** - Div. Rep. Mrs Beryl Adams

Because of all the millennium celebrations a February date for a late Christmas lunch was very successful. Mrs Adams writes that this year they had changed the venue to The Half Moon, Petersfield which the committee had tried first. The food was superb and the staff friendly. A large space was partitioned off to hold their raffle and as they had decided to have no speaker, the 65 members present had plenty of time to talk to old friends. In May they had yet another venue at a hall in Lyndhurst in the New Forest and amazingly the weather was fine. They all arrive at these meetings carrying a plate of goodies for the tea and a raffle prize. Two members, Mrs Ebdon and Mrs Gundry had been awarded the MBE. Mrs Ebdon entertained them with a description of her visit to Buckingham Palace. She told how on the train to London an American lady kept looking at her and eventually asked her if she was an air hostess. On being told what the uniform was and how she was on her way to the Palace the lady was most impressed and kept saying "Going to Buckingham Palace. I must tell my friends !"

**SOUTH WEST DIVISION** - Headquarters Exeter

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

At their Tewkesbury meeting in June, Mrs Reckitt, the speaker described how she had become interested in fans since buying four in the 1960's some costing only 25p. They learned how fans were used in Japan and China in the hot weather and mainly by men at that time.

Much used in Elizabethan England, some decorated with diamonds, they became very expensive. The Guild of Fanmakers was formed in 1709. Mrs Reckitt showed her beautiful collection, some fragile, some painted or bejewelled. They are sad to report the death in August of Mrs Akehurst of Tewkesbury who will be sadly missed. She had prepared the lunches for the Tewkesbury meetings for many years and was a valued member.

Cheltenham held a Spring meeting in April and 21 members attended. It was suggested by Mrs Norman that meetings be discontinued due to poor attendance, but after discussion it was agreed to hold a further meeting next year before making a final decision. A talk by Dr and Miss Owen on "South Africa and its flowers" was much enjoyed and members appreciated tea and cakes at the end of the meeting.

**Somerset, Devon, Cornwall** - Div. Rep. Mrs J. Ellis-Martin

We welcome Mrs Ellis-Martin to her new post as Divisional Representative and wish her well. She has asked us to send the following message to all WRVS and Association members in Devon and Cornwall asking them if they would be kind enough to answer the following questions.

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. I am still a member of the WRVS Association                             | Yes/No |
| 2. I would like a regular annual meeting in a suitable venue               | Yes/No |
| 3. I would like to meet/communicate with other members who live in my area | Yes/No |

Would they also send any suggestions about when and where to hold meetings. If they already hold meetings she would also like to hear from them. Please send your replies to Mrs J.Ellis-Martin,

**West Midlands** - Div. Rep. Mrs J.M. Smith BEM

**Wilts, Dorset** - Div. Rep. Mrs B. Williams

Welcome news from Mrs Darby reporting that the Wiltshire group turned out in strength for a tea party served for them by the Care Rowde Community. In March 36 members sat down to a reunion lunch provided by caterers at Melksham. This group now has 65 members, some unable to attend meetings but enjoy receiving the Newsletter and Action. At the time of writing they were planning a garden event for the summer.

**WALES** - Headquarters Cardiff

**North Wales** - Div. Rep. Mrs E. Edwards BEM



Mrs Bocking reports from the Conwy branch that they meet on the first Friday of each month and numbers are maintained. At their AGM in March they invited children from the Special Needs School to come to receive the proceeds of their raffle which will pay for some lesson books. (What a good idea! Ed). The children entertained them with musical items. At another meeting they had an exhibition of Saris, by one member, Mrs Pereira and at another, they had a talk on Homeopathy by a local practitioner. In June they met for lunch in a Llandudno Hotel and enjoyed all their meetings. They are faced with yet another office closure and are encouraging members affected to retain contact by joining the Association.

**South Wales - Div. Rep. Mrs M. Gibbons. OBE**

We send a warm welcome to Mrs Gibbons who has joined us following her retirement from her work on the Benevolent Trust. She writes to say that she finds the South Wales members there have had little coverage in the Newsletter in the past, although they have continued to meet regularly. (This is possibly because Mrs Edwards has been the only Div. Rep. for the whole of Wales and that is far too big and difficult a Division for one person to deal with. It is good that we will be hearing from them once more, thanks to Mrs Gibbons. Mrs Edwards too is pleased. Ed)

Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire are looked after by Mrs Rowland-James and this group had a summer picnic at the home of Mrs Walden-Jones. Also an outing to Aberglaslyn, whose gardens have featured on T.V. The weather was good, the gardens wheel-chair friendly and they all went home with sore throats from talking so much.

Mrs Travis, BEM, looked after S. Wales until her retirement and has kept in touch with the Newport and Brent group inviting them to her home for tea on the Queen Mother's birthday. Mrs Gibbons has asked us to mention that if there are Welsh members who do not belong to a group, but would like to be more in touch, if they ring her, she will see what she can do for them.

The group in Abergavenny and Gwent meet quarterly for lunch under the leadership of Mrs Stinchcombe and Mrs Gibbons hopes to join this group sometime soon.

## **CHANNEL ISLANDS**

**Guernsey - Assoc. Rep. Miss E. Robilliard**

**Jersey - Assoc. Rep. Mrs D. Jennings**

Mrs Jennings reports that six of their eleven members met for a tea party at the home of one member living on the North Coast.

They chatted about holidays and the relatives they had visited.. Some remembered Mrs Dora Corner who has recently died, who had been a Jersey resident and Mrs Jennings's predecessor, organising the Jersey group and whom they missed when she left the island to return to the mainland.

### **SCOTLAND** - *Chairman Lady Mackintosh*

We have had welcome news from Lady Macintosh who apologises for their long silence, as they have changed Chairman. She points out that in Scotland they have so far kept the old Regional titles, that being the way 90% of their members remember them from their active days.. She thinks it will only be a matter of time however before the "new" creeps in, as already Central no longer exists, although the Association still has a loyal group who continue to meet under their old heading.

This year the Scottish Association celebrated its 30th Anniversary since it was inaugurated by Mrs Crabbie, CBE. Since then they have grown in number and all Regions have monthly meetings, although the central committee of eleven representatives meet twice a year and every member is invited to attend the AGM, held this year at Edinburgh. They were pleased that Mrs Price was able to join them at this meeting and spoke about the WRVS and the need for members to feel needed as we all "need to be needed". Mrs Bomphrey, Head of Fund Raising in Scotland spoke about the changes in WRVS, the centralisation, the continuing need to fund raise and for volunteers.. A Scottish MP, Margo MacDonald then spoke and was bombarded with so many questions they were concerned that she was going to miss her flight to Portugal that evening !. They issue a Newsletter in Scotland too and it like ours contains reports from all the Regions. Their talks have ranged from a holiday in Australia seeing Aboriginal Cave Paintings, Gold Rush Ghost Towns, a trip to HMY Britannia, a visit to the new Museum of Scotland, a demonstration by a butcher on the different cuts of meat, training huskies in Alaska, Quaker tapestries now housed in the Lake District and a talk by a Paramedic Divisional Training Officer in the Highland and Western Isles. Lady Mackintosh says that this is just a sample of the many varied meetings they have all enjoyed.

#### ***POST CODES / ACTION***

**Would you look at your post code on the envelope enclosing this Newsletter and let the office know if it is incorrect or missing.**

Next year we will be letting the suppliers of Action magazine have the list of our members, so that they may send the Action Magazine direct to your home - therefore they need to know your **correct** postcode. There is no extra cost to WRVS for this as it is covered by advertisements.

## *Mrs Helena Foster*

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Members will be sad to learn of the death in Leeds of Mrs Helena Foster who died in August. Helena was the Association's second Chairman and all who knew her at that time will know what an outstanding Chairman she was. Those members who still have a May 1986 Newsletter will see there the piece written by Mrs Peggy James, on the occasion of Helena's retirement after her three year stint as Chairman. In that article, Mrs James writes "her appointment left no qualms in anyone who knew her that Helena would maintain the standards set by her predecessor (Kathleen Halpin), and colleagues" and this she certainly did. Mrs James wrote, "She always took great pride in doing things properly, making sure she had a thorough knowledge of her subject, coupled with clear communication, setting herself the very highest standard, which she encouraged in others."



The appointment of a national Chairman who lived "north of Watford", was a good choice as it stimulated the interest of all "out of London" members for Helena attended their many meetings, whether in the Midlands or the North. This did much for morale throughout the Association. All who knew Helena will know her worth and be glad to have known her. Her smiling face was well portrayed in the above picture and this will be how many remember her, with that winning smile and slight tilt of the head.. Sadly both Helena and her husband had been in nursing homes for some time and we send our sincere sympathy to the family.

## *Millennium Celebrations*

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The month of May saw the Association celebrating the Millennium at Milton Hill, with a "re-union". We were delighted to see so many members from all points of the compass which in the past just had been names on the office list. On the Saturday we visited Oxford and went to see "The Oxford Story" We hope we shall have the pleasure of meeting even more members next year in Birmingham. (See accompanying notice of this meeting.)

**From Mrs D Stevens.**



Dear Members,

I hope that along with the ducks, you have managed to enjoy the summer months and be looking forward to the autumn and winter. Not the best time of year for the elderly I think and I certainly feel the cold these days, whereas in younger days winter was my favourite time of year, as I cannot stand hot weather!. We are never satisfied ! But I am enrolling for a morning class to get me out of the house occasionally and give me some work to do in the long winter evenings by the fire.

I am sorry to read in the reports from the Divisions, the news of more WRVS offices closing. When this happens I wonder if they lose the focal point for volunteers who often join the service to make contact with people and perhaps make friends. In York we are lucky to still have our District Office and I still regard it as my second home, after so many hours spent working there. I hope present members get that feeling too of being a part of a whole. You will have read above our Chairman's remarks as guest speaker to the Scottish Association AGM, (see the News from Scotland above). Lady Mackintosh reported that our Chairman, Mrs Price, stressed the fact that in voluntary work, the volunteer has to feel "needed". This set me thinking and I wondered if it is as easy today, without our local offices, to make present WRVS members feel needed, missing that contact with their "centres" which we had when we were active members. Perhaps they can. I certainly hope so for I think we can all recall that pleasant feeling that we "belonged".to our service. We too, in our own Association Groups must make sure that our own members continue to feel part of the whole. Mrs Price is right, I think, in that we all need to feel needed, especially as we grow older.

Those of us who were lucky enough to attend the reunion weekend at Milton Hill will have certainly felt this warm feeling of "belonging"and members who could not go will have had reports from those who were there. I hope that more of you are able to get to Birmingham, next year. I am sure we will all enjoy it.

Has anyone had any news of the knitted scarf that members made ?. I would like to know the outcome and I am sure those who did all the knitting would like to know too how long the scarf was eventually.

To those members who are housebound I hope you get lots of visits from your WRVS friends and manage to keep warm this winter. To those who are active and able to get out, keep up the good work; it is very valuable.

*Ness Venables*

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ness Venables'. Below the signature is a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that serves as a decorative flourish or underline.

## *The Perfect Guest*

The Perfect Guest  
She answered by return of post  
The invitation from her host.  
Came by the train she said she would  
And changed at junctions as she should.  
She brought a small and lightish box,  
With keys that fitted in the locks.  
Food rich or rare she did not beg  
But ate the boiled or scrambled egg.  
When offered lukewarm tea she drank it  
And did not crave another blanket,  
Or extra pillows for her head.  
She said she liked the spare-room bed.  
She brought her own self-filling pen  
And always went to bed at ten.  
She left no little things behind  
But stories good and gossip kind.

*from Mr Creed. York.*

## *More Evacuation Experiences...*

At the outbreak of war I was eight, and lived in what was later called “Bomb Alley” in Walthamstow. When war broke out I was ill in Chingford Isolation Hospital with “Typhus” ! I remember lying in bed and hearing Churchill from a loud speaker in the ward. Later when I was back at school we were all evacuated to Wales. With navy raincoat, school cap, my label showing my school and name, my gas mask and sandwiches, we set off by bus for Paddington. On the train I had “a bundle” with my best friend and he threw my cap out of the train window. From Cardiff we went by stopping train to Llanharan. I vaguely remember ladies in green. A huge policeman dropped us off at the various addresses. My family were the Davies family and were kindness itself to me. I soon got used to walking the long walk to school each day to Llantrisant, (where the Royal Mint is now). Later, when my Gran came to live with me I moved to other digs and we stayed there until I passed the Scholarship exam. But Glamorgan Education Committee would not send me to the Grammar school so we returned to Walthamstow in 1942 at the height of the blitz to continue my education. Last October almost 60 years to the day, I returned to Llanharan to a wedding. At the reception I found I was sitting next to a lady who had been in my class in the school there.. I am, to this day, very fond of Wales.





## Another Evacuation Story

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We have been sent a very long and moving account of the experiences from the late Detective Sergeant Ferguson of the Met of being an evacuee from London to Devon from 1940 until 1945. It was sent by Mrs Ferguson his widow, for Mr Ferguson sadly died in 1994. Unfortunately it is long enough for a book and impossible for us to print, but here is just a sample of what "evacuation" meant for one small London boy.

"Git down 'orf there. If you fall you'll break yer bleeding neck" shouted Mrs Higgins in a voice loud enough for the whole street to hear, at six year old me, where I was perched on the top of a street lamppost in Battersea. It was the summer of 1939. I was the second of five children of a Police Sergeant and a bit of a tearaway needing a firm hand. My father worked at Battersea Police Station and had met "Mum" at the Police Training School. We lived in a ground floor, one-bed roomed flat. We children had spent that summer months playing in the park, climbing trees and dodging the park keeper. Then in the summer of 1940 there was talk of evacuation and we brought home lists of things we would have to have to take with us. The school had practices, when we had to take these things to school to be checked by our teachers. Then one day we took notes home saying that we would be going next day.. I remember my Dad bathing me in the kitchen sink that night and telling me how important it was to dry myself properly as "You'll have to do it for yourself. Mum won't be there you know.". Mum kept crying and going out of the room. Next morning our parents were not encouraged to go to the railways station, so we kissed goodbye to Mum and Dad took us across the road to school. We got in the buses to take us to Paddington and as the coach passed him, Dad turned away with tears in his eyes. At the station, the engine was hissing steam. One man was tapping the wheels with a long hammer, and another was oiling the wheel hubs with a can with a long spout. At last we set off. The journey seemed endless, with a continual, long queue for the toilet. Out of the train window I saw animals in the fields which I had never seen before and at last we arrived in Devon. We were met by the billeting officer, ladies from the WVS and various other helpers, and were driven by coach out into the country. Eventually we stopped at a house called "Hillcrest" and me and my brother and sister got out. But Mrs Clarke, the lady, only wanted one child and a discussion followed. Then she took pity on us as we looked so tired and said two could stay there and Jimmy was to stay next door. Next morning Mrs Clarke cooked us big breakfasts of bacon, egg, sausage and fried bread, "More like me dinner", I told her. Then we went to meet the hens and sheep and cows and go with Mr Clarke to the farm.

So began five very happy years. We walked each day the mile and a half to school and back and I got into many scrapes, but Mr Clarke and the school teachers were very strict and I learned to behave. I also learned all about country life. We called the Clarks "Auntie" and "Uncle" and Auntie made us write home regularly. Apart from feeding the animals, no work on the farm was allowed on Sundays. We dressed in our best clothes and went to Sunday school in the morning, then to church in the afternoon, then home for bread and jam for tea, on top of which we spooned clotted cream. Then we had home-made buns and a glass of milk. Then in the evening we went to church again with Auntie and Uncle, all dressed in their best.

Auntie and Uncle were very strict and we were punished if we went wrong, but they were very kind. My sister was always dressed in pretty dresses which Mrs Clarke made for her.. As I got older I was able to help with the harvest and at dinner time Auntie brought freshly baked pasties to the field for us to eat”.

The children had many experiences and learned the hard way about country life, which was very cold in winter, and very hard work with no break.

Sadly Mr Ferguson died in 1994 before he could finish the book, so we are left abruptly without a home-coming and will not know what it was like returning to Battersea and Mum and Dad. But it is a moving story.

*Sent by Mrs D Ferguson. Wetherby*

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### *Two Memories of wartime voluntary work, from a ninety-year-old*

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1. From the Voluntary Car Pool.

One of our jobs was taking lecturers to public lectures under the auspices of the CEMA. (Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts). One day we took a famous professor who liked to be driven by young and pretty women. If he liked the driver he would leave his umbrella in the car and when asked to do another lecture he would ask for her because, “I left my umbrella in her car”. However, the office got wise to this after a few journeys and sent him a retired gentleman or an elderly lady.

2. From Nottingham Meals on Wheels.

For the first meals from Nottingham in 1946, we used 6 tea chests, filled with crumpled newspaper instead of hay, with the meals in scout billycans. Hundreds of these had been sent from Canada.

*Mrs Stevenson. Cumbria*

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### *Some “Funnies” from members*

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#### *Prayer Choice*

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Church of England

O Lord, grant that we may be not like porridge, - stiff, stodgy and hard to stir - but like cornflakes, light, crisp and to ready to serve.

Church of Scotland.

O Lord, grant that we may not be like cornflakes - lightweight, empty and cold, - but like porridge - warm, comforting and full of natural goodness.

*From Mrs McCormack. Northumberland.*

## ***The Pressed Leaf***

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A little boy opened the big old family Bible and with fascination he looked at the old pages as he turned them. Then something fell out and he picked it up and looked at it. It was an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed between the pages. "Mummy, look what I've found" the boy called out "What have you got there dear" ? his mother asked. With astonishment the boy answered "It's Adam's suit" !



***From Mrs Thompson. Richmond.***

Remember the old joke about the Irish schoolmaster who told his class at registration "If your not here, put you hand up"

***From Mrs Dawson. Tyne and Wear.***

## ***Prayer for the Day***

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"So far, God, I've done all right.  
I haven't gossiped, I haven't lost my temper  
Haven't been grumpy, nasty or selfish.  
I'm really glad of that.  
But in a few minutes, God  
I'm going to get out of bed,  
And from then on,  
I'm probably going to need a lot of help".

***Sent by Mrs Hardy. Sunderland.***

## ***Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson go camping***

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One night Holmes awakes and nudges his faithful friend. "Watson, look up and tell me what you see".

"I see millions of stars".

Holmes, "What does it tell you ?"

Watson, "Astronomically , it tells me there are millions of galaxies. Astrologically, I deduce that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically I deduce that the time is 3.15am.

Theologically I can see that God is all-powerful. Meteorologically I suspect that tomorrow will be a beautiful day. What does it tell you Holmes "

Holmes. "Watson, my dear friend, it tells me that someone has stolen our tent."

***From Mrs Dawson. Whitley Bay.***

## ***Senior citizens are the nations leading carriers of aids***

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Hearing aids, Band aids, Walking aids, and most of all monetary aids to their children.

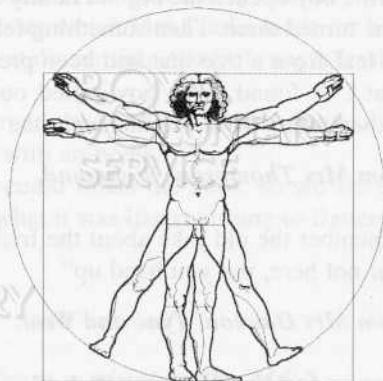
***From Mrs Thompson. Richmond***

## *The Anatomy of Success*

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Keep on your TOES.  
Put your best FOOT forward.  
Hold on to your BACKBONE,  
Keep a stiff upper LIP.  
Keep a-BREAST of the times.  
Stick out your CHIN,  
Don't get down in the MOUTH.  
Keep your EYES and EARS open  
And keep your MOUTH shut.

*from Miss Cramp. Nottingham.*



## *Recipe for a "Sweet Tooth" - Choc Pots*

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7 oz Plain Chocolate broken into pieces  
1/2 pint single cream  
1 egg beaten  
1 tabs Rum

Melt chocolate with cream in saucepan and bring to the boil. Remove from heat and whisk in beaten egg and then rum. Pour into individual dishes, cool and leave in fridge overnight. Decorate and serve.  
Serves 4 to 6 people.

## *For the next Newsletter*

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Would you all please send to the Editor your answers to the following:

"The best things about getting old are....."

A small prize for the best answer sent by January 31st 2001



**MBE**

*Mrs Molly Ebdon*

Services to WRVS, Hampshire  
Community Services Manager, Solent Area.

*Mrs Iris Gundry*

Service to WRVS, Derbyshire, Hants and Wilts.  
Books on Wheels Organiser.

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***News from the Benevolent Trust***

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Over the last two years the Trust has been able to help over eighty members and this year has already agreed more than twenty five grants in the first six months, thanks to the extra publicity the Trust has received.

Among many requests, the Trust has been able to fund a much needed holiday, new glasses, a new oven, the overdue repairs to a house, and a wheel chair. Help has also been given after a mugging.

We think readers will be interested in these facts and so once each year, we will be putting an update in the Newsletter, telling members of the variety of help given each year.

This help has been made possible through the gifts, donations and legacies it has received and Mrs Boot,, Chairman of the Trust wishes to thank all groups who have sent contributions. All donations or requests for assistance should be sent to:

The Hon. Secretary,  
WRVS Benevolent Trust,  
151 Clapham Road,  
London SW9 9SP.

*All enquiries will be treated confidentially.*



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**WRVS Association**

82 Bootham ,York, YO30 7DS

Tel: 01904 634500

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Mrs Tina Tietjen  
Chairman. WRVS

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Mrs E.D. Claydon  
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Mrs Jean Pickard

**Hon.Treasurer**

Mrs Maureen Hudson

**Hon. Editor**

Mrs Ness Venables



May the road rise to meet you,  
May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine on your face,  
The rain fall soft upon your fields

And, until we meet again

May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

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