
WRVS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER



No. 55 Autumn 2001

Letter from the Chairman

82 Bootham, YORK YO30 7DS

Dear Member.

It is a great honour and pleasure to be appointed as your new Chairman. It's a very daunting prospect following all my predecessors, who have done such a wonderful job over the years. I will do my best for the Association, you the members and the Service to which we all belong.

As your new Chairman, I would like to introduce myself. I live in Essex and on retirement from my post as County Organiser for Essex I joined the Association, I was County Representative and then, Divisional Representative for Essex and Hertfordshire, a post I still hold.

Our Reunion and AGM will be held in Bath at the beginning of July 2002. Bath is a beautiful city being the only World Heritage City in the UK. I do hope you will be able to join us, meeting old friends and making new ones. Further details will be included with this newsletter.

With so many projects closing down many WRVS members who have worked tirelessly for years are being lost to the service. May I ask you to encourage them to join the WRVS Association thereby keeping in touch with friends and colleagues on a regular basis.

I do hope the weather is kind to us this winter, and that those members living nearby can keep an eye on those who are unable to attend meetings due to illness and frailty.

My very best wishes to you all, and I look forward to meeting many of you during the coming year.

Yours sincerely

Pat Copping

News from the Divisions

NORTH EAST DIVISION - Headquarters Darlington

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

All groups continue to meet regularly and Sunderland group welcomed 5 new members. Mrs Hardy reports that Mrs Rawlinson, the City Centre Manager gave an excellent talk on the redevelopment of Sunderland City Centre, explaining the improvements taking place in disabled access. It was a lively meeting with many questions and some criticism of the Bridges Shopping Centre area. This was Mrs Rawlinson's last meeting in Sunderland as she is moving to become Durham City Centre Manager. This group supports St Benedict's Hospice and at the March meeting, which Mrs McCormack and Mrs Hurst attended, a cheque for £200 was handed to Mrs Oliver for the Hospice. A return visit from the Rev. Derek Aldridge followed with his stories of funny happenings at weddings, like the little boy whose kilt fell off during the service and the groom who fainted and had to be married sitting down. This was followed by a talk on "Creative Inspiration" when poems and short stories were read, one telling of the experiences of a new bank teller who was held up by a bank robber on her first day in the job. Mrs Hardy says it was a most entertaining meeting.



They also had a coffee morning and spent the time looking at old albums, recently brought up to date. Several ladies attended the Newcastle lunch and enjoyed the excellent meal and the talk by Mrs Fenwick. Nineteen ladies went on an outing to Northallerton on market day. Lunch was prepared for them by the Methodist Church ladies and they had a good day out, bought many bargains and had lovely weather.

The Whitley Bay / North Shields branch also enjoyed the Newcastle lunch. Mrs Dawson writes to say that congratulations were given to Eileen and John Frew, (both WRVS members), on their Diamond Wedding .

This group is sad to record the death of Mrs Joyce Brown who worked in the Whitley Bay office, and on Meals on Wheels and Books on Wheels for a number of years.

Mrs Doyle reports that the Newcastle branch met each month, sometimes with no speaker. They went out in April and July. In April they stayed warm and dry at a matinee at the Newcastle Theatre Royal, this year seeing "Charlie's Aunt" which was beautifully dressed and acted ,with Eric Sykes getting a huge round of applause when he first appeared, and before he had said a word. Nyree Dawn Porter should have played the "Aunt" and had just died and it must have been hard for the cast backstage to act without her.

In July this group went to Harewood House but sadly the numbers were down. Twenty-one should have been going, but only 15 turned up. Mrs Doyle says "They must be getting old!" For those who went , the house was beautiful and they saw the Turner exhibition too. They enjoyed the exotic bird garden, the gift shop and restaurant and had a lovely day out.

Most Northumberland members seem to live in or around Ponteland. Mrs Sealey reports that they meet in each others homes each month for a chat and sometimes have a speaker. Those living in more distant places in the county are kept in touch and are always welcome if they can join the Ponteland group for their get-togethers.

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

Darlington branch began the year with a lunch at the Fox Hounds, Neasham and they repeated this in April, where Mrs Thompson reported to them on the Birmingham AGM which none had been able to attend. In May they visited the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle to see "Royal Milliners", a display of hats created for H.M. The Queen, H.M. The Queen Mother, H.R.H. The Princess Margaret and H.R.H. The Princess Royal. They also saw other hidden treasures of the museum which had never been on display before and enjoyed a delightful tea before the journey home. In July they had a coffee morning in Squire's Court to make arrangements for this year's Divisional lunch to be held at the Darlington College of Technology.

Hartlepool group changed the venue of this year's New Year's lunch to a hotel in Seaton Carew where Mrs Thompson was delighted to join them by the seaside on a lovely sunny day. They have also had talks from Bill Hunter on his experiences as a radio presenter and from a speaker describing his experiences on ships in Madras and Calcutta in wartime. They also enjoyed a sing-song with a husband and wife duet team who accompanied members on their keyboard. This group have had "Meals with Care" demonstrated to them. This proved very informative and some members ordered meals for themselves.. (I am sure other groups would be interested in this. Perhaps they would let us know how they find the meals ? Ed.). They also had an outing to Helmsley to join a "Winter Warmer" day, which included lunch and entertainment. In May they took a boat trip from Stockton to Yarm, had lunch at Piercebridge and then went on to Richmond. to be put in touch with Lady Macintosh who runs the Association in Scotland. Just let us know. Ed)

Members who attended the Divisional lunch at Middlesborough two years ago will remember Mr Sidgewick, the Tees Pilot who made them all rock with laughter. Middlesborough enjoyed him again at another talk entitled "The Other Titanic". They have also had a talk on Aromatherapy by a nurse who taught herself the skills and she fascinated them all. Another talk described the "We'sela", the Hawian canoe from the Captain Cook Museum which has been restored by a group mostly consisting of Council Office workers. They have since crossed the Channel in it and members look forward to hearing about it, at another talk. Miss Marshall brought an original oar and various other items and she lined up some chairs and got members trying out the various methods of paddling a canoe. It was great fun. Other meetings have been occasions for chatting, bingo and the last one started with ice cream (a nice change - they usually finish the meeting with tea !)

Scarborough group held a special party for the over 90's, to honour those who had reached this great age. Miss Lesley Hyatt was invited to this party and enjoyed it so much that she wishes to tell us about it and recommends it as an idea for other groups. It was held at the home of Mrs Irene Winter. A superb tea was enjoyed by all. The weather was lovely and they were able to be out in the garden. After delicious strawberries and cream and the cutting of a special cake, and a toast drunk in champagne, Lady Whittaker made a charming speech, introducing the five honoured guests in turn, presenting each with a beautiful corsage. Sadly one member was absent. A vote of thanks was given to Mrs Winter, her team, and the drivers. Miss Hyatt recommends this idea for any other groups who have 90 year old members in their midst. They also held coffee mornings in February, April and May

Selby branch, have now returned to their former meeting place, the British Rail Club, but with different caterers. They had one meeting cancelled due to the floods. Barlby was impassable and two members had to be evacuated, with many other people. One went to her daughter but one member moved from friend to friend until she found a more permanent home with the Minister and his wife. The York group, and Mrs Thompson were their guests at the New Year lunch and after an excellent lunch with mince pies and wine, they enjoyed a talk by "Dick and Joe" on "Lady Anne's Way". Only 7 members were able to go to the fish and chip lunch, but they were pleased to welcome Mrs Thompson to their annual luncheon and AGM in August. The flower fund continues to provide cards and flowers to sick members. One member, on holiday in Venice, broke her ankle getting into a gondola, ended up in the canal and had to be flown home. Mrs Altass ends her report with her sincere thanks to the members for all their help and comfort at the time of her husband's sad illness and death. Mrs Thompson sends her apologies to this group for omitting their report from the last Newsletter

Harrogate branch meet each month and sometimes have a speaker. But they have also had several trips to the Royal Hall for matinee performances and have visited Harlow Carr to view the gardens and have tea. This group hope to recruit a new member.

York welcomed four new members at their March meeting and enjoyed a talk on "The Treasurer's House" by Mr Steven Piggott. At the end of April they had a fund raising afternoon at the home of Mrs Ness Venables, where with the tea, served by members and a Bring and Buy and Plant stall, they raised a generous sum for the branch funds. The summer outing was to Sledmere House with tea in the Stable Restaurant. The gardens were beautiful and a visit there can be recommended. For their autumn meeting they will have a talk on "A taste of Iceland" by Mrs Phyllis Smith and there will be a cake stall, always popular with the members.

East Yorks issue a future programme of their forthcoming lunches for their members, held in the four corners of the county, and they find that in this way, members wishing, and able, to attend lunches with other groups can "make a day of it", and go further afield. (Could this be a good idea for other widely spread groups? Ed). They have welcomed five new members. Mrs Barbara Hall and her husband John. Mrs Hall was one-time Humberside Hospitals Organiser and recently retired from the National Executive Committee.

Mrs Maureen Sampson worked for Emergency Services in Humberside and Yorkshire. Mrs Jean Creaser and Mrs Eldred were both hard working members of their local areas. All are most welcome. Mrs Priestly reports that she has taken another bundle of doll-sized baby jackets and bonnets to the Special Care Baby Unit at York District Hospital, all knitted by members and greatly welcomed by the staff

Mrs Wynne Taylor, the member from East Yorks who moved to Edinburgh has joined the Scottish Association. She was picked up by car and taken to their meeting. It is good to know that through the Association, if we have to move, there are "friends" who will make us feel at home in our new surroundings. (Our thanks to Edinburgh for this. Ed)

Sadly two members have died, Mr Albert Allison who was a great support in N. Humberside WRVS and one-time treasurer of the E. Yorks Association, and Mrs Margot Edgar who will be remembered for her work in Walkington.

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

Calderdale group has enjoyed three well attended meetings since the spring report. At the March meeting they welcomed Mrs Caroline Naylor. She represents this Division on the Vice-Chairman's Committee and spoke about the formation and work of the committee and the purpose of the VCC. She also outlined the WRVS and its work today and members found it a very thought-provoking talk. She was presented with a flowering plant (in WRVS colours of course !) At another meeting in May they enjoyed a talk on "Old Gas Lamps" given by Mrs Tordoff. Mrs Pitts wishes she was young enough not to remember them. (Your editor distinctly remembers the fish-tail light which came from a bracket on the bedroom wall and the flickering pattern it made on the ceiling !).

This group's July meeting was enlivened by a talk from the Rev. Pauline Millward entitled "Twist your Braces", a talk on the superstitions surrounding the home, travel, family, childbirth etc. Eg. if a man leaves home and has to return because he has left something behind, he must sit down and recite the Lord's Prayer, backwards ! The argument is that if he fails to do this he will have bad luck. (If he does it, I should think he would be late for work anyway, and perhaps be sacked!. Bad luck either way ? Ed.)) Mrs Pitts says she had them in tucks for over an hour with this talk. They all recalled other WRVS disasters they had met on WRVS work when one member who ran a lunch club had the bright idea of celebrating their 50 years when she had a near disaster. Having worked hard with planning the event, arranging caterers, entertainment, cake, helpers, gold glasses etc., on the day, the caterers came late, the Mayor could not attend, no tables and chairs had been put out and the heating pipes were frozen., However within an hour the WRVS had sorted it all out and the occasion was a great success. Mrs Pitts says "It takes you back, does it not"?

From Wakefield branch Mrs Zeigler reports that her group continues to meet regularly for coffee and a chat, and every 8 weeks they meet for lunch at Wakefield Catering College. During the summer a number of members visited Southport, especially enjoying the lovely flowers there.

It is with sadness that Mrs Pitts records the death of Mr Norman Airey, a member who had helped with Meals on Wheels for many years and was always willing and very cheerful.

Leic. Lincs and Notts. - *Div. Rep. Mrs J. Newman*

Mrs Newman regrets that due to other commitments she has not been able to visit groups as she would have liked, but hopes for better next time ! She writes that she is very pleased with the number of new members joining and hopes they will enjoy their meetings. Mrs Newman attended the Birmingham meeting and was pleased to meet the new Chairman, Mrs Copping.

Leicester members have had their usual coffee mornings and day trips. One visit which proved most interesting was a visit by the WRVS Volunteer and Communications Officer as she brought them up to date with WRVS work in the area. In March they set off for Lincoln in fur hats, in a blizzard, saying "we must be mad". However by lunch time it had cleared up and they enjoyed the day. This trip was originally planned for last November when floods had forced its cancellation, so they were determined this time that snow would not deter them. In June they had a lovely day at Blenheim Palace. The Chairman, Mrs Barbara Raven was invited to the Investiture when a member, Mrs Mavis Timson received her Long Service Medal from the Lord Lieutenant.

Their treasurer Mrs Ellis, Australian by birth and recently widowed, has retired and Mrs Rita Hornbuckle, formerly Books on Wheels Organiser has taken over. They add, sadly that WRVS Books on Wheels has now ceased in the county, but happily that their membership is increasing.

The N.E.Lincs group had a successful spring luncheon in April and in June, a strawberry tea at the home of a member's daughter, a most interesting house which is an old water-mill. The tea was delicious and there was a chance to chat and catch up on all the news,

The small group in Lincoln under Mrs Birkhead's care, enjoy their lunches and meet-ups and are grateful for the kindness of their chauffeurs who make it possible for them to enjoy the meetings.

Ashfield branch attended a Faith Tea held at a complex where WRVS members help. In June they held a luncheon at the Duke of Wellington pub before the AGM where plans were made for the future programme.

Bassetlaw held their AGM at the WRVS Offices and enjoyed a delicious Faith Lunch. A Bar to her Long Service Medal was awarded to Mrs Jenny Smith who was invited to a Civic Reception in honour of her award. In May they had lunch at the Shireoaks Inn, Worksop, which was well attended. In June Mr and Mrs Heason kindly opened their home and garden for a strawberry tea prepared by their hostess and on that day thirty members completely forgot their diets ! In July eleven of them went to the Japanese Garden at North Clifton near Newark and it was interesting to see close at hand the Japanese way of pruning trees. The water lilies were beautiful.

Broxtowe began their regular monthly coffee mornings with one in January at which sherry and shortbread were served. During a ceremony at the Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, the WRVS Chairman, Mrs Tietjen presented their Chairman Mrs Val Haig, with her medal for 15 years service. Mrs Tietjen said in her speech how impressed she was with the energy, commitment and enthusiasm of WRVS volunteers. At one well-attended coffee morning Mrs Maureen Tarcy, WRVS Volunteering Communications Officer for Notts., and Derbyshire, came to ask for volunteers for the many WRVS projects at QMC, especially over the holiday periods. She said she recognised many faces of members already working there and spoke of the many and wide variety of projects and the necessity of creating awareness of the work of WRVS. At this meeting Mrs Newman was also welcomed. In June members descended on Sherwood Forest where they visited the Craft Centre and had coffee. They then went on for lunch to The Fox inn in the village of Kirton.

One long-serving member Mrs Mary Small has died in an Oldham nursing home. She ran a luncheon club, delivered meals and was a regular attender at their meetings but sadly an horrific accident near her home caused a decline in her health and since then she has been greatly missed.

The Gedling programme has included an excellent "entertainment" of poems and songs by a professional with a beautiful singing voice. They have also had an informative talk about the Air Ambulance Service. For their Spring meeting brave volunteers among them talked about "an embarrassing moment". A catch-phrase quiz tested their brain-power and a musical quiz brought back some memories. Snow caused the cancellation of the March meeting but later they visited the Longdale Craft Centre near Newstead Abbey where they watched a sculptor at work and afterwards enjoyed tea and scones.

The AGM proved as popular as ever - a quick business meeting in anticipation of an excellent lunch prepared by the committee with a generously supported raffle and lots of chatter. They have welcomed some new members, which is excellent news.

Mansfield is a busy district and they have only managed a late Christmas lunch, but they look forward to more activity in the next half-year.

Newark have settled into their new venue and have enjoyed lunches in March and June, but their numbers are unfortunately dwindling.

The brains of the Rushcliffe branch members were taxed when at their March meeting they had a quiz in which they had to identify photographs of everyday household objects taken from unusual angles. They ask readers if they have ever looked at a can opener from the front end and recognised it?. (The two winners only got half of them right, so it must have been difficult! Ed.) Four members attended the Birmingham AGM and they were able to report to their meeting 4 days later, so the timing was good and they could tell members all about the events and decisions made there. Two coffee mornings were held in May and July and in June they had lunch at Rufford Abbey in North Notts. This is a Cistercian Abbey which was destroyed in the reign of Henry VIII and later became the home of the 6th Earl of Shrewsbury and then passed to the Savile family.

Foot and Mouth Disease had closed the Abbey for some months so they were fortunate to be able to go. There were excellent crafts on display and exhibitions, shops and splendid grounds. It is now run by Notts. County Council.

NORTH WEST DIVISION - Headquarters Manchester

Cumbria and Lancashire - Div. Rep. Mrs M. McCambridge BEM

Merseyside and Cheshire - Appointment pending

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

The Bury group had their usual home-cooked meat and potato pie lunch for their A.G.M. in March. (They have mentioned this lunch before and the very sound of meat and potato pie always makes me feel hungry, coming from the North West, as I do! Ed.) The speaker this year was ex-Assistant Chief Constable Jim Paterson, QPM who entertained them well with his talk entitled "A Bobby's Job." In July they had a super day out at the World of Glass at St Helens, and after lunch spent the afternoon in glorious sunshine at Liverpool's Albert Dock.

This group is sad to report the death of Mrs Connie Cowsill, a very vibrant and long serving member who will be remembered for her enthusiastic involvement in many community projects after she retired from her work as the local midwife..

Despite falling membership, Romiley group continue to meet with great enthusiasm each month and at their A.G.M. in April, Mrs Betty West agreed to continue as Chairman for another year. (Well done, Mrs West. We know in York how hard it is to find Chairmen. Ed). Mrs Potts gave a very interesting talk about her work of rescuing wild animals and birds in distress and brought with her four abandoned baby blackbirds which she continued to feed during her talk. In May they had a good day out and lunched at the Hanging Gate Pub in Derbyshire, followed by a musical quiz, with the bar open all afternoon, which, they say proved very enjoyable.! In June a local lady, Mrs Hammond gave "an interesting and powerful" talk about her collection of books. In July the meeting was crowned with a strawberry tea and a visit by Mrs Matthews, who brought a friend, for a very friendly and pleasant afternoon.

In January Sale group started the year with a slide show about Lyme Park, Disley and they learned of its history, the deer which roam the park and the family who once lived there. In February the speaker told them about the work of the Magistrates Court. They joined WRVS at their March meeting where they heard of all aspects of the work and several members received long service medals. They then enjoyed a buffet lunch. In April they wallowed in the past with a speaker who brought lots of memorabilia, old newspapers, an old telephone, photographs etc.

In April they enjoyed tea and cakes at a large garden centre and saw the beautiful plants. In June they had a marvellous talk on memories of evacuees in wartime which revived memories for many. In July a blind lady brought her guide dog, a huge Alsatian, which behaved impeccably as she explained the work they do. After this very varied programme, like many other groups, they have a break in August and look forward to their autumn programme.

Staffs.Shropshire, Derbyshire - *Appointment Pending*

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

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

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

Bedfordshire gave their mite to support the local tourist trade. As soon as the canals were open, they booked a boat trip at Stoke Bruerne and a visit to the Canal Museum. A local primary school had chosen the same day and 20 pairs of WRVS eyes watched the little ones with a grandparent's concern while retired teachers among them remembered to give thanks for their retirement! The AGM and the garden party were well supported. Members probably find more pleasure in talking together and eating the excellent meal than in checking financial statements, etc., but their whole-hearted support of the Association is encouraging. Nearly 60 people attended the garden party at Mr and Mrs Vesey's lovely town garden. Mrs Vesey had taken immense trouble to ensure that they could all fit into the house as and when necessary and the rain held off enough for the visitors to wander in and out to enjoy the garden. Mrs Ann Phillips, Community Services Manager was a welcome guest and Mrs Callaway hopes that she and the VCC, Mrs Lynne Rawlings will be able to attend other Association functions in future. She also wants to say "thank you" to Ann for the helpful way she has answered many questions she has raised. She asks if other Representatives find that the older members of WRVS still turn to them for advice, as she has been very glad, on occasions to be able to ring her with a problem.

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

Mrs Scholey says that since the closure of the Norfolk Area office earlier this year they have all felt a bit out on a limb! She attended a lunch held by the Sudbury branch at the Angel Hotel, Lavenham and was made most welcome.

The North Norfolk branch held a lunch at Wayford Bridge and many Norfolk members attended. Also their annual visit to the End-of-the Pier Show at Cromer was much enjoyed.

Norfolk and Suffolk - Div. Rep. Mrs S Scholey

The Gt. Yarmouth branch have had lunches and outings this summer and thus the Norfolk and Suffolk branches are thriving. Mrs Scholey and her husband went to the Birmingham AGM and found it most interesting and many friendships were renewed.

In June Mr Ken Moss and Mrs Myrtle Moss, MBE, celebrated their Diamond Wedding and warm congratulations were sent from their many friends.

They send their best wishes to Mrs Pat Copping who takes up the reins of the new National Chairman of the Association and they also wish to thank Mrs Diane Price for her dedication to the Association during her three year term of office.

Essex, Herts. and Berks. - Div. Rep. Mrs P Copping

In Essex, The annual meeting of the Maldon branch on May 3rd was well attended by members from Maldon and Burnham-on-Crouch, when for the first time there was a change of venue. Instead of the luncheon being held in Maldon, Mrs. Barbara Perks made arrangements for it in North Fambridge at the Ferry Boat - a 500 year old riverside Inn. The rural surroundings were greatly appreciated, especially as it was a day of sunshine and blue skies.

A further cause for pleasure was the announcement that Mrs. Pat Copping, their own Div. Rep. had been appointed National Chairman of the WRVS Association. There was a round of applause and hearty congratulations were offered.

It was unanimously agreed that the excellent luncheon at the Ferry Boat Inn was an ideal arrangement for an annual meeting.

They are sad to report the death of Miss Joyce Allingham and Miss Pat Wallis. Both had worked tirelessly for WRVS and been Association members for many years and will be greatly missed.

Southend-on-Sea have had three good speakers recently. A representative from Waitrose spoke about how they deliver all the fresh produce to the store between 4a.m. and 8 a.m. They learned that courses on cooking by well-known chefs are run in the store and for a small fee customers can watch. These are very popular. Gifts of biscuits were supplied by the firm. A local artist brought some of her work and picture cards of Old Leigh, the fishing boats and the well known cockle sheds, to show members amusing them by saying that over the years some of her personal experiences in life have changed her style. Mrs. Judith Buss the VCC visited and explained how WRVS is changing and why.

Hertfordshire group want us to especially mention Mr and Mrs Smith of Hitchin. These two stalwart WRVS members have delivered meals together for 38 years and have just had to give up as he, the driver, can no longer drive. (We, in the Association would like to send both of these Association members our hearty congratulations. Lady Reading would have been proud of you both, as we are!. Ed.)

Members held a very successful garden party at the home of Mrs Betty Sewell, a former County Organiser and they all enjoyed the delightful garden and the hospitality made even more special as Mrs Sewell celebrated her 90th birthday in July. Even the weather was perfect and everyone enjoyed it. They were pleased that Mrs Copping was able to join them for this event. The VCC, Mrs Judith Buss spoke on her role and told them about changes in the Service.

It is with sadness that Hertfordshire report the deaths of two members, Mrs Doris "Do" Powles who joined WRVS in 1976, working in St Albans clothing department and at the hospital tea bar. She was also part of the emergency team. "Do" received her long service medal in 1992 of which she was very proud. She had had to retire three years ago due to failing health. They also lost Mrs Thrale, a long time member from St Albans and an Association member for many years. Condolences go to both families.

Hertford branch met at a Garden Centre in July for tea and cakes. The garden centre was situated near a river and the 11 members present enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon.

Surrey, E.& W. Kent, E.& W. Sussex - Div. Rep. Mrs J. Rosling

Mrs Bright retired as Div. Rep. at the end of last year and so this is Mrs Rosling's first report. She wrote that they were all very sad to see Mrs Bright go and everyone wishes to thank her for all the hard work she put in over many years. They will miss her and her very informative reports she always gave after each AGM. It will be sad not to see her smiling face at our County lunches. However they know she will remain active in W. Kent.

The Surrey group held their AGM and lunch in April, enjoyed by all but sadly, not quite so well attended this year. A good number of Guildford members had lunch at Guildford College, in June. A lovely occasion with excellent food which they hope to revisit. This group welcomes two new members Mrs Gibbs and Mrs Lamber. They had to postpone a lunch they had planned owing to the illness of Mrs Evans, but they plan to hold it in the autumn when they hope she will be well enough to join them.

Woking held their AGM in March which was well attended. In June a party visited Hampshire's Living Museum, Milestones, at Basingstoke and with an excellent lunch all had a wonderful day out. Their annual garden party at their Chairman's home in August was a popular event as usual. Unfortunately it rained suddenly and they all had to dash inside, but they enjoyed an excellent tea and the rain did not spoil the party.

They are looking forward to W. Kent's County meeting at Yalding on 31st August. W. Sussex has one new member, Mrs Holman, whom they are delighted to welcome. thanks for all she has done for the Association.

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

Coffee mornings have been held at intervals during the past months. Unfortunately a London re-union had to be postponed in April due to Mrs Stevens' sudden spell in hospital.. This has been rearranged for October 24th. She thanks everyone who sent her their good wishes which she greatly appreciated

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

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

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

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

SOUTH WEST DIVISION - *Headquarters Exeter*

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

The speaker at the June luncheon, held in the Tewkesbury Masonic Hall was Mrs Lewes, who spoke of her experiences in the Auxiliary Territorial Services Band from Nether Hall School of Music, of which she was a member in the last war. She spoke of her training days in the army and of the many concerts the band gave in Britain. In 1945 they were sent abroad and played to the troops in N. Africa, Italy, Egypt and Palestine. Mrs Lewis played a recording made by the band. They enjoyed this, and the excellent lunch prepared by Tewkesbury members.

Mrs Connop has very sad news of the deaths of four members from her area. Lady Rosamund Holland-Martin died in June. She had been P.A. to the Dowager Marchioness of Reading and was Vice Chairman of WRVS from 1978-1981. Mrs Joan Jacques died in May. She had been in charge of the trolley service at the Sunnyside Rest Home for 25 years and she also worked at the Cheltenham Hospital Canteen. Mrs Nellie Owen died in February aged 102. She had helped in the hospital canteen. When she was 100, she cut the cake at the lunch to celebrate the branch's 25th anniversary. She still went to town every day and had been presented with a free bus pass by the local bus company. Mrs Madge Downes, who died in February, also helped in the hospital canteen. They all gave valuable service and will be sadly missed.

The Cheltenham group, run by Mrs Norman held a spring meeting in April attended by 20 members. Members enjoyed renewing their friendships and listening to a talk by Mrs Barbara Steele on her "Severn-side childhood". Mrs Norman is retiring as this group's leader and she was thanked for all the work she had put in to running the group.

The editor deeply regrets that the following reports were inadvertently omitted above and is sorry for this

South Wales - Div Rep Mrs Mary Gibbons. OBE

In June a "high tea" get-together in Port Talbot was much appreciated and they were delighted that Mrs Cleland, Mrs Jones, VCC for S. Wales and Mrs Cole, Vol. Manager for S. Wales were guests. Mrs Cleland explained the changes in WRVS and answered some direct questions which smoothed many ruffled feathers. Mrs Cole explained her role and offered help when needed. The speaker, John Williams, one of the Queen's Bodyguards, gave an illustrated talk on their work and, they assure us, there were no drooping eyelids. Numbers were disappointing, although non-members were also invited. The distance for some was 60 miles each way. This Division hopes membership will increase and are working hard to achieve this. Abergavenny continue to be "ladies who lunch" 3 or 4 times a year and enjoy catching up on news. Dyfed group meet twice a year and hope to next meet in Pembrokeshire. The Christmas lunch will be repeated in Carmarthenshire. (It is good to hear that S. Wales is making strides in difficult terrain.!Ed.)

Wiltshire - Local Representative. Mrs Marjorie Darby

Mrs Darby is pleased to announce the formation of a new group in Swindon. (Welcome to Swindon. Ed). Fifty members welcomed Mrs Price to their reunion lunch in March where Mrs Saxby was presented with her V.C's Certificate for 22 years service. They regret that Mrs Williams, their retiring Div. Rep could not be present. In August they plan a tea in the village of Holt.

Surrey - Div. Rep. Mrs Rosling.

From the Horsham group, a phone call from Mrs Manton telling us of the sad death of Mrs Berkeley-Barton a WRVS member from 1946-1976 and a member of the Association. Mrs Manton also asks if any member in the Horsham or Dorking area could contact her.

Cumbria and Lancashire - Div. Rep. Mrs M McCambridge BEM.

The St Helens group is small, fewer than 20 members but they have well attended monthly meetings with a wide range of speakers and outings. Talks have included a local police woman giving advice on "safety for the elderly", poems and jokes in the local dialect and by a farmer's wife who arrived dressed for the milking shed and as she described her work on the farm she stripped off her working gear and transformed herself with beautiful clothes ready, as it were, for a Royal Garden Party complete with picture hat. Other treats have been a quiz, tea in a beautiful garden, a trip to a garden centre and a "Lucky Dip Meeting" when each member gave and received a wide variety of gifts (not costing more than £1.50 !). Mrs Nan Chisnall, who comes from this group, won the Crossword Competition and has received a gift voucher.

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

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

Wilts, Dorset - Div. Rep. Mrs B Williams

WALES - Headquarters Cardiff

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

South Wales - Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Gibbons. OBE

CHANNEL ISLANDS

Guernsey - Assoc. Rep. Miss E. Robilliard

Jersey - Assoc. Rep. Mrs D. Jennings

Mrs Jennings writes that Jersey has been blessed with good weather this summer. They met for a tea party in February. At this event, on hearing that one member had won a prize in the National Trust for Jersey competition, they decided to make a list of all the clubs and organisations to which they all belonged. They found that between them they had 28 different ventures. (Jersey is a very small branch, on a small island. But it would be interesting to know how many other groups could muster. Mrs Jennings also makes the point that for them there is little problem with transport as their distances are short wherever they live on the island. I imagine they mean charitable volunteer groups etc. Ed). Their weather was good for their two highlights of the summer, the visit of the Queen and the "Battle of the Flowers" Her Majesty came as a ray of sunshine, dressed in a lovely yellow outfit. The battle of flowers was started in 1902 to celebrate the coronation of King Edward and has its centenary next year. Several members have been involved with it over the years. One Jersey member celebrated her 90th birthday this year, but sadly another has died.

SCOTLAND - Chairman Lady Macintosh

At the WVS/WRVS Association-Scotland AGM in Aberdeen in April Lady Marigold Mackintosh who had been Chairman of the Association for the past three years retired from office. She has been succeeded by Mrs Audrey Wilkinson Chairman of the Highland Branch. Mrs Joan Spalding and Mrs Alison Clark were elected as Secretary and Treasurer respectively and as a "new Team" all three hope to maintain the high standard set by the previous office bearers.

The guest speaker at the meeting was Miss Sheena Blackhall, a creative writing fellow in Scots Doric, who is involved with promoting Scots songs and poetry in schools as well as working in the Mental Health Sector. Sheena delighted her audience with her singing and readings in Doric, a Scottish North-East dialect.

Now that summer is over, branches are resuming their Winter Programmes. Highland Branch had an outing to start the new session with a visit to see the Hydroponicum at Achiltibuie near Ullapool in Wester Ross. It was a most interesting visit, with a lovely meal, spectacular scenery and good company.

(It was good to get news from Scotland, I too have visited the Hydroponicum- it is amazing and most interesting. Ed.)

WRVS BENEVOLENT TRUST

We have had the following news from the Trust which may interest our readers.

Last year the Trust helped 38 members of the WRVS spent some £27,000, nearly £2,000 more than in the last financial year.

So far this year we have been able to assist 15 more people.

Once again the requests have covered a variety of things, including a washing machine, house decorating, building repairs, and hand controls for the car of an invalid.

We are always very touched by the letters of appreciation that we receive.

All this is made possible by the gifts, donations and legacies that we receive.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed.

All requests for assistance should be sent to

Mrs J. Firminger, OBE., Hon Secretary, The Benevolent Trust,

151 Clapham Road, London, SW9 0PU.



23 September 2001

Dear Member,

Once more autumn is coming and the days are getting shorter. I hope you have all had a good summer. Let us hope we all have a mild and healthy winter.

I am just preparing the Newsletter for the printers and I find that, as usual there are several gaps, perhaps more in this issue, where I have had no news from a particular Division. If you live in such a Division and you are disappointed and annoyed that you have been left out, perhaps you would write and let me know what your group have been doing during the last six months, where you meet and how many of you there are. On the other hand, if you live in an area where you have no contact with any other member or group, do write and let me know too. If the report for your Division says "Appointment Pending" it means that no one has yet been found who would take on the job. Perhaps your Representative is ill, or for some good reason is not able to put pen to paper and someone from your group could help until she is better. So do write.

With this Newsletter you will find information about the AGM to be held at Bath University next year. Do come if you can as I am sure you will enjoy it and Bath is a beautiful city which we hope we will see during our stay. Guests are welcome too, so do come and, perhaps, bring a friend.

This issue of the Newsletter has, for me, been very difficult to produce as I am struggling with a new computer, (my husband's old one.) and I am having to learn a whole new set of instructions. My "study", (the small spare room upstairs) is right above my husband's ("proper") study downstairs, where he is usually busy working on his research or answering his emails, so that when I get stuck and everything on the computer's screen goes haywire I simply stamp on the floor and he comes up to sort me out! Sometimes he looks at it with astonishment, casts his eyes to heaven and says "How on earth did you get that?" So I proceed by stops and starts.!

Could I finally make an appeal to you all. For this edition of the Newsletter I have had very few contributions from Division members. No funny stories or contact with others at all. Remember it is your Newsletter and I can only put in what is sent to me. If we have to cut it down to fewer pages it will be a pity, but inevitable if there is nothing to put in it. So *please* put pen to paper. You have all led interesting and long lives and there must be some outstanding events in your life that would interest other members. Do write and tell us about them, funny stories of your WRVS work etc, I get many letters, usually sending your changes of address in which you kindly say you enjoy the Newsletter. If this is so do contribute to it. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours with best wishes.

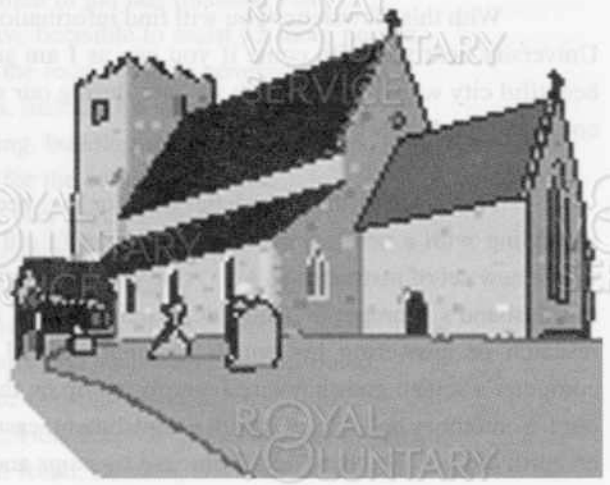
Ness Venables



“Churchyard maintenance is becoming increasingly difficult and it will be appreciated if parishioners will cut the grass around their own graves”

Submitted by Eve Dawson

Tyne and Wear



IN THE GARDEN

It is a glorious Autumn day. What is it, I wonder, that September gives which no other month can hope to imitate?

There is a quality about the soft light, the stillness and the warmth of the sun that makes it seem as though the year has waited just for this day. "Look!" it says, "see what I have given you this summer!"

Beside me the orange and red begonias are glowing. They may be fading around the edges of their fluted petals but the depth of their colour is undiminished. The pink and purple petunias may be paper thin but they still blaze a trail across the border. The geraniums, late starters that they were, are massed in greater profusion than ever before. Only on close inspection is it possible to see that the African marigolds have passed their best. From a distance they are still an acceptable centre piece for the yellow tagetes which encircle them in a close-packed collar of bright blossom.



Reluctantly, this morning I have cut down the brown, faded stalks of the tansy plants and the yellow leaved stems of lemon balm. I have pulled from the soft warm earth the dead and dying nemesias whose flowers have given me such joy this summer. More than that I cannot bring myself to destroy. Now the patio is covered with these wilting remains, spread out to dry before their final journey to the compost heap.

When the Romans dedicated the first month of the year to Janus, the god whose two faces enable him to look back on the year past and forward to the one ahead, surely they should have considered September. It also has two faces. One is looking back to the richness of the days glowing with colour the other is glancing slyly, almost guiltily, ahead to the days when their flame will be extinguished by the first frost.

But sometimes, on a day such as this, there is a pause - no movement to past or future - when all life is standing still, just basking in the beauty of the present. Not daring to move, not daring to whisper, this September day scarcely breathes for fear of breaking the fragile threads that bind it to summer.

Marjorie Pringle

Burnham-on-Crouch

“We regret to announce that the “Ladies Happy Hour” are heavily in debt following their recent ‘SPONSORED SILENCE’

Submitted by Eve Dawson.

Tyne and Wear.

CORRESPONDENCE.

We have had a letter from Mrs Kaye Holmes who lives in Canada giving us her change of address. She says she very much wants to maintain her connections with WRVS. She was with WVS Overseas working in Singapore with Mary Gray and in Hong Kong until 1942, with Daphne Strong and Muriel Cowling. I wonder if anyone remembers her ?. She recalls a wonderful visit to York with her husband in 1985, remembers it well and is interested that the Association office is now in that beautiful city. She recalls a Christmas in Hong Kong at Whitfield Barracks helping men of the 150 Indian Infantry Division and still treasures a silver cigarette case given to her by the men. She then recalls the first Christmas she had in Montreal in 1946. She was invited to spend it with a new friend's family. She had never seen a cooked turkey before as she had only ever had goose in England before the war and she says that that meal was the most delicious she had had in many years. It was lovely to hear from you, Mrs Holmes and we hope you are happy in your new home in British Columbia.

“During the clergy conference a skeleton staff will be left in each deanery for cemetery duty”

Submitted by Eve Dawson.

Tyne and Wear.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR THE MILLENNIUM.

Ten Commandments for the Millennium.

Thou shalt not worry, for worry is the most unproductive of all human activities.

Thou shalt not be fearful, for most of the things we fear never come to pass.

Thou shalt not cross bridges before you come to them, for no-one has yet succeeded in accomplishing this.

Thou shalt face each problem as it comes. You can only handle one at a time, anyway.

Thou shalt not take problems to bed with you for they make very poor bedfellows.

Thou shalt not borrow other people's problems. They can usually deal with them better than you can.

Thou shalt not try to relive yesterday. Concentrate on what is happening now and try to be happy.

Thou shalt listen to others; some people know more than you do.

Thou shalt not become bogged down with self-pity for it will interfere with positive action.

Thou shalt count thy blessings, many small ones add up to one big one.

From Mrs Sheila McCormack

Northumberland

"The Minister is going on holiday next Saturday, could all Missionary Boxes be handed in to The Manse by Friday evening at the latest.

Submitted by Eve Dawson.

Tyne and Wear.

A teacher of French to an adult class decided she would try to find out what gender the class thought the word “computer” should be, as it was not in her French dictionary. She split the class into two groups by gender and asked them to decide if it should be a masculine or feminine noun

The men decided it should be feminine because

1. No-one but their creator understands their internal logic.
2. The native language they use is incomprehensible to anyone else.
3. Even the smallest mistakes are stored in a long-term memory for possible retrieval later.
4. As soon as you make a commitment to one you find yourself spending out half your pay-cheque on accessories for it..

The women however decided it should be masculine. Because,

1. In order to get their attention you have to turn them on.
2. They have a lot of data but they are still clueless.
3. They are supposed to help you solve problems but half the time they are the problem.
4. As soon as you make a commitment you realise if only you had waited a little you could have had a better model.

Sent by Mrs McCormack

Northumberland.



One bliss for which there is no match
Is when you itch, to up and scratch

Submitted by Eric Dawson.

Submitted by Eric Dawson.



THE LONGEST SCARF IN THE WORLD

Are you one of the WRVS knitters who worked hard, along with W.I. members, on a joint effort, to try to make that record-breaking scarf that it was hoped would feature in the Guinness Book of Records as the longest scarf in the world? We have just heard that three years, and 25.68 miles of knitting later, the record has been broken and it has earned its place in that publication.

A previous scarf had measured 20 miles. The above photograph, taken at the recent press launch at Ushaw College, Durham University shows Mrs Helen Mellor, WRVS Media Relations Officer for the North, amongst the miles of knitting before it is sent to Low Newton Women's Prison in Northumberland, where, in the fullness of time the panels will be unpicked and then stitched into an estimated 2,000 blankets.

Also present at the meeting, held to launch the finished scarf, were Christine Dobson, WRVS Volunteer's Manager for Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and Durham, Mrs Enid Hurst and Mrs Sheila McCormack representing the Association. Mrs McCormack who is a prison visitor at Low Newton hopes she will see some of the finished blankets. Well done to all who contributed!

THE DUCK.

Behold the duck
It does not cluck.
A cluck it lacks.
It quacks.
It is especially fond
Of a puddle or a pond,
When it dines or sups,
It bottoms ups.

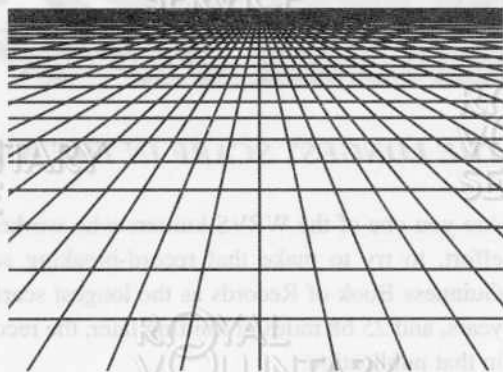
Ogden Nash.



DAYS

What are days for?
Days are where we live.
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
They are to be happy in;
Where can we live but days ?

Part of a poem by Philip Larkin



ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

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