



NEWSLETTER

No 60 Spring 2004

Letter from the Chairman
82 Bootham York YO30 7DF

Dear Member,

Looking out of my window onto a snowy landscape with daffodils and crocus making a colourful display I can hardly believe spring is on its way.

We were delighted with the attendance at last years 30th Anniversary Reunion held at the Hoole Hall Hotel in Chester. It was nice to see so many day delegates. My thanks go to all those who attended, without you it would have been a disaster. I think the highlight was the evening performance of the Welsh Male Voice Choir; the only complaint was it wasn't long enough, I think members could have sat there all night listening to them. This years Reunion and AGM will be held from Friday 24th to Sunday 26th September, a flyer with details is included with this newsletter.

The memorial service for Lady Pike, a former Chairman of WRVS and President, and later a Vice- President, of the Association, is to be held in Scotland at the end of April, I will be attending representing the Association.

I hope you have kept reasonably well during the winter and wish you all a very healthy and happy spring and summer.

My very best wishes

Pat Copping

From the Editor

Dear Members

So, did you notice? We have moved on from the original white, to green, and then I went with yellow and now pink. Yes a pink cover for the Newsletter. For those of you that do keep them, it means that they will be more easily identified and anyway, I like colourful things. And Jean Pickard, the Association Secretary in the York office said I could!



You will no doubt remember that it was she that put a message in the last newsletter about postal addresses. Well she has written to me again, this time saying how having explained the pressure on the office to cross check all addresses with the Postal database, she had heard from an obviously keen eyed member who kindly pointed out that the post code at the top of the Chairman's letter on the front page was a different post code to the address on the back of our envelope containing the newsletter!!!!' She asks if there is any egg on her face or could it just have been a deliberate mistake to see who is paying attention? I certainly did not pick it up, but have corrected it now.

There are still many areas with no Divisional Representatives or County Organisers, and I have no doubt that in those areas there are still many members. Now, do they get together with each other for coffee and biscuits, tea and scones or even gin and tonic? In which case, we would like one of them to write in and tell us just where these little groups are still flourishing. Or for those that are not able to get out or meet up with old friends, perhaps it is the newsletter that lets them keep up with the 'News from the Divisions' and their old comrades.

And finally, here we are still talking about the 30th AGM of last year and already the next one is being planned for September. Thirty-one is my lucky number so I hope to see you in Northampton and explain why!

Paulene

All contributions for the next Newsletter should be with me by 31st August 2004 by post to Paulene Lambert, or by email to

OBITUARIES

BARONESS PIKE OF MELTON D.B.E.

It is with sadness we report the death of The Lady Pike who died on 11th January 2004 aged 85 years. Mervyn Pike, the name she was known by, had a very busy life.

A Yorkshire woman, who gained an honours degree in Economics and Social Psychology at Reading University then enlisted in the WAAF in 1941. In 1946 she was appointed Managing Director of the family firm, which manufactured domestic pottery and, at the same time, started her career in Conservative politics via parish, rural district and county councils. At a time when women at Westminster were even more rare than now, she was chosen to fight a by-election at Melton, Leicestershire and was their MP from 1956 to 1974.

In 1974 following the death of our founder Lady Reading, she was appointed chairman of WRVS. Lady Pike's task was to give new direction to WRVS, still rooted in its valiant wartime role adjusting it to the possibility of coping with the aftermath of nuclear war, while at the same time attracting a new generation of volunteers to expand the WRVS work in the community.

On retirement from the post of National Chairman in 1981 she became a Vice-President of the Association. All those who had the privilege and pleasure of knowing her, will miss Lady Pike.

Also, **MRS. NORA MYFANWY WARREN** who died 28th December 2003 aged 96 years. Mrs Warren joined WVS in Dartmouth in 1940 to help with the war effort. In June 1940 she found herself receiving evacuee children from London who needed to be placed in homes in South Devon, taking one little girl into her own home. They also had to set up a sick bay for children who were not fit to be placed in family homes. Myfanwy, along with other mothers in Dartmouth, helped to staff this on a rota and she also helped run the Forces Canteen in Dartmouth.

After losing her husband at sea during the war, Myfanwy moved to Pinhole in Devon. She continued to work for WVS and Civil Defence in Devon after the war; she became an expert in emergency feeding, and regularly drove large vans around the Devon lanes.

In 1965 she moved to Edinburgh to be nearer her daughter and continued her work with WRVS and the Civil Defence in Scotland. In 1984 after her daughter's death Myfanwy moved again to Harlow, Essex and continued her involvement with WRVS receiving long service medals from both WRVS and Civil Defence.

SOUTH EAST DIVISION

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
Div. Rep. Mrs Barbara Titcomb

The Association in Cambridgeshire is slowly grinding to a halt: our members are all elderly and we are not getting younger members to join us, partly I suspect because there are so few WRVS projects running in the County from which we might attract new members. However, after that negative start I will endeavour to present the situation as to how it stands.

Huntingdon: No member contacted Mrs Ackerley to say they would like a luncheon meeting arranged and it would appear that that group is definitely closed. Mrs Enid Watson who ran the group for many years is now in a nursing home and Mrs Connors who was Huntingdon WRVS Organiser passed away Christmas 2003.

Peterborough: we now have only seven regular members who meet bimonthly provided they are well (sadly not always so) which means we no longer have speakers but it does give us an opportunity to keep in touch. One member very kindly supplied and served a delicious tea of sandwiches, cakes and sherry trifle in November and we went out for a Christmas meal in December. In January our meeting coincided with the local WRVS members' tea to which they very kindly invited us and which was much appreciated. I may say that three of our seven members are still active within WRVS.

The Cambridge group, while still the largest in the county, have had one meeting in October and their Christmas lunch in November. They find the cost of hiring a meeting place expensive and not enough members attend to make it a viable expense. At their Christmas meal they were able to take friends.

Northamptonshire: It is very pleasing to learn that Mrs Carter of Raunds has a group running and they enjoyed a Christmas meal together and the coffee morning at Mrs Allebone's home in Rushton.

-
- Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift and that is why we call it the present.
 - Yesterday is already a memory and tomorrow only a vision. But today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
-

OXFORDSHIRE, BEDFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Callaway

Greetings to new Bedfordshire members Mrs Jean Adams (Bedford MOW) and Mrs Gladys Hickling (Bedford Hospital Shop and Tea-bar). Sadly we also report that Mrs Margaret Fox (Bedford Hospital), Mrs Ann Titley (Renhold MOW) and former member Mrs Molly Burgess (WRVS service from 1941) have all passed away.

In September members went to Flitwick to enjoy a Coffee-morning at the home of Beryl and Doug Rees. An additional pleasure when visiting the Rees's is Doug's guided tour of his lovely garden. As a thank-you for this Coffee-morning, and for the one in June hosted by Dorothy Ward members donated 27 pounds to the WRVS Benevolent Trust.

In October there was a talk by Mr Parry about the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the part played in its organisation by Sir Joseph Paxton, a Bedfordshire man who had become Head gardener to the Duke of Devonshire. In designing the structure of the Palace he made the first known use of pre-fabricated materials. (O.E.R.D.) Conservatory owners please note there is more to Bedfordshire than Luton Airport. The year's activities ended with the customary Christmas Buffet Lunch. There was great co-operation from the members helping to provide the food and to deal with all the work entailed in entertaining over 60 people. The atmosphere was really happy. There is now a winter lull in Bedfordshire's activities to be broken in March by the AGM, sweetened as always, with a lunch before it starts.

In Buckinghamshire, Mrs McRoberts continues to visit some of the older members, when they can discuss, among other matters, the WRVS today and in Oxfordshire there are no formal meetings to report.

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK - No report

Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Taylor

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same,
While a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

Unused chest expander for sale (cannot get the lid off the box)

ESSEX AND HERTFORDSHIRE - Div. Rep Vacant

Hertfordshire County Rep - No report

SOUTHEND ON SEA, ESSEX

Chairman Mrs B Tytherleigh MBE

I am delighted to say we have a new member, welcome to Mrs Cooper

Our last speaker for 2003 was a lady talking about dolls. There we were, surrounded by 50 dolls from all over the world. All sizes from large to very small ones, dressed in bright colours, satin, silk, straw and "rags" - it really was a superb afternoon.

Our first speaker for this year was quite brilliant. Bernard Durrant spoke all about the BBC from when he joined right up to the present day. Some of it quite amusing, other parts, as he travelled the world as a reporter, very sad and frightening. He spent his last 2 years, before he returned to the UK teaching English to children in Japan.

We all enjoy our monthly meetings and look forward to seeing each other.

SURREY, EAST & WEST KENT, EAST & WEST SUSSEX.

Mrs Joan Rosling,

Five of us from this area attended the 30th Get-together and AGM in September. Jill Walden-Jones, our Editor Paulene Lambert and myself travelled from Surrey. Julia Cooper came up from West Kent and Norah Alston from East Sussex. We all had a very enjoyable weekend at Hoole Hall Hotel, Chester.

In October Paulene Lambert arranged the Surrey County Lunch at Sutton Green Golf Club. Unfortunately it was not as well attended as usual but those who were there had a good time and enjoyed meeting up with each other and catching up on all the news.

Epsom members still meet every other month for lunch. They try different venues, which seems to work well. A Christmas lunch, cooked by Audrey Broderick, was held at a member's house and proved most successful. Sadly Epsom have had three deaths recently. Rose Crookes, who ran the Epsom Clothing Store for many years, Babs Robinson and Soraya Taylor. They will all be greatly missed.

Farnham are to have a lunch in March. Elaine Maggs hopes to include people from Godalming and Haslemere and to recruit members for the Association.

Members from Guildford enjoyed a cream tea at Squires Nursery in September. I did notice several plants being loaded into car boots as we left for home, which proved it to be a successful outing. In November they had their, now annual, Christmas lunch at Guildford College. This is always popular and we all enjoyed a delicious three course lunch provided by the students, so much so that several people, me included, took their mince pie home to eat later!

On a lovely September day, Woking branch had an enjoyable boat trip on the Thames, with lunch on board, and then in November a very successful year of activities ended with a get together at Sutton Green Golf Club and a quiz after lunch proved so interesting that all the waitresses joined in. We are very sorry to report the death of Betty Stirling, a past Chairman of the branch. She spent many happy years during the war working at the BBC and was for some time secretary to John Snagg. Her work with us as a county organiser and her unstinting help in the office and as a committee member will be long remembered.

Julia Cooper of West Kent tells me that she had a small tea party at her house in October. Although only six people were able to attend she feels that more members would attend a lunch if it were held in Tonbridge or Tunbridge Wells. She is planning to arrange this during 2004.

From East Sussex Norah Alston reports that her members in Eastbourne enjoyed an outing to the Devils Dyke near Brighton with lunch at the Inn at the top in October. They held their pre-Christmas lunch at the Lansdowne Hotel, Eastbourne.

LONDON N.E. - No report
Div. Rep: Mrs W. Taylor OBE DL

LONDON N.W.
Div. Rep. Mrs Dorothy Stevens

We in NW continue to meet for coffee and occasional lunches at my home or a local restaurant

On October 20th 2003 a very enjoyable reunion of London members was held. Because it was the Pearl Anniversary of the Association, we invited the 'Pearly' King and Queen of Wandsworth, who gave a very interesting talk on their origins and the movement. *(When there is space I will put this in the newsletter - Ed)*

We do not know how long we will be able to hold this gathering as owing to the closure of London offices and projects we are not getting new members. So many of our long-standing members are getting too frail to travel, so our gatherings get smaller.

LONDON S.E. - LONDON S.W. - No reports
Div. Rep Mrs G Cleverly

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT
Div Rep Mrs Beryl Adams

Once again we held our autumn reunion in Shawford village hall and this year it did not rain! As a lunchtime meeting had proved very successful, we repeated it this year – but with a difference. Instead of each taking a packed lunch, Sarah Harfield, one of our members with her husband, offered to prepare a Ploughman's Lunch for us all. We all agreed we have never had such a meal for £2.50; - it was delicious and beautifully prepared.

After the meal, Anne Roberts, another of our members gave us a most interesting talk about visiting her son in Wyoming. It made us all envious and wished our sons lived in such interesting places. After our usual raffle and having once again met up with old friends we were able to get home before the rush hour.

BERKSHIRE - Div. Rep. Vacant

Berkshire County Rep: - No report
Mrs Morag Gordon,

The horse and mule live 30 years, and nothing know of wine or beers
The goat and sheep at 20 die, with never a taste of scotch or rye
The cow drinks water by the ton, and at 18 is mostly done
The dog at 16 cashes in, without the aid of rum or gin
The cat in milk and water soaks, and then in 12 short years it croaks
The modest sober bone-dry hen, lays eggs for nogs then dies at 10
All animals are strictly dry; they sinless live and swiftly die
But sinful, ginful, rum soaked men, survive for three score years and ten
And some of us (though mighty few) stay pickled till we're 92

From E Dawson, Tyne and Wear

SOUTH WEST DIVISION

HEREFORDSHIRE, WORCESTERSHIRE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE
Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Connop

The members in Gloucestershire enjoyed another Luncheon in Christ Church Hall, Malvern Road, Cheltenham, prepared by the members. Mrs. Judy Jackson gave the talk and demonstration in the afternoon on "Easy Flowers for Christmas". The number of beautiful arrangements made in such a short time was amazing and gave us some wonderful ideas for our Christmas arrangements. The Div. Rep. was even encouraged to arrange one!

We are sorry to announce the death of Mrs. Elaine Blundell who arranged flowers and did other duties in Gloucester Hospital, Mrs. Winifred Harwood at the age of 98 years who was County Food Organiser in Winchester for many years and Mrs Joan Sell, deputy County Organiser for Gloucestershire for many years and County Rep for the Association for three years.

DEVON AND CORNWALL - Div Rep Vacant

SOMERSET AND AVON
Div. Rep. Mrs Sheila Scholey

It seems incredible that six months have passed since the Reunion and AGM in Chester. This was a most enjoyable time; renewing friendships and being thoroughly spoiled. On Saturday morning we had an open-topped bus tour of Chester, followed by the Business Meetings in the afternoon and dinner in the evening, when we were entertained by The Cor Meibion Cymau Male Voice Choir.

The Kingswood Branch, in the capable hands of Margaret Dawson, meet regularly and have convivial lunches, which at times I am privileged to attend.

I am still hopeful that sufficient interest may be generated amongst other members here in Somerset to organise similar occasional get-together or lunches. There has been little response to my earlier letter. I should be delighted to hear from you with ideas on possible venues and dates!

WEST MIDLANDS

Div. Rep. Mrs J.M. Smith BEM

We were very sorry to learn of the death of Mrs M.F.Oswold. Peggy, as she was known, had given many years loyal service to WVS / WRVS holding the appointments of C.B. Organiser for Solihull, Meals on Wheels organiser and Emergency Training. As representative of WRVS Association for West Midlands, Peggy continued to take a very active part with the Solihull branch. Friends and colleagues send their deepest sympathy to all members of her family

Group Organiser: Endington \ Sutton Coldfield Group, West Midlands
Joan Wortley,

DORSET - Div Rep Vacant

Wiltshire County Rep

Since my autumn report we have welcomed four new members to Wiltshire who have transferred from other parts of the country. A local member has made a visit to Abbeyfield in Westbury, and we hope to meet up with the other three from Gloucestershire and Lancashire at our "new style" lunch in March - more next time.

Coffee before Christmas was another of our annual events thanks to Sheila Warren who always finds room to fit us all into her home. We were joined by the usual car load from Swindon.

Three of us joined the Swindon Group for their Christmas lunch. A wonderful buffet meal was cooked and served by a team of their members. This year we were able to taste, among other dishes, soup and quiches from the WRVS Cook Book. We went home more than satisfied after a very enjoyable lunch.

Jacquie adds that she has several new members this year, which is most encouraging.

Sir Jerry Impending	Lucy Lastic	Penny Cillen	Lady B. Goode
Dawn Onmesoon	Ginny Tonic	Isabel Wingin	Sheila Blidge
Anna Nurtherthing	Selma Boddie	Tina Kalada	Miss B. Havin

More of our incognito members, with some thanks to Radio 2 listeners

WALES

Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Gibbons. OBE - No report

SCOTLAND

Chairman Mrs Audrey Wilkinson - No report

CHANNEL ISLANDS

JERSEY

Ass. Rep. Mrs Doreen Jennings

Our small group of Jersey members meet several times a year for coffee, tea or a lunch. Our eldest member, Mrs Peggie Morden, MBE was 94 in January and our newest, Mrs Marguerite Crill was 90 in November. Sadly we lost one of our members in September, Mrs Freda Rossiter

We enjoyed a tea party in Marguerites home in April and on a sunny day in September four of us met at one of our delightful parks for coffee

Our usual pre Christmas lunch was attended by all members and was a very happy and enjoyable event

We were please to welcome our editor Paulene to Jersey earlier in the year and if any Association members come to the Island and would like to contact us we would be pleased to welcome them

GUERNSEY - No report

Ass. Rep. Mrs Margaret Brockway

NORTH EAST DIVISION

NORTHUMBERLAND, TYNE & WEAR
Div.Rep. Mrs S. McCormack BEM

The four groups in this part of the N E Division continue to meet regularly and enjoy the social contact and exchange of news. The group leaders do invaluable work in arranging speakers and outings for their members and also keeping in touch with those less able to attend meetings. Sadly I have to report the death of two long serving members Mrs Mary Potts of Gateshead and Mrs Margaret Philipson of Ponteland. Both had been involved in many WRVS projects through the years for which we are very grateful

Mrs E Dawson reports for Whitley Bay and North Shields and sends thanks to Mrs Lewis for a very pleasant Coffee morning spent at her home in September. Eleven members joined the Gentlemen and their wives of The Willow Club at their Carol Service. This was a particularly lovely Morning at which we were invited to join them all for Coffee and Mince pies afterwards. Our second annual lunch at the "Stonebrook" was once again enjoyed by sixteen members. Finally, our belated congratulations go to Mrs. Margaret Carr on receiving her 15 years long service award

There being no meeting in August, the Sunderland group began the second session of the year with a lively and entertaining talk by Mrs Hitcham on "The Japanese Way of Life". She brought many exhibits of everyday life in Japan (her son is married to a Japanese lady and teaches in an English school in Japan.) Everyone enjoyed her talk so much she was immediately booked for 2004. One of our members and her husband, Ethel and Ormonde Elliott, gave an informative and amusing slide show about their holiday in India 20 years ago. The slides were good and the asides made by Ormonde made it a very amusing morning. Suddenly Christmas was fast approaching, so November saw us tucking into our Christmas Buffet Luncheon and in December to our Sherry and Mince Pies get-together. Mrs S. McCormack was able to join us in December: it is always a pleasure to have her join us. Because of the poor weather, the AGM in January was cancelled.

Four members celebrated- their 80th birthdays during this session and each were presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Sadly, we have to report the death of Mrs Amy Bean, who until last year was a strong supporter of WRVS and the Association.

The AGM in Chester was attended by four members who thoroughly enjoyed the weekend, despite part of the train journey home being overcrowded.

Mrs M Doyle reports from Newcastle - We are continuing to meet each month but sadly, due to illness or death, the club is shrinking. It was for this reason that the Carol Service was cancelled again this year, but on the brighter side we are reinstating our area lunch so that we have one function at which we can all meet. The club once again filled shoeboxes for the Christmas Child appeal, the response from the North East is always huge and the ASDA that I use had a mountain of boxes waiting to be picked up. We all enjoyed our Christmas lunch in December at the New Kent hotel. All the members agree that we are given very good value for money at the hotel and so we have no plans to change the venue in the foreseeable future

DURHAM, CLEVELAND, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Div Rep. Mrs Rene Thompson. OBE

Hartlepool Mrs Stamp reminds us that each month this group manages to have either a talk or a slide show apart from May and August when they plan outings. One slide show that delighted was of Yosemite National Park in California, where the scenery is spectacular. (I can recommend it for a visit!) A talk on street and gypsy children in Romania was so moving that members left £25.50 on a collection plate to help fund the work. On one of the outings lunch was taken at the Lion Hotel at Blakey Ridge, Kirbymoorside, after which a visit was paid to the Lavender Farm at Terrington, York. I was delighted to join them for their New Year Luncheon in a local hotel and was lucky with the weather although it was January. They are a very friendly group and always willing to help one another.

Mrs Altass reports that the Selby group's monthly luncheons continue at the Bowling Club although unfortunately they could not cater for the Christmas / New Year Luncheon. They were fortunate to be able to return to their old venue at the Selby Railway Club and were delighted to welcome Pat Copping, Bill and Peggy James and Millie Wilks and thirteen York members. After an excellent meal they had a most interesting talk on 'The Thin Blue Line' by Mrs Wetherill, the daughter and wife of a policeman. (I was so sorry not to be able to attend) In November they lost their oldest member - Miss Iris Macleay, who died two weeks after her 100th birthday, before which four members visited her in the nursing home, with flowers. She had fire-watched from the top of Selby Abbey Tower, and helped with Meals on Wheels as well as being appointed Town 'Missioner', caring for old people who lived alone. She received the Maundy Money when the Queen visited Selby and donated it to the Abbey, where it is displayed. The following month another old member died - Mrs Elsie Mennell had been a regular attendee and will be greatly missed. However Mrs Freda Webster has joined the group, who are delighted to welcome her. Mrs Altass thanks all her devoted helpers, Mr Kay, Mrs Bell, Mrs Knowles and Mrs Watson.

Mrs Lock and Mrs Knowles had run the raffles ever since their inception. In the last Newsletter news that Mrs Lock had died rather suddenly was given, but Mrs Knowles is continuing with the raffles, for which Mrs Altass is pleased and very grateful.

Mrs Pantin reports that the Harrogate group still meets regularly on the first Friday of the month at St. Pauls UR Church and often have as many as twelve members, though bad weather keeps many, sensibly, indoors. In early December they attended the Gilbert & Sullivan Brighthouse and Rastrick Annual Christmas Concert in the International Centre, as sadly the lovely old Royal Hall needs a great deal of money to restore it to a safe condition. Instead of a Christmas lunch, when so many are away or entertaining family, they opted for a New Year one which all fourteen enjoyed. (Once again I missed out having promised to go to Selby.) Whenever there is a suitable show at the theatre they make a point of going to the Saturday matinees and they always support the local amateur groups. Yet another of the members has moved into a Home, and Mrs Pantin says how much the smiling face and gentle disposition of Marjorie Heald will be missed. There are others who are not in good health but send messages, good wishes and hopes of joining the group in the future. This group was very disappointed that we were not able to have our Annual Luncheon in the autumn and will be very happy to know that we are holding it in Scarborough in September.

Scarborough Always a very active branch (and numerically a large one -). This half-year they have had lunch at the local Coastal College; coffee and a speaker at Cober Hill; a visit to Duncombe Park in Helmsley; a coffee morning at a member's house and afternoon tea at Wold Cottage at Wold Newton. They brought the year to an end with Christmas Lunch at North Cliff Golf Club (and once again I didn't get there - this time because of the weather!). They have been delighted to welcome three new members and are most grateful to those who have already joined the committee thus giving great assistance to the branch. They all continue to miss Barbara Mackenzie who was their able Chairman for many years and also Min Clark, who gave so much time unstintingly and say how proud they are to have shared their friendship. Mrs Barbara Gardiner is most grateful to Irene Winter for acting as Secretary and thanks all her committee for their help.

Mrs Wilks writes to say how much York members enjoyed their Christmas Lunch in the beautiful hall of Bootham Park Hospital where they were joined by Miss Hyatt and also the Selby lunch in January. At their meeting in October Miss Joan Sadler, one of their own members, spoke about two events in London, when she had attended a reception in the House of Lords to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Winged Fellowship Trust, and later at the House of Commons with a local M.P. The Trust has homes for people with disabilities, which Joan had used for many years in her work for the M.S. Society.

The branch regrets the death of Mrs Madge Turner, a faithful supporter of the Association and still working at the shop in Bootham Park Hospital up to the time of going into hospital herself. They look forward to the talk of a hospital chaplain at their next meeting.

The Darlington group had a very happy Christmas tea party and Mrs Isabel Paterson has undertaken the secretarial duties, previously carried out by Grace Evans. They are looking forward to a luncheon meeting in the spring when it is hoped that a new Group Leader will come forward.

The Middlesbrough members continue to meet and celebrated Mrs Kit Bregazzi's 90th birthday before Christmas.

Whilst I am very happy that Mrs Robina Priestley has taken over as Div. Rep. For East Yorkshire and Hull, I would like to put on record how much I enjoyed representing them for the last few years, and to say that they are always welcome to join this Division for any function.

EAST YORKSHIRE AND HULL

Div Rep. Mrs Robina Priestley

The two Christmas Lunches held at either end of the County were enjoyed by forty-two members, with seven members attending both. The monthly lunches continue with numbers attending growing, the average being around twenty-two. This year's programme is about to be issued so that members can include them in their future plans.

Membership now stands at seventy-four with the loss of three Hull members this half year, two of which have sadly died. Mary Herbert who was a very regular attendee at our lunches until failing eyesight meant her having to have residential care in a Home for the Blind; and Pat Woodford who died after surgery. Our members will miss them both. We welcome a new member, Joan Coulthard from Wilberfoss who has worked in all WRVS activities in the Village and we hope she enjoys the friendship of our group. We also have members living away but enjoy keeping in touch and hearing our news.

Some members are still knitting for the York Special Care Baby Unit and we received a letter from one of the staff expressing their thanks.

I thought members might be interested in hearing about the work done by one of our Beverley members. Mrs. Margaret Sykes, is eighty-three years old and lives in a Residential Care Home in Beverley and is still working for other people. She first worked for WRVS in 1967 making layettes for babies born in refugee camps and went on to produce thousands of children's' clothes. She unpicked used clothing, bedding etc. to make dresses, skirts, trousers, and unravelled woollen garments to re-knit into jumpers or squares to make blankets.

She has just passed an amazing total of 14,000 children's' garments which have been despatched to third world countries. She also knits tiny bonnets and booties for the local Maternity Hospital. When she recently went into the Care Home she made sure she took along her sewing machine, and she organises her life by sewing in the morning, knitting in the afternoon and watches TV at night. Her one regret is that she has never got to see the thousands of needy children she has helped despite an appeal by her daughter to the 'Jim'll Fix It' programme some years ago.

SOUTH AND WEST YORKSHIRE
Div. Rep. Mrs June Pitts BEM

Gillian Highley from Calderdale Association has sent in this report.

June Pitts has asked me to send our contribution for the newsletter once again as she is not yet back with us at our meetings, although we hope to see her soon. As I did not expect to do this again I haven't kept a record of what we have done so I am trusting to memory. Here goes.

Calderdale continues to meet bi-monthly in our lovely Town Hall, where we are able to order tea and coffee to start our meetings. We are a small but happy group with many memories of WRVS, which are often exchanged. At least half the group are still actively involved working at the WRVS Luncheon club or the afternoon clubs, often both! One of our male members (we have two) arranges our speakers but at least once a quarter we have an informal business meeting. Four of our members enjoyed the annual conference at Chester and brought back reports. Six members attended the local Remembrance Service at our Cenotaph laying the wreath supplied by WRVS through our Vice-Chairman Alice Cleland. The number of organisations attending falls each year but we always have a good representation from the Association. In January we went out for a lunch, this time at a local pub (arranged by our other male member) although several members were unable to attend we enjoyed good food and good company.

Plans are going ahead to arrange a Yorkshire Day Tea and entertainment for the elderly on July 31st. For groups outside Yorkshire who may not know, the actual day is August 1st but this falls on a Sunday this year so is not a suitable day. An entertainer is arranged and guests will be asked to follow a Yorkshire theme. Members are already busy collecting Yorkshire memorabilia for decorations.

Our November meeting saw us taking a visit to St. Petersburg when we cruised with a former speaker and enjoyed tales and photographs of life on board and trips ashore.

LEICESTERSHIRE, LINCOLNSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Joan Newman

The second half of the year started off with a Luncheon for the three counties to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the WRVS Association, well supported by over sixty members who enjoyed the opportunity to meet up with friends from other areas to exchange news. It was a rather low-key function due to the date coinciding with the start of the National AGM in Chester - with the result that no Officials were able to attend. As usual the Gateway Hotel provided their excellent service and good food for our benefit - much appreciated by all present.

Following the luncheon four Rushcliffe members and myself hurried to Chester to attend the National AGM and Reunion held at Hoole Hall Hotel; an excellent venue, far superior to Bath University, which was anything but comfortable. The Reunion was well attended, especially by so many day delegates. It was, however, rather disappointing that neither the WRVS Chairman or Vice Chairman were able to attend. At the Business meeting matters were dealt with quickly and clearly, as were any problems that members brought up. The entertainment provided was first class and an optional open-top bus tour of the City with a most knowledgeable guide in the morning and a small Welsh Male Voice Choir entertained us after dinner in the evening - all much enjoyed by all present - altogether a very happy and successful Reunion.

All the Districts have held their regular meetings during these months and I have been able to visit most to keep in touch. The Christmas / New Year lunches seemed very popular, being well attended, and the opportunity for exchange of news instead of having a speaker.

Sadly, despite all efforts to keep going, Ashfield District held a meeting to discuss their future and reluctantly decided to close at the end of the year due to lack of support. Most disappointing for all concerned, especially for the Secretary/Treasurer who had worked very hard to keep the District operational. To her I send my thanks and those of the members. Life members will still get their copies of the Newsletter and perhaps be able to pass on any news to other members when they meet.

Coffee Morning/Meetings are still held each month in Leicester. We are pleased to welcome Mrs Joan Newman, our Divisional Representative, from time to time and were able to hear her report following her attendance of the National AGM in September. Mrs Anne Tribble, who sits on the Vice Chairman's Consultative Committee, was able to visit us and we found her news from WRVS Head Office most informative. Some of our members are still doing active WRVS duties, so this contact is important to us all.

The Committee plans to change the annual programme of events for 2004. As the Day Trips have been less well supported, these will be discontinued. In compensation we are planning two Luncheons during the spring, as these are so popular. The pre-Christmas Lunch held in November and attended by 64 members was as enjoyable as ever. Mrs Newman was able to join us for this occasion.

The small group at Lincoln is now reduced to just five members, but they are determined, with the help of Mrs Birkhead their leader, to continue with their lunch meetings every couple of months.

In North East Lincolnshire, Mrs Blanchard reports that thirty-four members enjoyed an early Christmas luncheon in November - numbers slightly down due to illness, other engagements and 'anno domini'. It was, however, a successful meet-up. They look forward to another meeting in the spring.

Our group of committed Bassetlaw members continue to meet regularly every month and we are continuing to encourage new members to join us. In August a number of our members met at a local hotel for lunch together. They all had a very good lunch and were pleased to have the opportunity to chat together in a nice comfortable environment.

In September a group attended the "Celebration Lunch" at the Gateway Hotel in Nottingham, taking the opportunity to meet up with old friends from across Nottinghamshire. We all enjoyed the meal and thank Jean Newman for once again organising the event. Our October meeting was particularly interesting as we had a speaker (Mrs Jean Dadge) to talk about her role as a trainer for Dogs for the Blind. What an interesting afternoon we had. We had no idea of the amount of work and time involved before a blind person could have such a useful companion. Our members provided afternoon tea and we all enjoyed it - even the beautiful dog that the speaker brought along with her. She was the best-behaved present that afternoon!

As Christmas was on the horizon, in November we arranged a visit to "Arkwrights Mill", an indoor shopping precinct in North Derbyshire, to do some of our Christmas shopping. We had a very good day. I think the owners would have been glad we went. You should have seen the bus driver's face when we appeared, ready for home, with all our many parcels. We don't meet again until February for our Christmas lunch, but in the meantime we would like to wish all our friends in WRVS Association a Healthy and Peaceful New Year.

The 24-plus members regularly attending Broxtowe monthly meetings always enjoy chatting over coffee and biscuits, but do manage to listen to the Chairman, Val Haigh, as, perhaps, she welcomes a new member, tells of anyone indisposed or in hospital, or gives WRVS information from our Divisional Representative.

The Secretary prepares a 6-monthly programme after the relevant committee meeting and ensures it is distributed to all members and to our Divisional Representative. The Treasurer is always busy, receiving coffee and raffle money, deposits for a lunch, and in January, the subscriptions. Despite us crowding round her table at such times, Barbara remains calm and always gets her sums right.

In September, Anne Tribble, a VCC representative, gave a talk, listened to with great interest, and followed by many questions that were concisely and clearly answered by Anne. We enjoyed her visit very much.

Also in September was the 30th WRVS Association lunch at the Gateway Hotel. Because Joan, and others, were leaving immediately after lunch to attend the Association AGM, there were no speakers. However, we all enjoyed meeting members from other areas, and old friends, and the buzz of conversation continued even as we made our way to the car park.

Now, in December, it is time for our Christmas lunch, a convivial and fitting end to our year, and with the January "Shortbread and Sherry" morning to look forward to - (and paying our subscriptions).

The summer meeting for Gedling was a casual one for those not on holidays - a delight for the garden lovers, at The Dukeries Garden Centre. Our attendances, despite members taking holidays at "odd" times, keeps quite steady at each monthly meeting - at around 20/22. The Slide Show and Talk of "Gardens Great and Small" was absolutely fascinating, and the effect of seeing such superb and colourful arrangements of flowers, shrubs and trees, had a most relaxing effect on us. There were great gardens from the south to the north of the country, of palaces and estates, to small cottage gardens in all their glory, in all seasons.

Our annual Coffee and B&B morning was enjoyed by many and provided a modest sum for our funds, which partly subsidised our excellent Christmas Lunch at the Vale Social Club. Our own party provided the usual chatter and laughter over a super buffet, quizzes and funny poems.

Mrs Hall, the leader at Mansfield, reports that the AGM was held in the autumn and that they look forward to a late Christmas lunch in January. As most of the members are still active, finding regular meeting dates is difficult.

Numbers seem to be dwindling in Newark but the quarterly luncheon meeting held in September and December were much enjoyed by those attending. A new venue has been found at Balderton - a hostelry, which seems to be successful (no problems for parking which is helpful).

September was a busy month for a lot of Rushcliffe members with a coffee morning early in the month followed by the Area Lunch to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the beginning of the Association, and the last weekend four members of the committee attended the AGM in Chester. We all thoroughly enjoyed the events and I would like to say a big thank you to the HQ staff that organised the weekend in Chester. It was great! In October we had a talk with slides, given by Suella Postles, who is the Director of one of Nottingham's Museums, the Brewhouse Yard, and the talk was about "The Women of the Brewhouse" which, as the name implies, was on the site of a brewery, very close to "The Olde Trip to Jerusalem", which most Nottinghamians say is the oldest pub in England. Not having been born in Nottingham, I do not get involved in this argument as there is a great deal of discussion even now as to whether this is so. Does any other area think that they have a pub dating from the 12th century?

Another chatting coffee morning in November and finally, in December, our Christmas Lunch at what has become our usual venue, The County Hall restaurant on the River Trent. Joan Newman was able to come and there were 29 members there, a number having had to cancel at the last minute because of the nasty virus doing the rounds. Why do these horrible bugs always come at the most busy time of the year? We all had a first class meal on a beautiful winter's day, so everyone there had a good time.

It would appear to have been another busy year for our members especially as many are still actively working on a variety of projects.

Do you know why Easter is when it is? Have you ever wished it could be fixed like Christmas? This has been a controversial issue for many years

Easter could fall on any of the 35 days from 22nd March to 25th April. The last time it was on 22nd March was in 1818 and under the present system will not do so again until 2285. The tourist industry would like April 9-15th as it would then start the holiday season in many resorts. At present, Easter is dated by phases of a 'paper' moon and tables calculated by an Athenian astronomer in 432 BC. Pope Gregory enforced the use of these tables in 1582, decreeing that Easter Day would be the Sunday after the first full moon that falls on or after March 21st, but if the full moon happens on a Sunday, then Easter falls on the following Sunday. And just to add to the confusion, a month according to that hypothetical moon consists of 29 and 30 days alternately. All that makes me think that the likelihood of a fixed Easter is pretty remote - but have a Happy Easter anyway.



NORTH WEST DIVISION

CUMBRIA AND LANCASHIRE - Div. Rep. Vacant

MERSEYSIDE AND CHESHIRE
Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Jones

Since introducing myself as the new Div Rep I have had a warm welcome. I have attended several group meetings and hope to attend many more where I can meet and get to know our members. No news this time from Chester, Northwich or Nantwich

St Helens held their AGM in March. It is a lively cohesive group who keep in close touch particularly with members who are ill. They meet 10 times a year for talks and other events, and twice a year for lunch.

Wilmslow meet bimonthly for coffee mornings at members' homes, and for lunch in summer and at Christmas. Sadly have to report the death of Mrs Florence Driver and Mrs E Schofield.

Wallasey and Bebington meet monthly for lunch and are both very active groups. A number of members attended the Reunion and AGM at Chester in 2003.

Crosby - Linda McEvoy reports - The first year of Crosby WRVS Association is drawing to a close. The bimonthly meetings have brought together past and present members to enjoy the lively and interesting conversation that is always evident when WRVS members meet.

The programme which was inspired by ideas from the group has been varied and fun. A talk on aromatherapy with a hand massage for each lady prompted many oohs and aahs and was enjoyed by all. A Garden party and plant sale, which coincidentally raised a large sum for a WRVS charity, was held on a lovely mid-summer afternoon. A talk and slide show on Brazil, and a Carol concert just before Christmas brought 2003 to a successful end.

Our next meeting is to be an illustrated talk on the changing face of the Liverpool waterfront, a sight which I am sure is familiar to people all over the world.

When our group formed I was aware of the interests of lots of members, but since February 2003 I have been amazed at the range and extent of these interests. Many members have volunteered as speakers and also offered the services of family and friends to contribute to the programme.

Each meeting has been inspiring and has prompted questions, discussion and debate, much to the delight of our speakers. But that is no more than you would expect from WRVS members.

NORTH AND SOUTH MANCHESTER

Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Matthews BEM

Bury Group and their friends enjoyed a fantastic day in East Lancashire last October stopping for coffee at Hollin Vale Craft Centre (in the next village to Wycoller where the star of 'To the Manor Born' and 'The Good Life' now resides.) Lunch at the Calf's Head in Worston, a lovely country hotel with a beautiful view and garden, was followed by a leisurely tour criss-crossing the Pack Horse Trails trodden out centuries ago. Pennine Edge communities still linger with a backdrop of prehistoric and strangely haunting moorland with a thickly populated Calder Valley below - such contrasts. The perfect weather, superb scenery (trees as colourful as ones in New England) and the interesting stories related by our guide, all contributed to make it a memorable day.

We met again in January at the Red Hall Restaurant near Bury. Despite the miserable weather the friendly atmosphere, good company and excellent food made it a very successful day. The 30th Anniversary Reunion and AGM in Chester was greatly enjoyed by those present and it was pleasing to have more members than usual from our division attending.

Romiley group are pleased to report that their last three meetings have been so enjoyable that they have decided to carry on despite their falling membership. A talk on birth signs and their meanings (not to be taken too seriously) and another talk on gardens with lots of useful tips just goes to show that you are never too old to learn. The Speaker included many humorous garden quotations in her talk. In December we all enjoyed a Christmas lunch at a local hostelry named 'Matteos'. We are extremely sorry to have lost two more of our members through ill health - Minnie Smith and Madge Eccles and we wish them well.

After the holidays in August, Sale members began their next season in September with a 'chat' and quiz. We told about our holiday experiences, if any, and had a good laugh with the quiz. In October our speaker told us about the Eden Project in Cornwall, with slides, showing all the plants and domes to house them, some tropical, some known to us. It made us think we ought to go there and I hope some of us will. In November our speaker showed slides of the Bernese Oberland; what beautiful scenery, such steep-sided mountains with the little trains winding their way up. We saw the Jungfrau, the Manch and the Eiger all covered in snow, and the villages of Wengen and MurrenIn

clinging to the mountainside, and the Schilhorn restaurant where they filmed the James Bond Film. Super. For our Christmas lunch we decided to go back to the Cresta Court Hotel in Altrincham where we had an excellent meal and all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. We were very pleased to have the company of Jean Matthews and Joan Allmark, who were able to catch up with old friends.

STAFFORDSHIRE. SHROPSHIRE, DERBYSHIRE - Div. Rep. Vacant

Derbyshire County Rep

There's little to report but here are a few lines for the Newsletter. Derbyshire members continue to meet monthly in Dronfield. I attended the Christmas lunch and was very pleased to meet several younger members, which augurs well for the future of the group. Members from Chesterfield, Erewash and West Derbyshire also attended the lunch and very much enjoyed the opportunity to meet up with friends.

WRVS BENEVOLENT TRUST - *You have helped us, now let us help you*

WRVS volunteers who find themselves in unexpected financial difficulties can apply to the Benevolent Trust for a grant.

Applicants can be retired or still volunteering, but must have been members for five years or more and are usually on a limited income

The Trust rarely gives ongoing payments, generally making single one off grants.

Recent examples include replacing a washing machine, buying replacement windows, installing a downstairs lavatory and the purchase of a wheelchair.

Requests for grants are reviewed in March, July and November, though urgent applications will be considered immediately.

In circumstances where the Trustees are unable to help, they will try to put you in touch with other grant providers

All applications for help should be sent in the first place to the Honorary Secretary at and of course all applications are treated in the strictest confidence.

WRVS ASSOCIATION

82 Bootham, York,
YO30 7DF

01 904 634 500

wrvs.association@care4free.net

President

Mrs Tina Tietjen
Chairman. WRVS

Vice-Presidents

Mrs Ava Christophersen
Mrs E.D. Claydon
The Hon. Dame Mary Corsar DBE.
Mrs P James MBE
Mrs Sheila McCormack BEM
Mrs Diane Price
Dame Barbara Shenfield DBE
Lady Toulson CBE

Chairman

Mrs Pat Copping

Hon. Secretary

Mrs Jean Pickard

Hon. Treasurer

Mrs Maureen Hudson

Hon. Editor

Paulene Lambert

Printed by North Wolds Printers Ltd, Pocklington, York, YO42 2QP
