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Spring 2005

No 62

WRVS Association NEWSLETTER

Letter from the Chairman
82 Bootham, York, YO30 7DF

Dear Member

I am pleased to be writing my first letter to you as Chairman.

Although I have only just started, as it were, to dip my toe into the water of this new and stimulating challenge, I feel that with your help and support the Association will continue to progress

The 2004 Reunion and AGM in Northampton was a great success. We hope that many of you will join us this September, from Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th in the North of England. Please find details in this Newsletter

Again many thanks to Pat Copping – your previous chairman and the staff in the York Office for their warm welcome and help

Wishing you a healthy Spring and Summer

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Sheila Scholey

ROYAL
VOLUNTARY
SERVICE

ROYAL
VOLUNTARY
SERVICE

Random jottings from the Editor

Dear Members

Well here we are again, and with yet another change. Yes I know there is a new Chairman, and I am sure that along with me, you will wish her a very successful three year 'reign', but no, this time I mean the front page. It was changed when I became editor, to signify the change from my predecessor, Ness Venables, but now that we have to use the new logo for the WRVS, I have re-jigged it again. But then I suppose that as long as there is lots of news from your region, it matters not about the cover.



But is there news from your club? I had a frantic message just after I had sent the last one to the printers, to say that a certain Div Rep had not got it to me in time, was it too late? Well in that case it was, but this time I phoned couple of Div Reps to remind them. Not an ideal situation, especially as I had to use the still relatively new and expensive directory enquiry service. Perhaps if your Div Rep has not sent in a report, or if you do not have one, you could write to me direct. All letters welcome, but please ensure that I know a name, address, phone number and Division. Or how about being totally radical and sending me a 'no report' report – at least that way I will know that we are reaching the right people

Talking of writing in, my thanks go to Joan Sadler, for many of the 'extras' in this edition of the newsletter and to those who were kind enough to send Christmas cards to me. All visits from the postman are very welcome

So what are your plans for the rest of 2005? Many of you that I talk to have six weeks in New Zealand lined up or four weeks in South Africa, usually visiting family. Some might be planning a week away with friends, whilst others, for whatever reason, cannot manage to get away at all. Well try if you can for the AGM in September, which is being held in Scarborough this year, in an attempt to give a chance to those in the North the opportunity to join in. For those that do have to stay at home, just aim to enjoy what the seasons have to offer.

Best wishes to you all

Paulene

Paulene Lambert

WALES

Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Gibbons. OBE

The Dyfed Group met for their Christmas Lunch at the beginning of December in Carmarthen. It was lovely to catch up on everyone's news and to welcome back Grace Foot who was visiting relatives in the area. Maud Davies would still like someone to put the Association Newsletter onto tape, as her sight is now very bad indeed. We believe the Association has discussed this but cannot remember what the present position is.

The Abergavenny Group still meet for lunch every three months. The January meeting was held in the Abergavenny Hotel and was attended by 9 people. As with most gatherings of WRVS 'oldies' we talked about what used to be and what fun we had and then what we were doing now. Some still helped with the WRVS Shop in the local hospital and some had continued to work in Usk Prison despite the project no longer being run by WRVS. We all felt it unfortunate that work in prisons and magistrates courts, which only WRVS did, should have been stopped and that the Service concentrates on the Elderly which Age Concern, amongst many others, also helps.

I am sure that the groups in Colwyn Bay and Newport have continued to meet but there has not been a report from them. Please could I ask Miss Bowden, Mrs. Travis and Mrs. Edwards to let me know if there is anything special to report - or just to let me know anyway that they are still meeting. I would happily try and go to one of their meetings if at all possible.

I have been approached by Head Office (mostly now in Cardiff) to see if I could come up with names of WVS members who were active during the war. It seems the National Assembly in Wales are holding Services and a special luncheon to mark the 60 years anniversary of the ending of the War. They had been asked how many invitations they should send out for the lunch. So far I don't think any members have been found. For the 50th celebrations of the start of WVS we were only able to find one member who qualified and was able to go to London, so what chance have we now!

Middle age is when broadness of the mind and narrowness of the waist change places

SCOTLAND

Chairman - Hilda Clow

May I take this opportunity on behalf of WRVS Scotland to wish our fellow members in the South a very happy, healthy and prosperous new year. It is incredible to realise that even as I write we are well into 2005 and rolling along towards Spring.

We are looking forward to our AGM in April, which, this year is being held in Hamilton. Arrangements are made and our hostesses, I believe, have organised an interesting and entertaining programme, and it is hoped that as many members as possible will attend.

We have been fortunate this year in not having had too severe a winter and members have been able to meet for lunches and coffee mornings. Christmas is the one occasion when members, unable to attend meetings throughout the year, make a big effort to join in at the Festive Season.

Our branch reports are submitted at the end of our season, so the next contribution from Scotland should be more newsworthy.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

JERSEY

Ass. Rep. Mrs Doreen Jennings

Not a lot to report this time. As we all know, the best laid plans – 'gang aft agley' and it was the weather that prevented all of our group meeting at Roseville Street in October. Two members were coming on the bus, but at the critical moment the heavens opened and the rain was so heavy that they could not get to the bus stop without being soaked. One of our members was away in New York but, nevertheless, I was pleased to welcome those who were able to come. Things were better in December when we had our usual pre Christmas Lunch at the Pomme D'or Hotel, as the entire group were present. It is a carvery restaurant and the food is always excellent. We are getting to be a real elderly group now with none of us under 80, but we find our get togethers very stimulating.

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 Division continue to meet regularly and I was pleased to attend the Christmas Buffet Lunch in Sunderland and the Christmas Dinner in Newcastle. Members of the Northumberland group are very scattered in this large county, but those who can, meet in Ponteland for a monthly coffee morning

Mrs M.E.Dawson writes from North Shields / Whitley Bay. In September we were once again made welcome for Coffee in the home of Mrs Charles - our grateful thanks from all of us. Thirteen members joined the Willow Club Gentlemen and their wives at their Carol Service, with coffee and mince pies in St. Johns Church and sixteen members met for lunch in January for lunch at the Stonebrook. Our next get together will be in the home of Mrs Jackman on March 15th 2005 and in June we have our annual gathering in the Old Assembly Rooms.

Our sincere thought and good wishes go to Mrs Betty Charles who has been in Hospital for many weeks after undergoing serious knee surgery. We all wish her well and a speedy recovery and look forward to her joining us again at future events.

Group leader Mrs. M Doyle writes that Newcastle members have continued to enjoy their monthly meetings with speakers, or sometimes, quizzes etc. At Christmas they had their traditional dinner at the New Kent Hotel in Jesmond and as always were pleased with the food, service and the festive atmosphere. All the members responded to the Shoe Box Appeal for the children in orphanages in Eastern Europe or provided money for the transportation. They are looking forward to more happy meetings in 2005 with everyone in good health.

Sarah Hardy tells us that September was the first meeting for the Sunderland group when Mrs Rogers told the group of her experiences in prison, working with the prisoners. She presented a very clear picture of the problems the women faced; i.e. often being far away from their children and families, and then went on to say how things have changed over the years. This was a very interesting talk and at times quite disturbing

In October David Hughes told of his working life starting as a boy and then becoming manager of various CWS stores. The talk was very amusing. After retirement, he started water colour painting and has written two books, both of which he sells for the Marie Curie Cancer Care Fund as usual in November we had our Christmas

buffet lunch and in December we met for Sherry and Mince Pies. At this meeting a cheque for £650 was handed to Mrs Somers, a trustee of St Benedict's Hospice, for the hospice refurbishment fund

The AGM was well attended in January and we are looking forward to another happy and successful year

DURHAM, CLEVELAND, NORTH YORKSHIRE & HULL

Div Rep. Mrs Rene Thompson. OBE

Before wintering in the Antipodes, Rene managed to write, mention and give thanks for the hard work of all the branch leaders, and their helpers. She also mentioned the Scarborough Annual Reunion Luncheon in September that was held at the Spa. A most excellent event although tinged with disappointment that no members were able to come from Darlington, Hartlepool or Middlesborough

Branch Rep, Isobel Paterson, of Darlington says that following on from their decision to not hold regular meetings, ten members did manage to meet for a festive Christmas lunch at a country pub. They plan to hold two more lunch meetings for Spring and Autumn at the same venue, as members enjoy the setting by the River Tees and possibly more importantly, public transport passes the front door!

Irene Winter, secretary at Scarborough, writes to welcome their new members Mesdames S Jackson, J Liddle, L Carling, C Hepworth, B Squires, W Donoghue, and Mrs. Joan Altass who transferred to us from Selby

The major event of the last half-year was the North Eastern Association lunch (held at the Spa) which the Scarborough Branch was pleased to have hosted. Although lower in numbers to the usual attendance all members enjoyed meeting old friends from various branches, a delicious meal and an entertaining speaker. We have continued to organise the usual coffee mornings (some with a speaker when funds allow) and have celebrated the Festive Season with lunch at the Mount Hotel. The programme for 2005 is already planned when we shall be pleased to welcome our new members at a particular event. Hopefully we shall arrange another '90's' party when we shall also celebrate the 100th birthday of a much-respected member Mrs Molly Morris.

Sheila Pantin of Harrogate writes to tell me off for not including her report in the last newsletter. As good that I am, I am not a psychic, so sadly, I can only include reports that I actually receive! Her group meet once a month, either for a social function or just for coffee. As leader she manages to find all kinds of suitable activities, venues

and things of interest to look for. This may be outings, theatre matinees, concerts or lunches, which are then enjoyed by everyone but especially those who live alone. All members have the common interest of years of working voluntarily for the WRVS (WVS in some cases) and much discussion often ensues, especially with regard to modern trends. In spite of advancing years, some of the members still work in the Harrogate Hospital in the coffee shop, trolley, book service or doing the flowers. Once a 'Weaver Bird' always one. All agree that they must keep up with the times, so despite the majority being mothers, grandmothers and great grandmothers, they continue to enjoy their 'get togethers' and always manage to have a laugh.

Ten members from York attended the area reunion luncheon and 16 made it to the AGM in October, when Millie Wilks agreed to continue as Chairman of the group despite having already done her two years. It was agreed to dispense with the outing in 2005 and to look for a suitable local venue to have a meal together. The meeting was followed by 'afternoon tea' provided by some of the members. Later in October we enjoyed two mornings stuffing newsletters into envelopes at 82 Bootham. Our Christmas lunch seems to have become a fixture in the beautiful hall at Bootham Park Hospital and 24 members attended including our area representative Miss Lesley Hyatt and our president, Mrs Ness Venables.

We are very sorry to report the death, at the age of 86, of Miss Helen Trippett, a faithful member of the York Association until ill health confined her to home and latterly to a nursing home. After serving as head mistress of Huby Primary School she volunteered for Books on Wheels in her retirement. We express our sympathy to her family of nieces, great nieces and great-great nieces

EAST YORKSHIRE TO HUMBER

Div Rep. Mrs Robina Priestley

A return to the Lawns Centre at the University of Hull, for our Christmas Lunch was enjoyed by all - a wonderful meal and welcoming staff. The previous problem of a flight of stairs had been resolved by the installation of a stair lift.

We welcome a new member to our Bridlington group, Mrs. Joyce Walker, who was the Local Organiser for Bridlington for several years. We have arranged to have one of our monthly lunches at nearby Flamborough and hope that it will encourage more people to join us from the Bridlington area.

Sadly one of our regular members, Gwen Hagyard, has died. Until her last illness Gwen was a great help to the Meals on Wheels Service in Beverley and was a well liked and willing member both in Beverley and Hull. We send our condolences to her family. We have also just learned of the death of Mrs. Joan Tennant, who for many years was the Local Organiser for Cottingham and was responsible for the care of the Darby and Joan Hall

She was always a most pleasant and welcoming lady. We send our sympathy to her son.

One of our members from Swanland in Hull, Mrs. Pat Mackrill, who will be remembered by many in East Yorkshire as the County Emergency Organiser, has been responsible for the design of a Tapestry which consists of 18 large and 2 small panels. Two other ladies interpreted the design onto the canvas and 100 volunteers - men and women, did the needlework! This has taken 13 years to complete working in two-hour shifts every day. It depicts the Heritage and Cultural Aspects of Hull and is on display at the Guildhall in Hull throughout the year. This would be well worth a visit if you live or are visiting the area!

SOUTH AND WEST YORKSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs June Pitts BEM

The Calderdale group have enjoyed three meetings at the Halifax Town Hall since the autumn report. At the September meeting we enjoyed a talk by a retired English Teacher who gave very amusing examples of poor grammar that he found whilst checking the boys homework. We were very careful of our diction when asking questions! The November meeting was of particular interest as we had Louise Heath, WRVS operations manager, S & W Yorkshire giving us up to date information regarding meals on wheels etc. The January meeting fell on a bank holiday so we arranged our annual lunch late in the month so we enjoyed an excellent meal at the Rams Head, Sowerby Bridge

The members of this group help to fill the rota for running the Kings Cross WRVS Luncheon Club, which has a membership of forty each week. They also support an afternoon club in Halifax where they have games, entertainers and speakers. A trip to York was organised by Mr & Mrs Ron Bunce for a fish and chip tea with a run through the North Yorkshire countryside. Sowerby Bridge club is supported by some of the group and will shortly be celebrating 55 years of clubbing

The members of Wakefield group have had successful meetings at the Salvation Army Citadel with very enjoyable lunches on alternate months at Wakefield College Catering School

And on the subject of food

A balanced diet is a cookie in each hand
I love cooking with wine. Sometimes I even put it in the food
Breakfast like a King, Lunch like a Prince, and Dine like a pauper

LEICESTERSHIRE, LINCOLNSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Joan Newman

Sheila Kent tells me that Leicestershire Branch is very sad to have lost their Chairman-Barbara Raven who died in October. Barbara had been a member since the last war and the Branch Chairman for over ten years. They have continued with regular coffee morning meetings each month when retired members enjoy the opportunity to meet with those who are still active. There have also been two successful luncheons when about sixty people attended.

In November their new Chairman, Merle Ellis accompanied Audrey Beeson and Doreen Roberts who received their Long Service Medals from the Lord Lieutenant, Lady Gretton in the delightful setting of Beaumanor Hall in Woodhouse. There were also nine other WRVS members who received their medals.

Barbara Kiernan writes for the Broxtowe group. We have missed Joan Newman, our Div. Rep. since her absence through illness. She attended our monthly meetings and Christmas lunches when possible, to speak to members and to give the latest WRVS information. Sadly, Ena Dunn, aged 92, collapsed at our coffee morning in October and died in hospital on the 20th Oct. Despite recent illness, she remained active in her church and community work, and is missed very much

Despite booking months ahead, a glitch on the part of the hotel meant that, with little notice, the day and date of our Christmas lunch had to be changed. However, 19 of us did enjoy lunch, which ended with great hilarity - and competition - over a quiz based on Christmas carols and distributed by Sadie.

Notice to quit due to the demolition of the building used for our meetings, meant a long search for a new venue, undertaken by our Treasurer, Barbara Wilson. Finding such a new home, in a suitable place and affordable rent, was not easy, but January saw us in a cosy room in a Beeston Methodist Church. Thanks are to Barbara and her husband for their diligent search and for transporting our crockery to the new kitchen. Our next committee meeting, held as always with great enjoyment at the home of our Chairman, Val Haigh, will decide on our programme for June 05 - Jan. 06

Pardon?

I think it must be true that marriage makes you deaf. Where you used to whisper sweet nothings, now you have to shout almost everything

YOU HAVE HELPED US, NOW LET US HELP YOU

As a Trustee of the **WRVS BENEVOLENT TRUST**, I am astonished how often I hear that **WRVS** volunteers 'know nothing about it' and 'have not ever heard of it'.

The Trust is a pool of money, intended for use by you, the WRVS volunteer.

If you find yourself in unexpected financial difficulties, or know of someone in that situation, you can make an application for a grant. We rarely give ongoing payments, but regularly make single one off grants. Recent examples include replacing a washing machine, buying replacement windows, installing a downstairs lavatory and the purchase of a wheelchair.

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

Requests for grants are reviewed three times a year, usually in March, July and November, though urgent applications will be considered immediately.

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.

Why is a Ship called a She?



She has a waist and stays
She is very often all decked out
There is usually a gang of men
about
She shows her topside and hides
her bottom
It takes a lot of paint to keep her
looking good
It takes an experienced man to
handle her correctly
When coming into port she heads
straight for the buoys
Because there is always a good deal
of bustle around her
Without a man at the helm she is
absolutely uncontrollable

Not sure that I agree with all of these!

NORTH WEST DIVISION

CUMBRIA AND LANCASHIRE - Div. Rep. Vacant

MERSEYSIDE AND CHESHIRE
Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Jones

I have continued to visit local groups and keep in touch by phone, and I have sent out questionnaires to the groups to collect memories of WWSIWRVS. I have had several responses so far including some photos, thank you ladies. In the last couple of months I have visited projects in Liverpool and Ellesmere Port to try and get groups started in those areas and will revisit to follow up the interest shown. Those who attended the AGM at Northampton in September had a very enjoyable weekend. See you in September.

Wallasey - We started off the year with our usual New Year lunch and AGM at Heatherlands Court in Barnston, 37 members attending. We had a very good lunch followed by a raffle and a sales table, which helped to increase our funds and enable us to send cheques to St John's Hospice and Claire House in Wirral. The Wallasey group continues to meet for monthly lunches and Bebington have their coffee mornings and regular meetings. We joined forces in September and enjoyed a lovely afternoon on the Trent and Mersey canal, concluding the day with a very good lunch at the Stanley Arms near Northwich. We had our usual Christmas lunch at the Old Wallaseans club, and again we were able to collect funds for charity. This was the last time we were able to enjoy the company of our chairman Mary Seed, sadly she died suddenly in December.

Wilmslow / Macclesfield - An active group with about 18 members attending each meeting. Thanks to Jenny Murphy, Mary Durston, Anne Ashmore who invited members to their homes for coffee mornings. The Christmas lunch was held at the Oakwood in Alderley Edge and was well attended - a good time was had by all. The summer lunch will be held in June. Sad to note that Alice Callaway, a long-standing member, died at the age of 92.

Nantwich - have regular coffee mornings 3 to 4 times a year, and also go out for lunch several times a year. These are well attended with lots to talk about. Welcome to new member Irene Moss.

Chester - Eleven members met for Christmas lunch and everyone had good fun. More people are attending the monthly lunches now including 2 new members - welcome ladies. The outing to Llandudno was a great success, and the shopping trip to Cheadle

St Helens - We had a wonderful day out in Chester where we were shown round the Cathedral by our guide Margaret, who explained and showed us everything. Then we had lunch in the refectory followed by a cruise on the river Dee. There was time for shopping or a stroll round the city before returning by minibus to St Helens. The Christmas lunch was held at the golf club - Sylvia Hatchell VCC, and Mary Jones (Div Rep) were invited to join us. Sadly we have to report the death of Nancy Peet - a long-standing local member.

Crosby - Another year has passed and inevitably we come to planning the new programme. This year the event is to be combined with a cake sale, hopefully whetting our appetites for great things to come. We have had some interesting meetings in the last 12 months, including a very lively and fiercely competitive quiz, and even though the referee's decision is final, HE WAS WRONG. I wasn't aware of the many and varied uses of lavender until a local company, Phytobotanica, came to our meeting. This is a family run farm, which has now changed from traditional crops to organic lavender, peppermint and chamomile. After a very informative talk, we all treated ourselves to some pampering beauty products. Our annual garden party started in a downpour and ended in a heat wave, English summers are so predictable! The Christmas lunch outing was held at a pleasant local hostelry. It was very enjoyable and we were entertained by another diner and his mobile phone! 6 calls during a one and half hour meal amazed us, but did not affect the good humour that characterises all our get togethers. We are looking forward with anticipation to our April meeting which will be an illustrated talk on the history of lingerie entitled "Naughty but Nice". Our guest speaker goes by the title of "The Knicker Lady", more on this next time. Until then I hope that all Association members have as much pleasure and fun as we in Crosby do.

MERSEYSIDE County Rep
Mrs D. Whittingham,

NORTH AND SOUTH MANCHESTER - No report
Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Matthews BEM

After the usual meat and potato pie lunch at the AGM, Bury members enjoyed a fascinating talk entitled 'The Secret Drawer'. The guest speaker had discovered, on the death of her in-laws, a locked drawer containing family records, letters and memorabilia dating from the mid 19th century. In the summer we were fortunate to have some gorgeous sunshine in Morecambe after having lunch at Overton near Sunderland Point - well known for Sambo's grave. Our autumn outing started at the Hat Works in Stockport, taking a magical journey revealing the art and mystery

a tour of the Pennine Edge across hillsides covered in bracken and purple heather and then finished the day at the Portland Basin. There we relaxed over a cup of tea in a pleasant cafe by the canal, after looking round the museum, which brought back many childhood memories. Finally in January we met again at the Red Hall Restaurant near Bury for a late Christmas Party.

At the meeting in April, members of the Sale club held a 'bring and buy' sale to raise funds to help pay for the hire of the meeting room. We raised over £40 and had a most enjoyable afternoon. In May we had a good laugh, testing our brains with a quiz. The outing in June was to Wyevale Nurseries, a very good venue with lots of plants for sale plus a good cafe. In July we had a strawberry tea, sang a few songs and played lotto. After the break in August, we discussed our future plans and how the summer had been for everyone. In October we had Musical Memories when Mrs Dyson came to sing songs of yesteryear to us, which were most enjoyable. In November Mrs Ledger from Hale WRVS came to talk to us about Mongolia - the people, dress, food, climate - what a different world it is from ours - very informative and interesting. Our Christmas lunch was again held at the Cresta Hotel in Altrincham where the food and company were excellent. We were delighted that Jean Matthews was able to join us as well as Joan Allmark from metropolitan days. We are looking forward to and hoping for a successful year in 2005.

STAFFORDSHIRE. SHROPSHIRE, DERBYSHIRE - Div. Rep. Vacant

DERBYSHIRE - County Rep
Doreen Martin,

We were unable to meet for our Christmas lunch owing to refurbishment at the hotel, and illness amongst members. However it is hoped that meetings can recommence soon and that a luncheon can be arranged shortly.

UPDATE ON THE JAPANESE BANKING CRISIS

The Origami Bank has folded
The Sumo Bank has gone belly up
The Bonsai Bank plans to cut back some of its branches
The Karaoke Bank is for sale and is apparently going for a song
The staff at the Karate Bank got the chop
Analysts report something fishy at the at the Sushi Bank, staff fear they may get a raw deal

SOUTH EAST DIVISION

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Barbara Titcomb

During the last six months Peterborough have had an outing to Sheringham and Cromer, enjoyed a tea in November that was prepared and served by our Member - Muriel Dickman and in December we had a very pleasant Christmas meal at a local pub. We had hoped for Peterborough Regional College but they were booked up from Day One! Our first meeting of this New Year coincided with the tea provided by WRVS members at Senior Stop for the local WRVS workers and we again enjoyed a lovely tea but only four of us were well enough to be there. One of our members living in a local nursing home - Edna Robinson - sadly passed away just before Christmas.

From Cambridge, Mrs Evelyn Charnley reports that the refurbishment of Victoria Homes Community Room was due to start in August 2004 so we had no meetings planned. However as there was no sign of builders by October, we held a coffee morning with video show of Old Cambridgeshire which was much enjoyed as so many of our members have lived here all their lives and remember the old places. Latest news on the refurbishment is that builders are due in January - but we shall see! There was a very successful lunch at Cambridge Regional College in November with thirty two members and friends - this is always a popular event as it is held in the city centre with good access and help for the disabled (a state in which so many of us find ourselves these days).

Best wishes are sent to Evelyn who has been in hospital for a knee replacement and is awaiting a call for the other knee to be operated on. We hope she will soon be fully mobile and without pain.

It would be nice to hear from any member in Northamptonshire. My phone number is

In the 60's, people took drugs to make the world weird.
Now the world is weird and people take Prozac to make it normal.

Even the 'young' film star Johnny Depp says that when you get to a certain age you talk about sleep in the same way you talked about intoxicants 25 years ago

OXFORDSHIRE, BEDFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Callaway

Bedfordshire say farewell to Mrs M. Mylchreest and Mrs D. (Ken) Clarke 101 years 349 days old. Ken had been a member of WRVS from 1969 and a member of the Association since 1989, when the Bedfordshire branch was formed.

Welcome to a brace of Pamela's. Mrs Pamela Darlington, one of the longest serving WRVS members in the county and Mrs Pamela Holley (Hospital Shop)

In September members enjoyed tea and cakes at the Bistro in Carlton run by the charity Emmaus. The Director gave a short talk on the charity's work with homeless people. There was time to wander round the shops displaying re-cycled furniture and electrical goods as well make some purchases from the attractive displays in the shop attached to the Bistro. Several members remembered working at the site when it was used as a WRVS Summer Camp.

In October there was a talk by Sally Sheard on her approach to Local History. This took the form of an exhaustive tour by slides of the village of Honeydon, where the Sheards have farmed for generations, and looked at changes in the use of land, buildings etc. over the centuries. It was a picture of great flexibility on the part of the rural population but had worrying implications for the future of farming in Bedfordshire. Interspersed were stories of long ago disputes and romances, including some lurid details of a mediaeval ancestor of mine, and his romantic escapades.

The Christmas buffet lunch was once again well supported, by which I mean that not only did over 60 attend, but they gave generous help, from providing attractive food to tackling the piles of washing-up

Buckinghamshire welcome Mrs Joan Murdy. As Joan lives so near the Bedfordshire borders she has been able to join Beds members for the tea at Emmaus and to bring husband Bill to the Christmas lunch, where both soon became very popular

The WRVS paper napkins finally reached Bedford via the Oxfordshire Fire Service. With many thanks they will be used at the lunch which precedes Bedfordshire's AGM

A music snob is someone who can listen to the William Tell Overture
and not think of the Lone Ranger and his sidekick Tonto

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK

Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Taylor

Autumn / Winter is a quiet time for most branches, especially North Norfolk as members are so wide spread weather conditions limit the social events that can be arranged. They did have a wonderful Christmas Luncheon at Virginia Court Hotel, Cromer, to which a number of members from Gt. Yarmouth joined them. A really delicious meal, very well organised, with the addition of gifts of Christmas puddings to really put all into the spirit of the season.

The branch at Great Yarmouth is very active. They had a visit to Kentwell Hall and Long Melford in September. Kentwell Hall is a beautiful moated Tudor house built by the Clopton family in the 1st half of the 16th Century Hall with gardens and working farm. It is still used as a family house to this day. During September they also visited Lavenham, a wonderful old village steeped in history. On this occasion they met with their neighbours from Suffolk, when members of Sudbury branch joined them for lunch. We were enthralled listening to Mrs. Gentry, aged 92 telling us how she was a member of the WVS when Lady Reading was organising. A remarkable lady and wonderful to listen to. October was the final luncheon of the year which 80 member attended. It was a memorable occasion as 2 members, Mrs Yvonne Cole and Mrs Rose Smith received their clips for 30 years service to the WRVS. They each are still active at 'The Sunshine Club' Ormesby, which meets alternate Monday afternoons. December the branch had their final outing of the year to Thursford Christmas Spectacular. A wonderful show, thoroughly enjoyed by members.

The editor had a separate note from Kathleen Paull saying that the return trip of the North Norfolk group to the gardens and maze at Beeston Regis was unfortunately washed out by the somewhat inclement weather on the day. (Not sure if this means that they went and got wet, or that they stayed home and stayed dry - Ed) Members from Great Yarmouth were welcomed to both the Spring and Christmas lunches, the latter being held at a new venue, Virginia Court in Cromer. The programme for 2005 is being planned with two special lunches and a theatre trip, as well as another outing. Congratulations to Shirley Meredith and Cecily Bobbitt who have both received WRVS long service medals. Well done!

If you love something, set it free. If it comes back, it will always be yours. If it doesn't come back, it was never yours to begin with. But, if it just sits in your living room, messes up your stuff, eats your food, uses your telephone, takes your money, and doesn't appear to realise that you had set it free.....You either married it or gave birth to it.

ESSEX AND HERTFORDSHIRE - Div. Rep Vacant

Hertfordshire County Rep
Mrs Gwen Rowley

The chairman at Southend on Sea Mrs. Bunny Tytherleigh MBE tells us that the last speaker for 2004 was a representative from the Essex Air Ambulance. She says that after they agreed to give the talk, the clubs members found friends and family to inflate their numbers. The crews are on duty day and night and the whole thing is run on voluntary contributions.

Sadly they can no longer afford the rent on the room that they have used for the last fifteen years so from now on the meetings will be at the chairman's home.

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

Mrs Joan Rosling,

In Surrey, Epsom members enjoyed a lunch in November and hope to re-start their six weekly lunches this month. Their leader, Audrey Broderick, has not been too well recently and we wish her a speedy recovery.

Guildford members again visited Squires Nurseries in September where some bought plants and we all had tea with a very large selection of delicious cakes. Early in December members enjoyed their annual Christmas lunch at Guildford College. Always a popular event cooked and served by the students.

Shirley Mason tells us that Woking branch had an enjoyable visit to the theatre in September and an excellent luncheon in November. We are sad to report the loss of Vera Hawkins who died on 18th October. Vera worked very hard for the branch and was Chairman for six years. We have also lost Winifred Robinson who, at 97, was our oldest member. A Naval nurse during the war she met her husband at the Naval hospital in Malta. She and her family came to live in Byfleet in 1955. A former Centre Organiser for Woking WRVS she started the Meals on Wheels deliveries in the borough and helped set up the Westgate Centre for the elderly, which ran until 1987. She served as President and Chairman of innumerable organisations and was named as Woking's Eminent Citizen of the year for 1987/88.

Julia Cooper of West Kent has sadly reported the death of six members recently, however, Mrs M. Calver from Rainham, Miss L. Cleaver from Orpington and Mrs L. Richie from Edenbridge have all joined, which is very good news.

At Eastbourne in East Sussex, Norah Alston has reluctantly closed the Eastbourne branch

other and to meet for coffee in the town from time to time. Before the group disbanded ten members enjoyed an outing with lunch to Hatfield in September and they held their annual pre-Christmas lunch at the Lansdown Hotel when twelve members were able to be present.

Although there are no Clubs or Groups in West Sussex we do have members and recently Mrs. Dicks of West Chilmington joined the Association. Welcome!

LONDON N.E. - No report

Div. Rep: Mrs W. Taylor OBE DL

LONDON N.W. - No report

Div. Rep. Mrs Dorothy Stevens

LONDON S.E. - No report

Div. Rep Mrs G Cleverly

LONDON S.W. - Div Rep Vacant

As we have no news from London this time, I am using the opportunity to include the information promised from issue 60 sent in by Dorothy Stevens

Pearly Kings and Queens are descended from the costermongers of the 18th century. The name costermonger is derived from the sellers of 'custard' apples and it eventually came to mean anyone selling on the streets of London. They sold originally from baskets, then barrows, then donkeys and carts. They were unlicensed and harassed by police and shop keepers alike, but were indispensable to the poor who could not afford shop prices

It was the Earl of Shaftsbury (well known for his help to the poor) who brought their plight to the government. He even bought himself a barrow and stood in the Borough selling vegetables. Licences were eventually granted by local town halls in the late 1800's, markets then sprung up all over London. There were no market superintendents then so they elected someone to look after their interests and in their cheeky cockney way, and their inherent love of Royalty, he was named the King of the Market. His wife became the Queen and any children, Princes and Princesses

They became a close-knit community and their main task was to look after their fellow costers. Because of their art of selling their goods they became adept at raising funds by holding Fetes, fairs and carnivals which gave them the opportunity to show off by dressing up during their work around London, they like Charles Dickens saw the squalor and

depravation in East and South London and this was the start of their charity work. All the money raised at these events went to helping the poor.

In 1862 a boy was born and sent to an orphanage, he was christened Henry Croft when he was old enough he was placed in the workhouse then at the age of 13 he left and got a job working for St Pancreas Councils a road sweeper and rat catcher. It was while doing this job that he came in contact with the costers he soon became friends and admired their way of life, community spirit and charity. He used to attend their fairs and help raise funds for the poor. His real ambition was to help those he had left behind in the orphanage and workhouse

When he came across some buttons that glimmered, he had the idea of putting them on an old suit in patterns. He had learnt to sew whilst in the workhouse. Down the trousers he sewed the buttons to read the messages 'help the poor' and 'pity the blind'. So almost by accident he had made the first Pearly Suit. He worked for the first time at a costers carnival and the outfit proved outstanding and helped him raise money for the orphanage and workhouse. Anyone called Henry is usually called Harry so the costers nicknamed him 'Flash Harry, the Pearly King'. Soon the costers decided to copy Henry's suit and differentiate themselves by putting the name of their market on their backs and changing their name from Coster Kings to Pearly Kings

Henry Croft spent fifty years raising funds for hospitals in the East End of London. He was made an honorary governor of two of them. When he died in 1930 he was still working as a street sweeper for St Pancreas and was found to be a pauper. The other Pearlys got together and paid for his funeral and the hospitals paid for a statue of him dressed in his pearly suit that is now in the crypt of St Martins in the Fields with the words 'The original Pearly King' inscribed. He started a wonderful London tradition but the costers started the charity

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

Div Rep Mrs Beryl Adams

Our summer get together was held in June when a large gathering of us met in a local community hall in Purbrook. We had not used it before but found it a very pleasant venue with plenty of parking. We arrived for 1.30pm for a Ploughman's Lunch, desert and wine provided by Mr & Mrs Harfield, two of our members. It was most delicious, beautifully laid out and wonderful value at only £3.00 each. After lunch we were entertained by Mr Brian Fletcher from the Hampshire Wildlife Trust with a talk and slides called 'Wildlife in a Hampshire Garden'. As well as pictures of birds, butterflies

and insects through the year, he told us of the best environment, flowers and weeds to grow that were beneficial to wild life and encouraged us to set up parts of our gardens to encourage them. We finished a most enjoyable afternoon with tea and biscuits, as well as our usual raffle and sales table. Now we just need the good weather for planting up our gardens

BERKSHIRE - Div. Rep. Vacant

Berkshire County Rep: - No report
Mrs Morag Gordon,

Mobile Phone Safety Tips

As so many of us have these today, even if only for emergencies, here are a few points you may not have thought of, both for safety and security

- If you do not use one regularly (and if you are not a teenager you probably do not) get one of the 'pay and go' phones. That way, as long as you only keep a minimum balance, no-one can run up a massive bill on your number if it is ever lost or stolen
- Find your IMEI number. This is a security number that can prove a phone belongs to you. It can easily be found by keying in the following symbols and writing down somewhere safe the figures that then appear on your phone

*** # 0 6 #**

- Mark your postcode on the phone and the battery with a UV pen
 - If you have to make a call when you are in a public place, see if you can find a CCTV camera and stand where it can see you
 - Remember that if ever you are threatened, hand the phone over without question and report the theft immediately
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- £ Why does a slight tax increase cost you two hundred pounds
 - £ and a substantial tax cut only save you thirty pounds?
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