



Spring 2009
Issue 70

ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Member

May I wish you a very belated Happy New Year. I hope not too many of you have been struck down with flu or coughs and colds over the winter.

I have been coughing hard since before Christmas and sound as if I have been smoking thick twist, which I can assure you is not the case, but I have taken antibiotics and am now very much better

Following a lengthy consultation, with Janet Turner QC, the WRVS Association now has a new Constitution. The original one, set up when we started back in the early 70's, was very open, and quite vague, so we now have a truly legal document. This was jointly signed by Ruth Markland, Chairman of WRVS, and myself at the AGM last September. We have enclosed a copy with this Newsletter. Please read it and keep it in a safe place.

If you have any amendments to propose, either on the Constitution or any other relevant matter to the Association, the York Office must receive these by August 2009 for them to be put forward at this year's AGM in September. Please write giving your name in Capital Letters, but also signed and dated. Only those attending the meeting are entitled to vote on any matter.

We had the first meeting of our newly constituted committee on Jan. 28th. This committee consists of myself as chairman, secretary Jean Pickard, treasurer Maureen Hudson, editor of the newsletter Paulene Lambert and two Association members Marilyn Openshaw and Eileen Burlingham. One of the many things discussed was concern about the lack of information we have about our members, particularly in regard to whether they were in groups or found themselves isolated. Please take a couple of minutes to complete and return the enclosed short questionnaire to us.

I think that is all I have to write this time. Take care of yourselves.

Sylvia Hatchell

WRVS Association - Linking the Past and Present

Random jottings from the Editor

Dear Members

I have to start with an apology. On page 22 of the last Newsletter there was an article about the dangers of certain lipsticks. Well I was taken to task by a couple of readers and therefore ignored the (normally reliable) source that had sent it to me and searched the Internet for clarification. The Cancer Research site confirms that this was a hoax of a couple of years ago, and ties in with claims that shampoo, washing up liquid and deodorant are all causers of cancer. This is an urban myth and none of it is true



You will find later in the Newsletter (page 11) an article by Matthew McMurray in which he asks if anyone has any old editions of this publication that they no longer want. It set me wondering about the number I have been involved with and as 58 was my first and this is now 70, then at two a year I have been at it for 6 years already!

I felt the need to share with you one of the bits of 'General Knowledge Trivia' that was actually in my Cracker at Christmas. It asked, 'Which country gives London a Christmas Tree every year?' The answer it gave was Germany! Talk about making my blood boil. The sad thing is that anyone who does not know why we are given the tree will take it as fact see page 23

The grapevine told me that WRVS Research Manager Namita Srivastava was looking for some older people who are ready to voice their opinions on how they can improve service users' involvement in the development of WRVS services. This was far too good an opportunity to miss. As I am now older (got the bus pass last year) and realizing that in time I would be one of the users of the service, I put my name forward and will be going along to the first meeting that is being held in London. Ready to voice an opinion? You bet I am, and with each and every one of you in mind!

I did have some George Bush isms as the fillers for this newsletter, but having to be totally PC (politically correct – not a constable of the law) have left them out!

Best wishes to you all

Paulene

Paulene Lambert

CHANNEL ISLANDS

JERSEY

Ass. Rep. Mrs Jill O'Byrne

We lunched together twice during 2008. First at the home of Mrs Broughton who absolutely refuses any offers of help and provides a very tasty meal for us all. Then our Christmas lunch at a newly renovated restaurant, which we pronounced very satisfactory as regards choice and décor. Also a reasonable car park!

However the year was very sad for us as it saw the end of the WRVS operating in Jersey. This involved a formal visit to the Royal Court by our solicitor, necessary because the WRVS had originally had to be incorporated there. This is undoubtedly very different to the rest of the UK!

Lack of new volunteers and the age of the members had led to the cutting down of services and ended with the shutting down of the shop. Mrs Broughton however continues to run the hospital car service, which has got much smaller since its heyday when there were 150 drivers. A local archivist came and chose some of our records and a sample uniform was given to the local museum. There were two coffee mornings with members of the WRVS discussing the closing down operation, and ending with a presentation of cheques to three local charities to finalise business. It was a very sad day

GUERNSEY

Ass. Rep. Mrs Margaret Chilcott

Margaret offers apologies for not contributing to recent Newsletters. She say her group seems to do so little, just having two lunches a year that it appears to say the same thing in different ways. They meet in April and November and enjoy the opportunity to have a chat with members that perhaps they only see at those times. The big regret is that there are fewer members at each lunch, which apart from getting older and more infirm, is because they have other commitments that fall on the same day. The next lunch is 7th April at La Villette Hotel. Then something to look forward to is a visit to Barbara Gaige's home when we have all been invited to have tea in her lovely garden on 24th June.

It is bitterly cold here in Guernsey. Although sunny on the day I write there are very strong winds and the headland where I live seems to have no protection from them. I can't wait for the weather to change to nice warm sunny days and walks on our lovely cliff paths. It makes one feel better just thinking about it

NORTH EAST DIVISION

NORTHUMBERLAND, TYNE & WEAR

Div. Rep. Mrs Sheila McCormack BEM

It was a great pleasure to join Northumberland members at their Christmas Lunch in November. Although few in number they continue to meet monthly for coffee in each other's homes.

Sarah Hardy MBE reports for the Sunderland Group. There was no meeting in August, so when we met in September there was plenty of chatter which soon stopped when our speaker Mr P Curtis began his slide show and talk on Old Sunderland. Everyone enjoyed it so much that he is returning later this year with another selection of slides. In October we had a wonderful display of chocolates from Thornton's. Beverley gave a detailed talk on the Christmas specialities and then we were able to buy. As usual we had our Christmas Buffet lunch in November catered for us by Serve-U-Well, accompanied by wine and ending with a delicious selection of Sainsburys Mini Cakes. In December we celebrated the coming of the New Year with Sherry, Mince Pies and chat. The meeting in January was the AGM and as there was little business we ended the evening with more chatter. There was a lot of talk of the past and everyone went home smiling and looking forward to the next meeting

CLEVELAND, DARLINGTON, DURHAM, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Ros Rowntree

The Hartlepool Branch report which came from chairman Mrs Edith Stamp states that since starting in 1986 they continue to meet monthly on a Tuesday mornings. Health and poor weather can restrict their numbers but they usually welcome between 18 - 20 members per meeting. They have enjoyed talks on holidays taken in New Zealand and the Antarctic - both were very interesting and accompanied with slides. They also had a quiz and Paper games morning making a nice change. The weather was very kind when they enjoyed an outing to Hexham, taking in the Garden Centre at Morpeth. In November they all met up at a local hotel for Afternoon Tea and a chat. Preparations are being made for the Annual January Luncheon when they hope Ros and William will join them.

Scarborough Branch has had a varied programme of events since the summer break organised by chairman Mrs Christine Hepworth. In September 22 members and friends went to Burton Agnes Hall and enjoyed a tour of the house with an excellent guide followed by good food in the cafe. Unfortunately the

enjoyment of the gardens and grounds was spoilt by continual rain. In October members were given an interesting talk on gemstones and the care of jewellery. Over forty members attended the November Lunch at the Everly Hotel, Hackness where they had a excellent meal on a beautiful Autumn Day. In December, on a day with plenty of snow an ice, 29 members managed to arrive at the Irton Garden Centre for coffee and scones and to see the Christmas gifts and decorations and do a little shopping. The AGM was held in January followed by coffee and cakes.

The report from the York Branch comes from chairman Mrs Millie Wilks and she says - we were sad to hear the news before Christmas that Mrs Anne Jamieson had died. She was involved in several WRVS activities but spent her latter years in a York nursing home. Twenty two members attended a very enjoyable Christmas lunch at the Blakeney Hotel in mid-December. We were pleased to welcome Ros Rowntree, our Divisional Representative but unfortunately our President Ness Venables was unable to be with us as she had broken her ankle in a fall. At the time of writing she was making progress but slowly. We wish her a full recovery. We have between 20 and 25 members attending our twice yearly meetings and are managing very well in the smaller room which we began to use last year.

EAST YORKSHIRE TO HUMBER AND HULL
Div. Rep. Mrs Robina Priestley

First I must apologise for not submitting a report last time. In doing so I failed to report the Diamond Wedding of Barbara and Steve Gillard. Barbara was for several years the County Organiser for East Yorkshire and since her retirement has contributed greatly to organising Association activities throughout the county. I know she and Steve had a wonderful anniversary and we all send them our congratulations. More recently there has been another celebratory event with Miss Phylis Clarke from Bridlington achieving her 100th birthday. She was with us for our Christmas lunch and on her birthday she had a celebration party for friends representing all the activities with which she had been connected throughout her life. All our good wishes are sent to her.

We had two Christmas lunches - one at each end of the County, which meant that one was close enough for all those who wished to attend. Of course there were those of us who did attend both! The Quiz, 'Plant Poser' had two winners, Margaret Neave and Eve Alderidge. Well done both of you as there were a couple of tricky questions. We have not had any new members this year but nor have we lost any. The regular people coming to the monthly lunches enjoy the social contact and there is much mutual support between members which is lovely to see

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

Mrs Gillian Highley MBE writes that they seem to have lost touch with June Pitts but know that she is not well and would like to send her our Best Wishes.

Calderdale continues to have bi-monthly meetings which are well attended with around 16 members each meeting. We usually have a speaker, ably found for us by one of our male members Norman Tatham. In November we used our meeting to help our local Emergency Services Organiser, Julian Dearden to gather the present members of the ES team. Julian brought us up to date with the latest developments and told us how active WRVS had been during the floods in January in different parts of the Country.

Once again we organised a coach outing for members of the Coffee/lunch Club. This was organised by Ron Bunce our second male member who planned a route taking in Lancashire and Morecambe. Lunch was organised and as always finished with a visit to an Ice Cream Farm where there is a choice of at least 30 varieties of ice cream. At another of our meetings the Halifax Ambassadors explained their role in the Town Centre where they help the general public with information and have helped to reduce crime by their presence.

In November we organised an Afternoon Tea and Entertainment for the Elderly, which was very well attended and has now become an Annual Event. The Centre where we meet organised a Christmas Tree Festival and we joined in, decorating our tree with WRVS colours and badges. One of our members knitted around 30 baubles of different shapes all in purple and orange. The whole affair made a good start to the Christmas season.

We were delighted to see one of our members Kathleen Robinson; featured in WRVS Action Magazine with the beautifully decorated cake made to celebrate 70 years of WRVS. The cake was decorated with past and present WRVS badges.

We started the 2009 with our now annual visit to a local Fish and Chip Restaurant. This is always very popular and a good opportunity to collect the subscriptions.

Drugs Intelligence

Allegedly a recent Intel Bulletin from Yorkshire Police regarding Ecstasy tablets. It has been found that users are getting the tablets and grinding them down to a fine powder, placing it onto tin foil and heating it until the powder turns liquid. It is then injected in the area just below the bottom front teeth. It's called E-Bye-Gum

LEICESTERSHIRE, LINCOLNSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Div. Reps, Jenny and Mike Smith

All the reports from this Division came independently as both Mike and Jenny are unwell. All wished them both well with high hopes of continued improvement. All your friends in the Association are thinking of you both at this time and send heartfelt good wishes to Jenny, Mike and their family.

Sheila Kent sends an update from Leicester. She says there is little to report although as a group they continue to meet for Coffee Mornings once a month. It goes without saying that a lot of 'chat' also ensues. Peter Griffin supplied the Home Made Mince Pies for the December meeting – always the best! As a group they also meet three times a year for lunch at the Leicester College of Catering. They have lost one of their long serving members, Mary Russell BEM, who was awarded the medal for services to WRVS. She was secretary of the Leicester office and then Secretary of the Association branch until 2005. They will miss Mary very much; she was a very loyal and hard working member, loved by all

Secretary Jean Heason sends the Half Yearly Report for Bassetlaw Branch and starts by wishing a Happy New Year to everyone. It doesn't seem long since our last report was sent in, but we have managed to keep busy and enjoy ourselves at the same time. In August we had our annual Buffet Lunch, everyone enjoyed themselves and fortunately the weather was good, so we were able to sit in the garden. In October we had entertainers at our usual meeting, playing and singing all the old favourites, it was a very pleasant afternoon. December we had our usual Christmas lunch that everyone enjoyed. We're looking forward to arranging our 2009 programme and hope that our AGM in February brings forth new members for our committee.

Sheila Court writes from Rushcliffe. On September 10th we held our celebration for the 70th Anniversary of WVS/WRVS, we were unable to have it on the designated date but were also puzzled why someone had chosen American Independence day anyway. It was a much smaller affair compared with the 50th and 60th anniversaries, a tea party at my home when fortunately the weather was kind to us. Our guests were Div Reps Jenny and Mike Smith, and Sue Stoakes, former Nottinghamshire County Organiser and now Deputy Vice Chairman. Sue asked the members about their work and added up the years coming to an amazing total of over 600 years between the 18 members who were there. All the food was prepared by the committee members, and dated from 1938 to 2008 We had champagne for a toast with the wonderful cake made by the daughter of a member who joined WVS with her mother as a teenager. Eight members were unable to attend so cake was taken to all of them during the following few days.

In October Mrs. Sheila Rosen gave a talk about 'The Jewish Calendar Girls'. No not a strip show, this was about the celebrations held during the Jewish year, the food, its preparation and the symbolic pieces on the table. All very interesting but entailing a lot of work. November was a coffee and chat morning and December saw 19 of us at our Christmas lunch. To end this six months period, January was another coffee and chat morning.

We have heard from her daughter Suzette Walker that Mrs D Thomas of Leicester passed away last April aged 91. She says that she is proud of her Mum's service with the WRVS - she received a long service medal and I have various awards, medal and ribbons still. She enthusiastically worked at the Baby Clinic, Mobile Library and other needful causes into her late eighties; in fact she was quite upset at being stopped from helping with the Library due to her age being discovered. I thought you might like to hear this as such workers must surely be highly valued in your organisation and much missed on their demise.

SOME GOOD NEWS - SOMETHING FREE

A scheme that was launched by the government in October 2004 allows all British Citizens who were born on or before 2nd September 1929 to claim a free passport, which usually costs £72. For more information about how to apply for a passport contact the Identity and Passport Service on 08 705 210 410 or visit www.ips.gov.uk

This was announced by David Blunkett, when he was Home Secretary. It means that Britain's wartime generation receive free passports in recognition of the sacrifices made by World War II veterans and civilians,

Many veterans received free one-year passports to enable them to revisit battlefields in the 60th anniversary year of the D-Day landings. It was then announced that this would be extended to cover everyone that played a part in the war effort, who will now receive free passports for life.

My wife and I were sitting at a table at my school reunion, and I kept staring at a drunken lady swigging her drink as she sat alone at a nearby table. My wife asked, 'Do you know her?' 'Yes,' I sighed, 'She is my old girlfriend. I understand she took to drinking right after we split up those many years ago, and I hear she hasn't been sober since.'

My goodness' said my wife, 'who would think a person could go on celebrating that long?'

NORTH WEST DIVISION

MERSEYSIDE AND CHESHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Sylvia Hatchell

During Sylvia Hatchell's term as Chairman, Mary Jones was pleased to return as Div Rep for Merseyside and sends this report

Wirral branch has continued to go from strength to strength with several new members. Mrs Eleanor Draper was presented with her long service award at the August lunch. The Christmas lunch was very enjoyable with almost all members present.

Crosby branch held a 'Balloon Debate' that was very lively with much discussion about who to save from being ejected - the choices being Kitty Wilkinson, Florence Nightingale, Marie Stopes and Mrs Pankhurst. Kitty Wilkinson was eventually chosen as a stalwart champion of women in early 19th century Liverpool and therefore the forerunner of the others.

My spell as Merseyside Div Rep has been short as Diane Smith is now taking over, while I become Div Rep for Lancashire.

Lancashire As yet I have not met any of the Lancashire groups but I hope to do so soon. There have been several new members joining and the Association is healthy in the county

Liverpool members are mourning the death in August 2008 of Barbara McKeand BEM. Barbara was originally a Clothing Organiser in the old Liverpool Clothing Store in Copperas Hill, then she was Liverpool Metropolitan Organiser for many years and was also a past Chairman of Warriston Residential Home in Aigburth. She joined the Association in May 1990.

NORTH AND SOUTH MANCHESTER

Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Matthews BEM

After not seeing much sunshine during the summer months, the Bury Group were very thankful to have a glorious day for the October outing. We left Bury at 10am and headed for the historic market town of Kirkby Lonsdale, which nestles beside the River Lune. Our journey to this handsome and unspoilt town took us through the fringes of the Yorkshire Dales, the Lake District National Park and Bowland.

There were plenty of nice places to have our morning coffee break, everyone enjoyed strolling round the outdoor market in the Square, and making mouth watering purchases from the "home made" stalls. A short run through the idyllic Lune Valley, which incidentally provided inspiration to such artists as Constable and Turner, took us to the Wheatsheaf Hotel at Ingleton for lunch where we were offered the largest portions ever!! A visit to the Jumpers Mill Shop and then to Country Harvest, where there were lots of goodies and a wide range of quality gifts for all occasions, finished off the day perfectly.

On 20th January, twenty four members enjoyed their 'Christmas' lunch again at Park Farm - this venue is ideally situated for the members who use public transport and there is also the advantage of a large free car park.

Congratulations and a basket of flowers have been sent to Elsie Mahon on the occasion of her 90th birthday at Christmas.

We were all saddened by the unexpected death on Boxing Day of Jean Lancaster who had been a popular organiser of the WRVS refreshment bars at Bury General Hospital for over nine years before becoming an enthusiastic member of the Association. Also we recently heard of the unexpected death of Dorothy Martin who was also a very well respected member of WRVS for many years and then the Association.

Our sincere thanks go to Rose Walsh for continuing to hold the monthly coffee mornings in her home for the Prestwich members. Everyone looks forward to these meetings that are much enjoyed.

We are equally indebted to Rosemary Cooper for continuing through another year as co-ordinator of the Sale Group and I would like to thank the members who take turns to provide the hospitality for their coffee mornings that take place on the 4th Monday of each month. Congratulations and best wishes were also sent to Marjorie Hillman who celebrated her 90th birthday in January. We were all delighted to hear that Marjorie was presented with her Long Service Medal last year, long overdue.

Thank you to Rosemary for organising a very successful lunch at the Hare and Hounds in Timperley just before Christmas. Joan Allmark and I were delighted to be invited again and so enjoyed meeting the Sale Members. We were very sorry to hear that due to family commitments Rosemary could no longer continue to act as Co-ordinator of the group but we are grateful to Joan Allmark for taking on this responsibility for the time being.

The National AGM and Re-volunt last September proved to be a wonderful weekend in Maidenhead/Windsor. The hotel was excellent and the afternoon trip to Windsor in beautiful weather was so memorable. Many thanks from Ken and myself to all concerned in its organisation. It was a great pity that more members did not come along to enjoy the warm friendship and experience the thoroughly good time we all had there.

WRVS ARCHIVES - NOW THE WRVS ARCHIVE & HERITAGE COLLECTION

Back in the summer of last year I was invited to give a short presentation about the WRVS Archive & Heritage Collection to those members who attended the Association AGM in Maidenhead

With the help of the Archive Support Group (ASG), on which you are now represented by your Chairman Sylvia Hatchell, alongside managerial support from within WRVS, I have managed to make great strides in both beginning to properly manage the collection and raise the profile and highlight the importance of the nationally important material we hold, both to WRVS and the wider public.

In May last year WRVS leased space in a building in Devizes, Wiltshire to better house the half of the archive which was moved to temporary self storage following the closure of the Archive & Heritage Collection's previous home in Compton. The storage facility in Devizes is also the home of the new Archive & Heritage Collection project to sort and list the vast number of boxes holding our materials, supervised by myself and staffed by volunteers. The project has been running since May last year and has so far listed the contents of over 300 storage boxes of material.

Most of the boxes are from the offices that closed in the 1990's including about 200,000 old members' record cards. There is also material from our old HQ in London, such as old WVS training and promotional film reels, lists of the Hungarian refugees we helped in 1956 and audio recordings of some of Lady Reading's speeches on LPs. We also have material from the Association including a reel-to-reel tape recording of one of the AGM's from the 70's. One thing we do not have is a full set of Association Newsletters and if anyone has any back issues that they do not want I would very much appreciate it if you could let me know. In particular, Issue 1, 1974; Issue 31, May 1990; Issue 32, Also 1990; Issue 37 Autumn 1992 and Issues 46-67

In March this year WRVS will be launching an appeal to raise some money to help me, and the volunteers, accomplish the next stage of our project. This is to get the Archive & Heritage Collection ready to support celebrations of the 75th Anniversary of WVS / WRVS in 2013. In the summer we hope to start properly cataloguing the collection, for which we need some expensive computer software, and storing everything in special packaging so that it will be protected from any serious deterioration. The work we are doing now will secure the future of the collection and make sure it is still around in hundreds of year's time.

Matthew McMurray BA (Hons) MA. WRVS Archivist
Garden House, Milton Hill, Steventon, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6AD

SOUTH EAST DIVISION

NORFOLK

Many thanks to Mrs M Harris from the North Norfolk branch for this report. They met at Jane Bowdens for coffee and the members spent a very pleasant morning catching up with each other. Christmas lunch was at the Cliftonville Hotel, Cromer where they met up with members of the Great Yarmouth branch

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Div. Rep. Vacant

Brenda Smith writes from Rushden that early in December members from their club, which now includes Raunds, met for Christmas Lunch at Rushden Golf Club, a meal that was greatly enjoyed by all who attended. She says that on a lighter note, the change of desert from trifle caused much jovial comment and a return to the same was promised for next year. *(Sadly, she has not told us what the change was or why it was so funny, so we just have to guess - Ed)*

In 2009 we have been offered venues for a Coffee Morning in the spring and Afternoon Tea in the summer. A vote of thanks was given to Chris Carter for organising these events

OXFORDSHIRE, BEDFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Callaway

Best Wishes for 2009 to Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. Sadly there is nothing to report from these counties.

Bedfordshire The Autumn programme began with a talk 'Nowt so Queer as Folk' by Mrs Jenny Clifford. It proved to be amusing insight into the way individual characteristics can be deduced from our bone structure and from individual responses to a request for designs based on simple shapes - circle, straight line etc. Not every member of the audience agreed with the verdicts given on their own personalities, but friends usually thought the same comments very perceptive.

Shortly before the Christmas Lunch Barbara Statham, Bedford representative, fell and dislocated her hip. She was very worried that plans for the lunch would be affected, however, with her trusty telephone in hand, supported by super husband Jack and backed by all members of the committee she went on with the plans.

Treasurer, Sheila Wilson, lead the troops on the day. Members rated it one of the best lunches ever.

As in other years, I was given plants to take to members who had not been well enough to attend the lunch. This is an enjoyable prelude to Christmas that I recommend to other members

ESSEX AND HERTFORDSHIRE

Div. Rep. Vacant

Hertfordshire County Rep.
Mrs Gwen Rowley,

SURREY, KENT, SUSSEX

Div Rep Mrs Joan Rosling,

There is very little to report this time. Guildford appears to be the only 'club' in this Division that meet anymore. They had a tea in September to celebrate the 70th Birthday of WRVS. This was held at Clandon Park Garden Centre where we have been several times over the years. As ever the tea and homemade cakes and scones were excellent and members were able to shop in the Garden Centre afterwards. Always an added bonus.

In December members met for their annual Christmas lunch. We did not go to the local technical College this year, due to booking problems, but went instead to the more commercial 'Parkway'. However, the food was not as good and the service was slower. But at least there were plenty of parking spaces near the entrance, this is very important, as so many members need lifts these days

Finally, I have to say that the annual Reunion in September was most enjoyable. Sadly we were a very select few but the hotel in Maidenhead was very good. The weather was warm and sunny and the hotel was only forty minutes drive from home for me!

LONDON S.W.

Div. Rep. Vacant

We have heard from her daughter Sue Adams that Doreen Edwards, who worked for many, many years with the WRVS, passed away last July. She lived in Pinner, Middlesex. *Sadly we only usually get to hear of the passing of some people when the Newsletter gets returned unopened to the office*

LONDON N.E. and City

Div. Rep. Mrs Win Taylor OBE DL

There is as always very little to say these days. I still send a Christmas message to all my members, only about 20 these days, but there was little response. Those who did write asked to be remembered to others, as it is unlikely that here will be another reunion in the area, so I have to mention Sally Gross, Audrey Keough and Etta Palmer. We have a new signatory on the bank account following the death of Marjorie Stagg, so thank you to Pam Lilley. It is nice to remember Ava Christophersen as well, who is in a nursing home in St George Square, London.

Some Food Facts from the 1500's

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the Upper Crust.

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could bring home the bacon. They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and chew the fat.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning deaths. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Almost a BLT here! Ed

IN MEMORIAM

The Legacy Team at WRVS have passed on a donation of £234 to the WRVS Association from a funeral collection of an ex-volunteer, Eva Court of Maidstone, Kent. We are grateful to the legacy team for considering us and helping to boost our much needed funds

It is wonderful when someone can be remembered this way. Should you want to make a bequest in your will or specify that a collection is made, please indicate whether you want the funds to go to the WRVS, the WRVS Association or the WRVS Benevolent Trust, whose message can be found on page 19.

London N.W.
Div. Rep. Vacant

MEMORIES OF DOROTHY STEVENS FROM JEAN MATTHEWS

Last May, Ken and I were deeply saddened to hear of the death of Dorothy, a true and dear friend for many years. I first met Dorothy in 1997 at the National AGM and Re-union, which was held that year in The Great Hall, St Bartholomew's Hospital, London. I was a complete stranger in the group that day but her warm sincere welcome encouraged me to become more involved in the Association and the following year I was appointed as the Divisional Representative for Greater Manchester. I often stayed in London with our elder daughter who, at that time, was living near Crystal Palace and it was convenient for me to call in the new Association office at Stockwell for advice. Dorothy's enthusiasm for WVS, WRVS and the Association was apparent to all who met her and she would travel several days each week from Pinner in Middlesex to carry out her duties as Hon. Secretary of the Association. I also regularly met Mary Davies, Hon. Treasurer, and Ava Christophersen who assisted Dorothy in the office and our friendship moved on from sharing a pot of tea in the office to meeting and enjoying a meal together in Victoria, London.

Many people held Dorothy in high esteem and she was very touched when the late Kathleen Halpin bequeathed Lady Reading's fountain pen to her in recognition of her commitment to WRVS. The pen was later donated by Dorothy to the Archives Department shortly before her death. Dorothy will be sadly missed by all her WRVS friends.

MEMORIES OF DOROTHY STEVENS FROM WIN TAYLOR

I first met Dorothy Stevens in 1996 at 151 Clapham Road, Stockwell. This was where the WRVS Association had moved offices after the WRVS Head Office had gone to Milton Hill. Following the death of Mrs. Maisey, BEM., Dorothy became the Hon. Sec. of the WRVS Association. Immediately one met Dorothy one realised that she was an energetic, loyal member of the Association and learned that she had been a very active member of the WRVS in the Harrow area of London.

Each year Dorothy made arrangements for the AGM and Reunion of London members at a church hall in Westminster, where an emergency team provided refreshments. The AGM's /Re-unions were always cheery and well attended events. The Association Chairman was invited and a Bring and Buy Sale was held, the proceeds of which was divided between London Divisional members. In October 2002, the Pearl Anniversary of the Association, she invited some of the Pearly Kings and Queens of London to attend. It was a very special meeting. In

addition, Dorothy arranged afternoon teas for her own local members, sometimes in her own garden and once at the Savoy Hotel. The proceeds were always for a local hospice

Occasionally we met to discuss London Association matters and it became clear that due to the closure of London offices and projects the member numbers had sadly declined. This was a great sadness to Dorothy as she always had the interests of the Association at heart. Despite circulating members no further re-unions took place mainly owing to the inability of members to travel. However, she still kept in touch with most of them. Dorothy experienced several periods of ill health but this did not prevent her from remaining active and did not blunt her enthusiasm. She was an active member of a local parish and, as a good needlewoman, was able to produce, at the age of 92 years, vestments and altar coverings for the church. She made a little cushion for me, which despite its age is still treasured. She was a good and loyal friend to many with whom she had served and kept in touch regularly with Ava Christophersen, another excellent London Association member. From our first meeting until her death in May last year, Dorothy remained a good friend.

MEMORIES OF DOROTHY STEVENS FROM SHEILA MCCORMACK

I was sad to read about Dorothy in the last newsletter. Apart from her responsibilities as Div Rep for London NW, she was a long term volunteer in the Association office when it was in Brixton, which is where I first met her. After Mrs Daphne Massey's death in 1998, she took over the duties of Hon Secretary. During my term of office as Chairman of the Association, Dorothy was an invaluable source of information and support, particularly when the office moved to Clapham Road in 1977. She received her long term medal in 1999. When Mrs Kathleen Halpin (a founder member of the Association) died, she left to Dorothy a gold pen which had belonged to lady Reading. Dorothy generously gave it to the museum set up in Milton Hill, where it has joined other memorabilia of Lady Reading's life. Dorothy continued to attend Div Rep meetings in York until she found the journey too onerous. I am sure all those who knew her will remember her with affection

Apparently a TRUE STORY: Outside Bristol Zoo there is a car park where cars and coaches can park. There was also a nice bloke with a hat and ticket machine charging cars £1 and coaches £5. This parking attendant worked there for about 25 years, then one day didn't turn up for work...Ho hum say Bristol Zoo management- Better phone up Bristol City Council and get them to send a new parking attendant.....Err no say the Council...That car park is your responsibility...Err no say Bristol Zoo the attendant was employed by you wasn't he....Err NO!!!! Sitting in his villa in Spain is a bloke who had been taking the car park takings for Bristol Zoo for the last 25 years.

LONDON S.E. No REPORT

Div. Rep. Mrs G Cleverly

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

Div. Rep. Mrs Beryl Adams

We have had two events during autumn. In September we all met up at Staunton Country Park near Havant. This is a lovely place with lots of space for lots of different animals. The weather was fine for us and it was a beautiful time of the year to wander leisurely around, especially to watch the children reacting as they approached the animals. We finished at 3.30 for tea, when there were lots of homemade cakes and scones; we were even invited to take some home. In October we met again for a 'Bring and Share Tea' in Deverell Hall in Purbrook, with drinks provided by the committee. This was a marvellous occasion to catch up on news and events and to chat with our friends. As well as the sales table there was the usual raffle and no one went away empty handed. We are all now looking forward to the spring, hopefully some sunshine, and our Annual Lunch

BERKSHIRE

Div. Rep. Vacant

Berkshire County Rep
Mrs Morag Gordon,

What Do Retired People Do All Day?

Working people frequently ask retired people what they do to make their days interesting. Well, for example, the other day my wife and I went into town and went into a shop. We were only in there for about 5 minutes. When we came out, there was a Traffic Warden writing out a parking ticket. We went up to him and said, 'Come on man, how about giving a senior citizen a break?' He ignored us and continued writing the ticket. I called him a rude name. He glared at me and started writing another ticket for having worn tyres. So my wife called him a rude name. He finished the second ticket and put it on the windshield with the first. Then he started writing a third ticket. This went on for about twenty minutes. The more we abused him, the more tickets he wrote.

Personally, we didn't care. We came into town using our free bus passes, but we try to have a little fun each day now that we're retired. It's important at our age.

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment and Publicity Officer Lily Carling, is working very hard to recruit new members to our Association, as without them we shall not survive. Recently there was an Open Day in Scarborough and she gives the following report

There was a modest turnout for the Open Day but this was to be expected. Not only was the venue (the MOW depot) on an industrial estate, but the rain poured down the whole time. Nevertheless, the aims of the meeting were met and there was a lot of enthusiasm for what was proposed.

Those attending included both past and present volunteers, some of whom were unaware of the Association and so were then either recruited or given details on how to join. All the project leaders had been approached beforehand and to their credit all of them were there, some to meet their opposite numbers for the first time. It was here I feel that most progress was made. Not only did they realise that they could work together to recruit across various projects, but they were quick to pick up on the benefits of being able to offer membership of the Association to their volunteers. It was generally agreed that the appeal of a strong social connection had to be worthwhile as many units had little or no contact with other WRVS projects. All took application forms.

Since all the project leaders were happy to be involved once the advantages to them were explained, this method could be used to recruit wherever WRVS is active. But the approach will have to come from us in the Association since many working within WRVS still don't know the Association exists!

Those places where WRVS no longer has a presence will need a different approach. The areas to target will need to be chosen with care. The press will need to be involved more and much will depend on the commitment of group leaders and others, but it should be possible for me to draft something by way of a standard article that could be used wherever it is thought worthwhile.

Lily Carling - Recruitment \ Publicity

Chairman Sylvia Hatchell has added the following. I would beg you all to consider yourselves as part of this campaign. If we all recruited just one new member think of the difference that would make to our membership. Remember the criteria for joining is membership past or present of WRVS. Men and women, active or retired, staff member or volunteer are all very welcome.

I joined a health club last year and it cost me £300.
I haven't lost a pound, as apparently you have to go there.

ARE YOU IN NEED OF FINANCIAL HELP?

The WRVS Benevolent Trust holds funds, for use by you, the WRVS member. It is managed by up to nine trustees, all of who have been volunteers like you.



Trustees, (L-R)
Shelagh Murray,
Pat Copping,
Lynne Rawlings,
Chairman Alice
Cleland CBE,
seated,
Douglas Frost,
Carol Milford

Caroline Naylor on
holiday and Paulene
Lambert behind the
camera

There are three meetings a year of the Benevolent Trust. In the past all applications were heard at these meetings but in this electronic age, most are now dealt with by email

So if you find yourself in unexpected financial difficulties, or know of someone in that situation, you can make an application for a grant.

We never just give money, but regularly make single one off grants for something specific. Recent examples include installing a downstairs lavatory, replacing carpet after flooding, emergency dental work, and the purchase of a wheelchair.

Applicants can be retired or still volunteering, and are usually on a limited income

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.

YOU HAVE HELPED US, NOW LET US HELP YOU

In Old English pubs, ale was ordered in either pints or quarts. So when customers got unruly, the landlord would advise them to mind their pints and quarts and settle down. It's where we get the phrase 'mind your P's and Q's'

SOUTH WEST DIVISION

SOMERSET AND AVON

Div. Rep. Mrs Sheila Scholey

I do hope most of you have kept healthy and not succumbed to the 'flu, as I did! Here in Somerset Christmas season was celebrated early with a Carol Service held in Clevedon, under the capable running of Ruth Weaver, who is on the Emergency Team in this part of the World. I am still hoping to hold a social occasion in my Area - but no joy so far. Keep well. Look after yourselves.

THE SHIRE COUNTIES OF GLOUCESTER, HEREFORD, WARWICK, WORCESTER

Div. Rep. Vacant

Jean Connop from the Cheltenham Group phoned the WRVS Association office in York over something else and asked them to tell me that all she had to report was they had a pub lunch in November, which was very enjoyable and will be meeting again in April.

DORSET & WILTSHIRE; DEVON AND CORNWALL

Div. Rep. Mrs Alice Cleland CBE

Mrs Gladys Stephens writes from Poole in Dorset, saddened by the fact that there is no news from her Country in the Newsletter. Div Rep Alice says that there does not appear to be a group in the area, but if there are one or two other like minded volunteers or ex-volunteers, she would be happy to help them set up a small group. Mrs Stephens volunteered at Poole Hospital for over 30 years, in the Tea Bar, the Shop and on the Ward Trolley shop. *Still going strong, they still have the Coffee Shop and the Ward Trolley Shop*

Mrs Dunn writes from Bideford in Devon. With one Member recently gone into care and another in respite care, we realise more than ever that age is catching up on many in our group. For various reasons we have not been able to meet together as usual but try to keep in touch to know how each are doing. We have had a small balance in a bank account collected from past Bring and Buy stalls. We heard of a new Junior Gig Club being formed at Appledore for 11-16 year olds endeavouring to keep that age group active in a healthy interest. Gig racing has become an increasing popular sport in the South West and on enquiring what they needed for the new boat and, what we could afford, we donated £100 for a

radio, a necessity when they are on the water for safety reasons. The Chairman received a nice letter of appreciation and was invited to the opening ceremony.

We have recently met together for a very happy musical evening at the Chairman's home. Major and Mrs Lomas had held a private family function which had meant a marquee was needed. It was felt that while the marquee was there it could be used to raise money for a good cause, in this instance repairs to Abbotsham Church. As a result tables of ten were as sold with supporters bringing a picnic supper to enjoy a musical evening with a good band and good community singing. Chairman Mrs Margaret Lomas invited Association members to make up a table and a picnic supper would be provided. We were well and truly spoilt and everything combined to make a happy, jolly evening and we all enjoyed joining in with the old songs. In one of the speeches our WRVS table got a special mention which brought forth a round of applause, needless to say we appreciated this gesture. We made a donation of £35 towards the effort.

Sad news from the Wiltshire area as Doris Arthey died in December 2008 age 88. She joined WVS in 1954, received a LS medal in 1969 and a clasp in 1990. She originally worked in Medway District in Kent, and was Van Officer in charge of meals on wheels vans in Chatham and Gillingham. She was also involved in Prison Welfare, Training, Old Peoples Welfare, Toc H, and was acting Centre Organiser. In the 1980s and 1990s she volunteered in Wiltshire, delivering meals on wheels and books on wheels in Bradford on Avon, working in the district office, on the emergency call-out etc. In the late 1990s she retired and joined WRVS Association. She has been a regular at social events until recently when bad health prevented her from attending.

I would like to put on record, as past County Organiser for Wiltshire, ex WRVS Vice-Chairman and now WRVS Association representative for Wiltshire, my very great respect for Doris's dedication to WRVS over more than half a century. We will miss her very much.



In the 1500's, most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour and hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

WALES

Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Gibbons OBE

I start by wishing all members 'A Happy New Year'. This report is very short and, I'm afraid, late getting to the Editor so I only hope she has a spare corner to push it into.

The Dyfed Group had their usual Christmas lunch at the Falcon in Carmarthen and I understand had a very good meal in enjoyable company. It is always a delight to be able to compare notes as to what is happening within WRVS and also in families, as members have known each other for a long time. Unfortunately I was not able to join them, having not long been out of hospital having had to have a kidney removed. Better luck for their summer outing!

The Abergavenny Ladies met at The Crown, just outside the town, towards the end of January. They obviously enjoyed the venue because they have decided to go there again in April. I hope to join them then. Unfortunately I was unable to be there at the start of the year because Morrision Hospital became my Hotel (!) for three weeks, just after Christmas, when a virus decided to rob me of the use of anything below my waist!! Luckily everything is working again now although I have two speeds - slow and stop - and anyone who knows me knows I don't do slow.

I am so pleased that I put my telephone number with my address at the top of the Welsh Report as after the last Newsletter I had a very welcome call from Eirwen Edwards. It was lovely to know that she is still about and look forward to hearing from her regarding any of the other members in North Wales. Those who know Eirwen will be pleased to know that she is as busy as ever with different voluntary organisations in the Clwyd area. I have not been able to contact Doris Travis or Miss Bowden but will do so for the next Newsletter.

Would other Div. Reps. consider putting their phone numbers in here as I would have loved to have been able to hear more about Freda Johnson (Somerset and Avon) and Pat Henderson-Begg (Oxox, Beds & Bucks) as they were names from the past.

Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today
(If you like it today, you can do it again tomorrow)

I have received a letter from Ann Wheal, who is asking for your help

Since retiring from the University of Southampton she has already researched and written a book about peoples memories of being children during WWII. She drew from interviews, either face to face or on the telephone, letters and emails of sixty four people. It was written so that children who are studying recent history today can get a sense of what it was really like being a child during that time. Of course it is also for adults of any age to read the stories of childhood, especially if their parents and grandparents were not forthcoming. The book is called A Scrapbook of WW2 Memories.

She now wants to write 'part two' which will be memories of adults who did not go to war, who either worked or volunteered during the period. The WVS is an obvious source, but so are teachers, nurses, land army etc

Please contact Ann at

or phone her on
her at
waiting to hear from you

or e-mail
She is



JUST IN CASE THERE IS ANYONE UNAWARE OF THIS HISTORIC TRADITION



Each year since 1947, a Christmas tree has been given to the people of London from the people of Norway in gratitude for Britain's support for Norway during World War II. It is put up in Trafalgar Square at the beginning of December and stays for a month

The tree itself is traditionally 20 - 25 metres tall, so 50-60 years old, is decorated in traditional Norwegian style, with 500 individual white lights and the sight of it has become an iconic London Christmas image.

Last year marked the 62nd tree to come to London from the City of Oslo, The lighting ceremony was on December 4th, with the Mayor of London, the Lord Mayor of Westminster and the Mayor of Oslo taking part, and carol-singing led by the Choir of St Martin-in-the-Fields.

(It's okay, I have calmed down now)

WRVS Association
15 Priory Street
York, YO1 6ET

01 904 634 500

wrvs.association@talktalk.net

Please use these contact details for all administration of the Association, including Membership Subscription, Newsletter Circulation and change of address notification

PRESIDENT

Ruth Markland - Chairman WRVS

VICE-PRESIDENTS

Mrs Ava Christophersen

Mrs Pat Copping

The Hon Dame Mary Corsar DBE

Mrs Peggy James MBE

Mrs Sheila McCormack BEM

Mrs Diane Price

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CHAIRMAN

Mrs Sylvia Hatchell MBE

HON. SECRETARY

Mrs Jean Pickard

HON. TREASURER

Mrs Maureen Hudson

HON. EDITOR

Paulene Lambert

Send contributions for the next Newsletter via your Div. Rep. if you have one. If you do not have one, then direct to me **By 31st August 2009**

The Editor

Please remember to give your contact details with your report, mention the group and Division, and print any names or places

Better still -