

WRVS Association

NEWSLETTER

Issue 72

Spring 2010

Letter from the Chairman, Sylvia Hatchell

Priory Street Centre, 15 Priory Street, York, YO1 6ET (office)

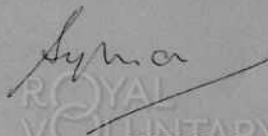
Dear Member

Firstly a very Happy New Year to you. We have certainly had a hard start to the year and I hope that you have not been too badly affected by the snow and cold. It has been interesting to see the cover given on TV to commercial companies delivering Meals on Wheels when I know that many of you have done this during snow and ice in the past with no mention in the media at all.

I spent Christmas and New Year at my daughter's house near Perth arriving on December 21st and there was thick snow to greet me. Cars were stuck on the drive then and were still there almost four weeks later. Fortunately Lucy's Land Rover was able to cope with the conditions and I managed to get home on January 4th after a long train journey. Since then I have been stuck here in the flat, luckily with my computer and the phone that have kept me in touch with the outside world. I have almost eaten my way through my freezer and that will no doubt be the reason for a slightly more chunky Chairman in 2010.

In the Autumn I shall have completed my three years as your Chairman and I hope that you feel I have accomplished quite a lot, in that time. I shall therefore be standing down at this year's Annual General Meeting, and due to the new Constitution it is now open for any member to stand for election as the Chairman. Nominations need to be posted to the Office by April 1st. Those who wish to vote and anyone standing for election must attend the AGM.

I have enjoyed my time as your Chairman but all things come to an end and let us look forward to the future and a stronger and more positive WRVS Association.



WRVS Association - Linking the Past and Present

Random jottings from the Editor

Dear Members

Greetings to you and yours on what I hope will be a beautiful spring day when you open this envelope. Sit yourself down with a cuppa to read about what the Association has been up to



Okay, the snow was good for the first couple of days but lets be honest, it did go on a bit and with almost no part of the country unaffected by it, I am sure that we all have a lot more sympathy with those who suffer every winter

The snow also reminded me of a couple of incidents when our town used to deliver Meals on Wheels. One was the day that all the volunteers turned up to deliver the meals to discover that the paid staff had not made it in. . . . and the other when I delivered two days running on the same round and found that my footprints were often the only ones to be seen. A sad reflection on what should be an example of good neighbours

Of course the other big thing at the beginning of the year was the departure of Terry Wogan from the Radio 2 Breakfast show. It was quite emotional for those who had grown up with him chatting to us every morning, to get us ready for school, work or voluntary duties. Knowing what an excellent wordsmith he was, I thought his little speech at the end of the programme was very well delivered, then I saw when it was on the news that he actually had it written down for him to read It was reassuring to know that. I listened in to Chris Evans on his first morning, but realizing that I would need subtitles to understand what he was saying (he speaks so fast); I now just have the morning chorus after the headlines

The other problem this presents is that I can no longer write TOG as my occupation on forms that really ought to know better than to ask!

It seems that there are a lot of areas where even if there is a Divisional Representative, I have to record 'No Report', so let me just say that if you are an individual living where there is no obvious named Rep, or if you have one who does not arrange anything, please feel free to make contact with me directly, my details are at the bottom of the back page. Have a good summer everyone

Best wishes to you all

Paulene

Paulene Lambert

NORTH WEST DIVISION

MERSEYSIDE AND CHESHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Sylvia Hatchell

During Sylvia Hatchell's term as Chairman, the following stand as County Reps

MERSEYSIDE

Diane Smith,

The St Helens group meet once a month, at various local hostelries. Marie Glover arranges the meetings and I would like to thank Marie for all her hard work arranging our outings. It is greatly appreciated. Sometimes lunch is combined with a shopping trip to Warrington or Southport both of which are easily accessible by public transport. In December we enjoyed a delightful Christmas Lunch and entertainment at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. The group is looking forward to another year of companionship but they would dearly like to welcome new members as numbers are dwindling.

Sadly, towards the end of 2009 Nan Chisnall, a very well known and respected member of the Association and stalwart of WRVS in St Helens for many years died and members attended her funeral at St Helens Crematorium. Even though Nan was in recent years unable to attend meetings she will be sadly missed.

LANCASHIRE

Mary Jones

Welcome to our new members from Chorley, if you are having a meeting there please do let me know and I will do my best to come along. If there are any members in Lancashire that I have not managed to contact please contact me on the above address and/or phone number. I would like to meet you all - maybe we could arrange a get together soon.

CHESHIRE

Pauline Blyth

NO REPORT

CUMBRIA

County Rep Mrs Pat Gill

Calling all WRVS Cumbria volunteers past and present. Do you have any memorabilia from your time with WRVS? Photos, books, reports on emergency services especially photos from emergencies, equipment, uniforms, badges and hats through the years? Tullie House Museum in Carlisle is putting together a permanent exhibition of WRVS Cumbria and Mr Rutherford from the Museum would like to hear from you as soon as possible. I have been in touch with WRVS Head Office Achievers, who are looking for the boxes of achieve material sent to them on the closure of the County Office in The Carlisle Castle.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you can be of any help.

NORTH AND SOUTH MANCHESTER

Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Matthews BEM

After a disappointing summer the Bury Group certainly had luck on their side when they boarded the coach on 8th October for their Autumn Outing. It was a beautiful day for another 'Welcome Day Out', this time entitled 'In Search of the Cheshire Cat'. First stop was for morning coffee and biscuits at the Castle Park Art and Exhibition Centre in Frodsham and then there was time for a successful shopping exhibition around the open-air market. A run through the lovely countryside to the 'Amore' room at the Oaklands Hotel for a delicious carvery luncheon followed. During the afternoon we all enjoyed a Cheshire Tales Tour driving through pretty villages and hearing all the local history from our superb guide. Our final stop at High Leigh Garden Centre was a very good place to browse and buy some early Christmas presents before visiting the pleasant tearooms for a 'cuppa' (or for some members cream teas!) before the journey home.

Unfortunately our January lunch at Park Farm has had to be postponed until 2nd February due to the dreadful ice and snow. There is a very pretty picture as I glance through the window whilst writing this report, but we shall all be relieved to see an end to these extreme weather conditions.

It is with great sadness that we report the recent deaths of five members. Lillian Roberts who started the Bury MOWs service in 1956 and also the Church House Club; Elsie Mahon who continuously delivered meals for many years until commendably she was older than most of the recipients; Muriel Johnson, for many years a leading member of the team at Bury General Hospital; Dorothy Gregory, who co-ordinated WRVS Services in Radcliffe for many years; and

Barbara Pollitt, my devoted Deputy Metropolitan Organiser until our retirement, and Deputy Leader of our Bury Assn Group. They were all dedicated members of WVS/WRVS and of the Association and will be very much missed by us all. We offer our sincere condolences to their families.

Once again our sincere thanks to Rose Walsh for having the monthly coffee mornings at her home for the Prestwich members during 2009. We send our congratulations and good wishes to Rose on the occasion of her recent 'special' birthday.

The Sale members have continued to enjoy their monthly coffee mornings and our thanks go to Joan Allmark for co-ordinating the group this year. Special thanks also to Joan and all the Sale members for inviting me to join them for their Christmas lunch and for their usual warm welcome - we all had a very enjoyable time at the Hare and Hounds in Timperley. Many congratulations and very best wishes from us all to Evelyn Blackshaw who will shortly be celebrating her 100th birthday - a wonderful achievement. We would like to express our sincere sympathy to Rosemary Cooper on the loss of her husband. We were pleased that she was able to join us at Christmas and hope that we shall be able to welcome her back into the Group in due course.

The National AGM and Reunion at the beginning of October proved to be another successful weekend despite the Northern weather in York not reaching the temperatures in Windsor the previous year. The food at the Hotel was extremely good and the staff very pleasant. Sincere thanks again from Ken and myself to all concerned in the organisation. Despite being married 53 years, it was the first time we had stayed in a Bridal Suite with a four-poster bed! We look forward to meeting old friends and making new friends in 2010 and would urge as many members as possible not to miss this enjoyable weekend.

EU DIRECTIVE No. 456179

In order to meet the conditions for joining the Single European currency, all citizens of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland must be made aware that the phrase 'Spending a Penny' is not to be used after 31st December 2009. From this date, the correct terminology will be: 'Euronating'. Thank you for your attention.

A little girl was watching her parents dress for a party. When she saw her dad donning his DJ, she warned, 'Daddy, you shouldn't wear that suit, you know that it always gives you a headache the next morning.'

You will recall that in the last newsletter Chairman Sylvia told of the tree planted in the National Arboretum in Staffordshire. The accompanying plaque says that it is **'DEDICATED TO THE 246 WOMEN OF THE WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICES (NOW WRVS) KILLED IN SERVICE TO THEIR COUNTRY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND IN CYPRUS. SERVICE BEYOND SELF'**



The cost was shared between the WRVS, the WRVS Association and a fund managed by former WRVS Vice Chairman Alice Cleland. Sadly Sylvia was incapacitated following an accident and unable to attend the ceremony but there was good representation by (L-R) Marilyn Openshaw, Ruth Markland (WRVS Chairman), Lynn Berry (WRVS Chief Executive), Div Rep Jean Matthews, Country Rep Mary Jones, Linda McEvoy, Ken Matthews (husband of Jean) and Robert Longley-Cook. Then slightly behind there is Jim Donovan (Chairman of Archive Support Group), VCC and Div Rep Shelagh Murray, Denise Murphy (Head of Services Welfare) and right at the back it is Anna Ashley (Services Welfare Co-ordinator.)

Jean Matthews who was the instigator of the project placed the poppy bouquet on the memorial tree

SOUTH EAST DIVISION

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK

Div Rep Vacant

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Div. Rep. Vacant

Sincere apologies are sent to Mrs Barbara Titcomb who is the last newsletter was referred to as the Div Rep. Barbara resigned in 2006, so I am not quite sure how she got another mention. We are also very sorry to hear that she has recently had a spell in hospital. Barbara is now recovering at home and everyone in her former division and I am sure everyone within the Association sends our best wishes to her

Brenda Smith writes from the Rushden and Raunds Club to report that seventeen members had a Christmas Lunch at the local golf club, when there was much laughter and chat as well as catching up with news. Chris Carter gave a short report on old friends and told of those who had passed away; in response she was thanked for arranging the meetings. There are already offers to host coffee mornings and afternoon teas in 2010. Finally everyone received a wrapped gift before leaving for home

Evelyn Charnley writes that although most of our local groups have been disbanded, due to increasing age and infirmity, we do get some news 'via the proverbial grapevine'.

We are sad to report the death of Mrs Enid Watson, one month short of her 98' birthday. For many years Enid was County Secretary for Huntingdonshire WVS/WRVS and, from the founding of WRVS Association, the driving force behind a very successful group. She very kindly included the Cambridge group in her plans and we recall many happy outings, meetings with excellent speakers as well as local lunches and teas, always with scrumptious home-made food in a flower-filled setting. Those of us who knew her only in her mature years were amazed to hear of her wartime exploits when she was 'drafted' into tasks which included climbing telegraph poles to repair damaged wires. Anyone who experienced the icy blasts from the Urals across The Fens in winter will appreciate her fortitude, a firm grounding for many years of peacetime service in her local community.

ESSEX AND HERTFORDSHIRE

Div. Rep. Vacant

OXFORDSHIRE, BEDFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Joint Div. Reps.

Mrs Jean Callaway,

Mrs Sheila Wilson,

Buckinghamshire No news to report

Oxfordshire Due to ill health Ursula Golding has resigned as our contact for this region. Our thanks go to her for her help and support over the past twelve years.

Bedfordshire Sadly we must report that one of our new members, Mrs Mabel Benson, whom we welcomed in the last newsletter, died at the beginning of December. Better news is that another of our members, Mrs Kathleen Fuller, will celebrate her 100th birthday in February. Unfortunately Mrs Fuller can no longer get to our meetings and we send her our congratulations and very best wishes.

In October Mr Mark Davis gave us an entertaining talk entitled "How the London Cockney influenced U.S. culture". Mark brought along a Pearly King Suit and delivered his amusing talk resplendent in a pearly waistcoat. He had personally hand-sewn all the hundreds of mostly mother-of-pearl buttons on his outfits. Twenty-five members attended this event.

Around 50 members attended our annual Christmas Lunch at the beginning of December. Our thanks go to the committee for providing a very tasty spread. A word of thanks also goes to the members who provided a mouth-watering array of puddings. The help given by our male spouses was very much appreciated and some outstanding teamwork helped to make this a very successful occasion

SURREY, KENT, SUSSEX

Div Rep Mrs Joan Rosling,

Guildford members enjoyed a really excellent Christmas lunch at a new venue. The committee found an Italian restaurant on the North Downs just outside the town, which provided a reasonably priced Christmas lunch or a choice of other English or Italian food. Most of us went for the full three courses; we had a great time and shall go there again. *(Soon I hope! Ed)*

We sadly have to announce the death of Peggy Pates. Two years ago she was interviewed for the WRVS Archives. She worked in London for WVS in the evenings and at weekends in 1942 and her account is fascinating. Peggy married after the war and came to Guildford and after she retired she worked for WRVS at least once a week for many years until her health broke down. The last couple of

years were difficult for her as she was more or less housebound but still cheerful and interested in the Association.

At the end of last year, with Vera Lynn topping the Hit Parade, various members of the Guildford club were reminded of an event in 1990 when WRVS volunteers Joan Ashbee, Glenis Knight, Rose Wunderlich, Mae Deverell and others attended Guildford Rail Station to commemorate fifty years since the evacuation of Dunkirk.

Returning soldiers were met at the railway station by the WVS and given refreshments; letters were collected for posting on to their families and of course there were smiles from friendly faces. Joan, seen here with two of the veterans was a young woman working at Marks and Spencer saththetime, so District Organiser Joy Slorick wrote to the local store to tell them of the connection and they provided refreshments for the reunion day, as they had originally.



The turn out the second time was not as stressful or busy as 1940, and the refreshments were much more upmarket, but the friendship was just the same

Among the dignitaries were the Mayor of Guildford Mrs Mary Lloyd-Jones, her deputy John Ades, the Earl of Onslow, representatives from the British Legion and of

course British Rail, who had also arranged the use of a platform for the event. Joy remembers it was quite an effort on everyone's part to get it organised, but well worth it and a very memorable occasion.

Congratulations to Miss Daisy Blackford of Capel Grange Residential Home in Kent who has just reached her 100th birthday. She would like her to go on receiving the newsletter as she enjoys all the Association news.

LONDON S.W.
Div. Rep. Vacant

LONDON N.E. AND CITY NO REPORT
Div. Rep. Mrs Win Taylor OBE DL

LONDON N.W.
Div. Rep. Vacant

LONDON S.E. NO REPORT
Div. Rep. Mrs G Cleverly

HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT NO REPORT
Div. Rep. Mrs Beryl Adams

BERKSHIRE – NO REPORT
County Rep - Mrs Morag Gordon,

Young Arthur bought a donkey from a farmer for £100.

The farmer agreed to deliver the donkey the next day. The next day he drove up and said, 'Sorry son, but I have some bad news. The donkey has died.' Arthur replied, 'Well then just give me my money back.' The farmer said, 'can't do that. I've already spent it.' Arthur said, 'OK, then, just bring me the dead donkey.' The farmer asked, 'What are you going to do with him?' Arthur said, 'I'm going to raffle him off.' The farmer said, 'you can't raffle a dead donkey' Arthur said, 'Sure I can, just watch me. I just won't tell anybody he's dead.'

A month later, the farmer met up with Arthur and asked, 'What happened with that dead donkey?' Arthur said, 'I raffled him off. I sold 500 tickets at two pounds a piece and made a profit of £998.' The farmer said, 'Didn't anyone complain?' Arthur said, 'Just the guy who won. So I gave him his two pounds back.'
Guess who now works for a multi national bank?

SOUTH WEST DIVISION

SOMERSET AND AVON

Div. Rep. Mrs Sheila Scholey

Sadly there is nothing to report from Somerset, despite my pleas for help! I do hope you have managed to keep warm during the very cold winter.

THE SHIRE COUNTIES OF GLOUCESTER, HEREFORD, WARWICK, WORCESTER

Div. Rep. Vacant

Daphne Paton writes from the Nuneaton WRVS Stroke Club that was set up in 1985 to cater for people left with a permanent disability after a Stroke. It provides a welcome social outlet for sufferers and gives their Carers a few precious hours of freedom each week. Mrs. Diane Norton was a founder helper in 1985. She has been the Organiser since 1986, and has kept the Club going for 24 years. Like the Windmill Theatre 'we never closed'.

The club is perhaps best described as a 'family of friends'. We celebrate birthdays, have occasional entertainment, an outing each year, and a Christmas lunch party. It is much valued by those who use it. We laugh a lot - and laughter really is the best therapy. When the Club was started, many other WRVS Stroke Clubs were set up with help and support from agencies such as the Borough Council and the NHS. This has gradually been withdrawn. Daphne wonders how many other Stroke Clubs have withstood the test of time?

DORSET & WILTSHIRE; DEVON AND CORNWALL

Div. Rep. Mrs Alice Cleland CBE

The Wiltshire branch had a very enjoyable coffee morning at the home of Denise Smyter before Christmas. Delicious mince pies and a chance to catch up with each other

The Swindon branch held a Christmas lunch in early December that was well attended. Alice Cleland updated them on WRVS's reorganisation, reminded them of the Benevolent Trust which is always there for members in sudden financial need, and told the latest plans for the Archives. This has special relevance for

Wiltshire as following the closure of Milton Hill in March, the whole national collection will be moved to Devizes to continue the cataloguing by volunteers which is hoped to be finished in time for the 75th anniversary in 2013. If anyone has material that they would like to send to the Archives, please contact the WRVS Archivist, on 07 714 898 569 or matthew.mcmurray@wrvs.org.uk

Margaret Lomas the Chairman of the Torrige District WRVS Association has asked Jo Young to put together a few words about her Mother, Mrs Margaret Dunn who unexpectedly passed away last October. She joined the WRVS in June 1968 and was an active member of the Torrige Group of the WRVS Association.

"I came across a newspaper cutting of November 1983 in which Mum was being interviewed for the 'Women's Page' of the local paper, the Bideford and North Devon Gazette. She recalled it had started when 'two ladies in green knocked at her door and asked if she would be prepared to give up some of her time to help. Within a fortnight I was in manning the office'

After joining, Mum almost immediately became the Abbotsham village representative, followed by the Deputy Rural Organiser, Deputy Centre Organiser and finally Torrige District Organiser in 1974. She felt extremely privileged to work alongside such a superb team of active WRVS volunteers when District Organiser and would be the very first to give them credit for the work that was achieved. Those achievements included: meals on wheels - 27,000 meals were delivered in 1982 throughout Torrigheside, books on wheels, hospital trolley, welfare food service, clothing, soup kitchens, over 60's clubs, luncheon clubs, mother and toddler groups plus emergency teams trained to handle any crisis.

A year after receiving her Long Service Medal in 1985, Mum retired from active volunteering and turned her energies to the local Torrige District Group of the Association where she was Chairman until 1997 and then Secretary until last October. She relished her role as Secretary and organised meetings, outings, teas or lunches continuing the friendship built up during her time as an active volunteer. The wider Association brought more enjoyment and a particular highlight of each year was the annual pilgrimage to the AGM with friends from the local Group. Every trip was enjoyed but perhaps the one that really stood out was 2007 at Windermere, even if she was slightly annoyed with herself for choosing to go for a boat trip rather than go to the Lakeland shop!

Looking back to when she joined she recalled in the same newspaper article, 'I was ready to do something outside the home and have never regretted that day'. She was a member of the WRVS for 41 years and it was a very fulfilling part of her life. Never happier than when doing things for other people, volunteering allowed her to achieve just that and when asked whether there was still the need for voluntary organisations such as the WRVS Mum replied: 'Statutory bodies count heads – voluntary bodies count hearts'

WALES

SOUTH Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Gibbons OBE

I would like to apologise to members of the Association in Wales – or others who read the Welsh Section of the Newsletter – for not sending any news for insertion in the Autumn Letter.

The Dyfed Group met again in The Falcon, Carmarthen for the usual Christmas lunch. We were sorry that Elizabeth John (Rowland-James) was not able to join us, as she had made all the arrangements, but her husband was ill and unfortunately he died soon afterwards. It was lovely to see the usual familiar faces and to catch up with all the new. I came away having found a new helper for the crèche in Swansea Prison – Carol Bright who used to be Young Families Organiser in Dyfed (she had moved to Swansea recently).

The Abergavenny Ladies had to cancel their Christmas Lunch because of illness and the weather since Christmas has not been at all suitable to be out and about. I am sure that Mrs. Stinchcombe will be on the phone as soon as the weather improves.

NORTH Div. Rep. Shelagh Murray

Now that the better weather is on its way I am hoping to be able to visit as many of my area members as possible. I have heard that Miss Boden is doing well and is back home after her spell in hospital. Colwyn Bay's Christmas party had to be postponed because of bad weather and at the time of writing will be held in February this year. Two former Association members Cath Ellis and Olwen Crump died at the end of last year. Both had been volunteers in Llandudno hospital Cath running the trolley and Olwen the flowers.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

When I were a lad, me mother would send me down to t'corner shop wi' a shilling, and I'd come back wi' five pounds o' potatoes, two loaves o' bread, three pints o' milk, a pound o' cheese, a packet o' tea, an' 'alf a dozen eggs.
Yer can't do that now. Too many security cameras!

CHANNEL ISLANDS

JERSEY No Report
Mrs Jill O'Byrne

GUERNSEY No report
Mrs Margaret Chilcott

While taking a routine vandalism report at a primary school, PC Plod was interrupted by a little girl about six years old. Looking up and down at my uniform, she asked, 'Are you a policeman?', 'Yes,' he answered and continued writing the report. 'My mother said if I ever needed help I should ask the police. Is that right?' 'Yes, that's right,' he told her. 'Well, then,' she said as she extended her foot toward him, 'would you please tie my shoe?'

Grants for WVS and WRVS members

The WRVS Benevolent Trust was set up by Lady Reading to help members of the WVS later WRVS.

Any current or former member finding themselves in unexpected financial need may apply for a grant.

To apply **write to:**

The Honorary Secretary
WRVS Benevolent Trust
14 Wykeham Road

Guildford, Surrey, GU1 2SE

Or **e-mail** wrvsbenevolenttrust@hotmail.co.uk

Visit our webpages at www.wrvs.org.uk

Charity no. 261931



Our founder Lady Reading

It has been rumoured that on her 69th birthday in 2004, Julie Andrews sang the following 'blue hair' version of the famous Rodgers and Hammerstein 'My Favourite Things' tune from the 1965 film of the Sound of Music. It was said that it was performed at a charity event at the Radio City Music Hall in New York.

Botox and nose drops and needles for knitting
Walkers and handrails and new dental fittings
Bundles of magazines tied up in string
These are a few of my favourite things

Cadillac's and cataracts, hearing aids and glasses
Polident and Fixodent and false teeth in glasses
Pacemakers, golf carts and porches with swings
These are a few of my favourite things

When the pipes leak, when the bones creak, when the knees go bad
I simply remember my favourite things and then I don't feel so bad

Hot tea and crumpets and corn pads for bunions
No spicy hot food or food cooked with onions
Bathrobes and heating pads and hot meals they bring
These are a few of my favourite things

Back pain, confused brains and no need for sinnin'
Thin bones and fractures and hair that is thinnin'
And we won't mention our short shrunken frames
When we remember our favourite things

When the joints ache, when the hips break, when the eyes grow dim,
Then I remember the great life I've had, and then I don't feel so bad.

However, Julie lost the ability to sing in 1997. That year she was admitted to hospital for the removal of a non-cancerous polyp on her vocal cords, and what should have been a simple surgical procedure went dreadfully wrong. Her multi-octave singing voice was virtually destroyed. She sued the doctors and the hospital and in 2000, she settled out of court for a substantial sum

Since the surgery the songstress did a little speak-singing in the 2004 film The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement, saying of the experience, 'I wish I could call it singing, the song was pitched very low for me'

So, not only didn't Julie Andrews sing the parody of 'My Favourite Things' for a Radio City Music Hall audience on her 69th birthday, she couldn't have.
But it is a good version though and I hope some of you will sing it out loud. Ed

NORTH EAST DIVISION

NORTHUMBERLAND No Report
Div. Rep. Mrs Sheila McCormack BEM

TYNE AND WEAR
Div. Rep. Frances Somers

Regular monthly meetings of the Sunderland Branch resumed after the August break with a talk in September by a former Organiser about some of the 'bonuses' of her work in WRVS; parading at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, working on the desk at Wimbledon, meeting a variety of Royals, were some of the highlights. In October a fascinating slide show 'Cribs and Nativity Scenes' from around the world, accompanied by a wide range of Christmas music, was presented by Mrs Morgan. November brought us to our always well-attended Christmas lunch, with a very popular quiz. Towards the end of December the festive season was ushered in with Sherry and Mince Pies.

Also from Frances, the following two stories

Scene: A cold winter evening on the concourse of Kings Cross Station. The Organiser had spent the day at WRVS HQ in Brixton and is waiting to get onto the platform for her train.

Action: A very drunk, very aggressive beggar is systematically working his way round the concourse fiercely demanding 'donations'. Leaving the man nearest to her looking decidedly shaken, he weaves towards her. He stops and thrusts his head forward. A wide smile breaks across his face, "Keep up the good work, Miss", he says, "You do wonderful work", and lurches off towards his next victim. Thank Heaven for the uniform!

Scene: A normal day in The Office, various volunteers about their different tasks, the Organiser at her desk.

Action: Suddenly a loud commotion in the hallway. The Organiser emerges to find a very large, very irate man demanding access to the closed Clothing Store. Although couched aggressively his request is quite reasonable given that he is clad in a smart black and white checked jacket, well-polished black shoes, and nothing in between. The Organiser confronts the man, persuades him to sit and despatches someone to find him the trousers he so obviously needs.

During the ensuing conversation he explains that during a walk in the park he fell in the pond so had to remove his trousers and leave them in the pond.

He then agreed that, yes, he had had rather a lot to drink, and that, no, he should not have spoken to the ladies like that. He then said, almost shyly, that he was glad the Organiser had challenged him because the uniform reminded him of his time in the Forces and helped to calm him down.

He donned his trousers, apologised all round and left.

Thank Heaven for the uniform!

CLEVELAND, DARLINGTON, DURHAM, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Ros Rowntree

Although all Branches have welcomed new members during the past six months they have also said goodbye to many friends amongst who was Miss Lesley Hyatt OBE. Seven of us attended a Thanksgiving Service in Coxwold to hear the tributes paid to this wonderful friend of the WRVS and the Association.

The Harrogate Branch report came from chairman Mrs Sheila Pantin. She writes that they continue to meet regularly on the 1st Friday of the month at St Paul's UR Church. This is always a very busy time catching up, particularly with those of the group unable to attend, making arrangements for theatre visits, concerts at the Royal Hall and of course lunches out. Unfortunately the January meeting was cancelled due to heavy snow, but we manage to keep in touch as they say.

Sadly our oldest member Lady Hilda Laycock died in November aged 101 years and 10 months. Physically she had been failing for a few years but mentally was as bright as ever. We had been bridge partners for many years and we all had enjoyed her generous hospitality over the years. Her son told me at the funeral (at which five members managed to attend) that she had been in the WVS/WRVS 70 years. She never learned to drive but we took her to meetings and reunions etc. We were all glad to see the Royal Hall reopened and have enjoyed quite a few concerts since. It is nice to have a gentleman amongst us in Keith Carmichael who, along with his wife Katherine, attends meetings and social functions. The three of us were in York for the National AGM that we enjoyed, especially meeting the National Committee in person.

The Hartlepool Branch report came from Co-ordinator Mrs Ida Hodgman who says that they are still managing to hold monthly meetings with an average of 17 members attending. We have had talks on various subjects. A lady from the RSPB spoke about the new Bird Sanctuary at Saltholme that has just opened. The local Crime Prevention Officer gave an interesting talk with advice on personal and property safety. (He also left us some freebies). Our summer outing was to Ampleforth College where we were given a guided tour by the Monks

followed by an excellent lunch - well worth a visit if you are in North Yorkshire. During November we lost Jennie Emerson, a long serving member of WRVS and the Association. A member who had known Jennie told us about her life and we kept a minutes silence in her memory. We have now decided that we should try and keep in touch with other members who can no longer get to meetings. We had a lovely Christmas lunch in early January although due to illness and the atrocious weather our numbers were lower than usual. The New Year is with us and we look forward to more interesting talks and outings in 2010.

Scarborough Branch. Sadly we have said good-bye to three members who died recently. Mrs Audrey Ward who was a founder member and the first secretary of the Scarborough Branch and Mrs Kay Adamson and Mrs Mary Dresser. All gave unstinting service to the WRVS and enjoyed meetings with the Association. Also members were saddened by the death of Miss Lesley Hyatt OBE who came to many meetings - the last being in 2005 for 90th birthday celebrations.

In late August on a perfect summer day, 23 members went by coach to Glaisdale - a joint outing with Scalby and Newby WI - having lunch at the Arncliffe Arms before going to see a very enjoyable matinee performance by the Esk Valley Theatre of 'April in Paris' by John Godber. The speaker for the October meeting was Michael Fearon of Filey who gave a wonderful talk on Butlins Holiday Camp in the 50's showing a social history of the time, its formation - 1938/9 to 1983 - and its workings. On a beautiful autumn day in November an excellent lunch was enjoyed by 43 members, at the Everley Hotel, Hackness. In December 36 members went to Irton Garden Centre for coffee and scones and a little Xmas shopping. The January meeting was the AGM followed by coffee and birthday cake to celebrate the 90th birthday of Mrs Betty Atkinson-Jowett.

The York Branch report came from chairman Mrs Millie Wilks. We have continued with our usual Activities during the past six months, the AGM being held in October when 14 members attended. Eight York members also attended the Association AGM on the previous Saturday that was held on our home ground, very informative and good to meet members from other parts of the UK. As usual we enjoyed our Afternoon Tea in May at the Blakeney Hotel but decided to postpone the Christmas Lunch to the end of January, so at the time of writing we still have that to look forward to. We also look forward to welcoming a new member, Mrs Nellie Fletcher.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Miss Lesley Hyatt OBE, a stalwart of WRVS and the Association. We knew her as our Divisional Representative who attended our special occasions and then in 2006 she became acting chairman of York Branch for one year for which we were extremely grateful as otherwise we would not have been able to continue

Miss E M Lesley Hyatt OBE of Coxwold, North Yorkshire died on the 2nd December 2009 (age 95) peacefully after a long illness. Family, friends and

representatives from the Church, WRVS Association and the Sailors Society were among the many who attended a Thanksgiving Service at St Michael's Church, Coxwold. Several Addresses were given including a presentation of her life and work as a representative of the Sailors' Society, from 1939 until just recently, for which she received an OBE.

Although she had joined the WVS in 1938 - it was only for a year - before returning in 1970 as Regional Administrator for Cumberland, Northumberland, Durham and the North Riding of Yorkshire.

In 1976 she became Area Controller for the North Yorkshire and Humberside Region for Premises. Retiring from Area Office at age 65 (Official retiring age) she continued helping at North Yorkshire County Office in Northallerton for many years. Later she became County Organiser for North Yorkshire with the WRVS Association. She was very much loved and respected by all who met her and were privileged to work with her. Her enthusiasm for the WRVS and for the Association, her concern for the welfare of its members and her ability to 'smooth things along' will be among my lasting memories of a remarkable lady.

EAST YORKSHIRE TO HUMBER AND HULL

Div. Rep. Mrs Robina Priestley

There is not much news this time although all the usual lunches continue to be enjoyed with everyone exchanging news and views, and surprisingly with such dreadful weather our first get together in January was very well attended!

2009 ended rather sadly with the loss of two of our members. In October Janet Todd from Pocklington died after along period of ill health. She was one of the mainstays of the office in Pocklington before her retirement, mainly helping with the Clothing store and Meals on Wheels. Diane Price, my husband & I attended her funeral. In December Monica Levitt, one of our regular Association members died after a relatively short illness, her cheery presence will be very much missed. Unfortunately because of the atrocious weather on the day none of us could make it to her funeral but of course we were all thinking of her.

HO also received a letter from the niece of Mrs M Sweeting tendering her resignation, the reason being ill health. Although she had not been able to attend any of the lunches Barbara Gillard had kept in regular touch giving her all the news etc. which she seemed to have enjoyed

We are all now looking forward to an enjoyable Spring & Summer and wish all our fellow members Health & Happiness in 2010

SOUTH AND WEST YORKSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs June Pitts BEM

Mrs Gillian Highley MBE says that they were very sorry to discover that there was not a report for the last newsletter and hope to give all our news this time. As we all find, time goes by so quickly and months seem like days and there goes another year.

Once again Calderdale has been busy with our usual fish and chip lunch in January. This is now a looked forward to annual event and as it is held in the Restaurant at our local bus station everyone can get there easily. We usually have a full attendance and is a good time to collect subscriptions.

In March we had a speakers from an Audio Visual club when we watched lovely videos of The Winter Palace in St Petersburg and many other places. The last presentation showed a humorous selection of notices and signs, which could be interpreted in many ways and caused us to laugh.

In July, our old friend Canon Frank Carless came to tell us about his recent holiday to America with his grandchildren, visiting New York and Washington and all the exciting things he had done there. His talks are always enjoyed.

Mr David Glover, a local historian came in September to tell us about 'Scandal and Rumour' His talk was based on incidents recorded by the Clergy in the Parish Church Records of the 16th and 17th century. It is apparent that little changes regarding the morals of people over the years as many incidents of theft, fornication and drunkenness were recorded.

Our last meeting of the year was in November when our speaker was unable to come at the last minute and so we looked through our own 'Archives' kept by one of our members. They date back to 1948 when WVS was started in Halifax. The longest serving members attending the Association became members in the mid-sixties. We laughed as we remembered some of the things we had done and the comradeship we had enjoyed. The 40th, 50th, 60th and 70th anniversaries were highlights. For the 40th we pushed an enormous giant Birthday cake through the streets in the Gala procession and some of us went to Westminster Abbey for a service. We also remembered the day to day activities such as meals -on- wheels and clothing, clubs, contact centres and emergencies in which we had helped in fact, the many acts of service which we had undertaken and which made WRVS the organisation it was and is.

On August 1st (Yorkshire Day) we held our annual Afternoon Tea for the elderly and entertained around 40 people. The usual homemade cakes and sandwiches were served. Two singers and a pianist entertained us, and the afternoon was

declared the 'Best Yet.' The tables were decorated to follow the theme of Yorkshire. It is interesting to note that some of our members are older than the visitors!

During the year we have been pleased to welcome a new member Mrs Sheila Stott who travels from Mirfield to join us. This is a bus journey of about 8 miles. We were also very happy to renew acquaintance with a former WRVS Local Organiser Mrs Jean Castle BEM and we hope she will join us on a regular basis. Some members of the Association may remember her WRVS Organised in Halifax and later Calderdale.

The Association members continue with our Coffee Morning and Lunch for former afternoon and luncheon club members but numbers do not increase, as we would like. At least 6 of our 14 members are over 90 and have been with us for many years at the lunch club before we had to close. Our Christmas Lunch was well attended despite being the first day of the snows this year and we served 30 dinners.

On a sad note we have to record the death of Mrs Joyce Moore, a life member who joined at the age of 18 during wartime and who had served in many ways in Halifax. Her service with WRVS was marked at the local Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday by one of her neighbours who sent a WRVS wreath in her name. There were therefore two WRVS wreaths as six of our members attended to lay our own wreath. We used the inscription from the newly planted WRVS tree at the National Memorial Arboretum.

LEICESTERSHIRE, LINCOLNSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mike Smith

Sheila Kent reports that the Leicester club continues monthly Coffee Mornings, although they did have to cancel the one in January, as the weather was too treacherous, particularly for those members who live on the outskirts of the city. There is a lunch arranged at the Leicester College in February and a coach outing in March to Buxton with a boat trip on the nearby canal

Sheila Court writes: We had a wonderful celebration in September to recognise the 30th Anniversary of the Rushcliffe Association. It was held in the home of Wendy Greaves, our treasurer. The tea was supplied by the committee, a lovely mix of savouries, cakes and dessert; we do know how to treat ourselves well. It was a time for memories, and one person came to the fore. I think a few of you reading this will remember Marjorie Lovett, a real character right to the end when

we had to remind her where she was and how to get home. In the hope that she would remember to wear her glasses and not hit too many other cars on the way there. October and November saw us at our usual venue for two very chatty coffee mornings. During this period Olive Humm and I attended the AGM in York and met up with a lot of old friends, and it was good afterwards to be able to retell the events of the AGM to our members.

In October Mrs. Barbara Smith, our oldest member died, she had been a stalwart member from the beginning and had been a huge help with WRVS in West Bridgford for well over 40 years. A number of us attended her funeral.

December of course saw 22 of us at our Christmas Lunch at the Masonic Hall in West Bridgford, where once again we were served a lovely meal. We have not had a meeting in January. At the last committee meeting it was decided not to meet in the first two months of the year, as often the weather is bad. Well this year our fears came true so our decision was well made. But here in the south of Nottinghamshire we have been spared the worst so commiserations to anyone who has suffered the worst of this winters snow.

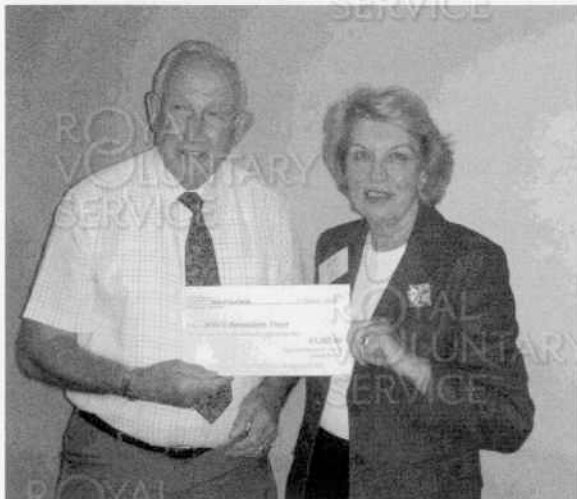
Jean Heason writes from the Bassetlaw Branch. I don't know if we are getting older or if time is passing us by faster, but it does not seem long since I was writing the report for the summer activities. Fortunately we have a strong group of WRVS members who attend our meetings on a regular basis.

We began with this half of the year with our 'Swing into Shape' everyone seemed to have enjoyed it and participated, as long as they could sit on their chair! There might have been a few aches and pains the following day but no one complained

In October we had a speaker Mrs Judy Colby who came along to talk about her interest and activities associated with the Sheffield Amateur Dramatic Society. She was responsible for all the costumes and props needed for each of their performances. Everything she used was recycled from everyday articles that we would normally throw away; she could find a use for everything and we learnt a few lessons from her!

December was our Christmas lunch, which was enjoyed by all, so much so that, we have already booked for 2010. What can be nicer than to have good food and good companions at any time of the year? Our next meeting will be are AGM with a 'Faith Lunch'. The faith comes in, hoping we shall get new members and that perhaps we shall have volunteers for the committee, who knows!

The roundest knight at King Arthur's table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much PI



Following the funeral of Div Rep Jenny Smith, her husband Mike generously made a donation to the WRVS Benevolent Trust from the collection on the day.

He is seen here presenting the cheque for £1285.00 to Alice Cleland CBE chairman, of the Trust at the Association AGM last September

PUBLICITY / RECRUITMENT REPORT Lily Carling

It is not clear how many association members reported as 'lost' can be attributed to the recount following the recent questionnaire, but our membership is again slightly down on last year. Disappointing as this may seem, we do now have a truer picture of where we stand and this should act as a motivator for us all in the future. The push for new members continues to play a large part in the Association's programme and we are concentrating heavily on this

Those members who have seen the new application form have indicated their approval to me, but it has been proposed that provision be made on it for the applicant's date of birth. Such information isn't strictly necessary but it has been suggested that it might be useful for organisers to know such things as when a member's significant birthday is coming up! Comments would be very useful here. My own view is that it should be optional as not everyone likes to divulge what is seen as private information.

By the time this report goes out I will have attended at least one of the meetings to be run by WRVS as informal chats with both volunteers and service users to get their views on fundraising and legacy-giving. If the opportunity arises you can be sure I will also spread the word as to what the Association has to offer. Perhaps you can think of a situation where you might do the same? Just think, if we all recruited one new member each the future of the Association would be secure for years to come

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*Please use these contact details
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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 September 2010**

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 –