

# WRVS Association

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 74

Spring 2011

Letter from the Chairman,  
Priory Street Centre, 15 Priory Street, York, YO1 6ET (office)

Dear Member

It is with pleasure that I write my first letter to you as Chairman of the WRVS Association.

I would like to meet as many members as possible during my term of office. If you are organising a celebration or an AGM in your area please contact the office in York with details and if possible I will try to come along.

The Association AGM in October was held in York and I was able to chat to members there. I always enjoy meeting people from other parts of the country, it makes one realise how much we have in common just through being involved with the WRVS.

The winter so far has been quite severe with lots of snow in many areas and very cold. I know many Association events had to be postponed over the Christmas and New Year period due to the bad weather. Hopefully we can now look forward to the Spring and better days ahead.

I have noticed that there are snowdrops in bloom in my garden, always a good sign that we are heading towards more favourable weather.

This letter comes with very best wishes to all

*Marilyn Openshaw*

**WRVS Association - Linking the Past and Present**

## Random jottings from the Editor

Dear Members

As we gallop away from one of the worst winters in living memory to the hopeful prospect of a compensatory Spring and Summer, I have tempted fate by removing my roundabout clothes dryer and replaced it with a washing line. Is there anything nicer than a line of washing blowing in the breeze? Remember the joy of a row of terry nappies bleached white by the sun? The rescuing of sheets from the bushes when a sudden gust of wind billowed them away? Gathering it all in and smelling the freshness that is absorbed into the very strands of the linens, only to then realise that you are left with a pile of ironing?



You will notice that the newsletter is smaller this time. With no reports from the Channel Islands, and various other areas around the country, my supply of 'fillers' was about to overtake the news from the divisions. Where I have managed to speak to a Div Rep, I have asked for a report that says 'nothing has happened'; but that cannot be what you want to hear. Please try and send something in to share with other members, especially if you are a lone voice that still gets the newsletter but is not a member of a group. Let us know you are there!

It is not often that you hear me 'eating my own words' but I have to admit to willingly chewing the cud over this one (sorry about the mixed metaphors). It was the Radio 2 thing with the loss of Terry and his Togs. I thought that I would never understand a word that young whippersnapper Chris Evans had to say as he speaks so fast. But now that my mind can tune into him, I have to say that it is a pleasure to listen to someone who is so positive in all that he says. Whereas you-know-who on Radio 4 now has me reaching for the off dial, as he is rude both in what he says, the way he says it and his constant interrupting having asked a question! Never thought that I would prefer it that way round

Finally it is with much sadness that I report the passing of Ness Venables. She was my predecessor as the editor of the Newsletter for eleven years, and sadly died in November at the age of 91. Please see the wonderful report of her WRVS activities on page 10.

Best wishes to you all

Paulene

Paulene Lambert

At last year's AGM in York, Chairman Sylvia Hatchell read a message from the WRVS announcing plans to create a 'Network' of Volunteers, ex volunteers, retired volunteers, staff, sponsors, friends and families of recipients of WRVS care

There were references to people being called 'supporters' which did not go down well, and various other things that were anathema to members

The impression was that our WRVS Association would no longer exist

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The Divisional Representatives discussed this at length, as did the members that were at the AGM

With so many branches closing, with so few Div Reps, and with an ageing membership, many thought that it might well be time for the Association to end its days

Of course there were those that thought it should continue, but these voices were mainly from the Midlands and the North of the Country where there is much more input into the Association. Certainly many in the South thought that it was past its prime

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New Chairman Marilyn and Editor Paulene representing the committee have had a meeting with Alistair McDougall, WRVS Director for People

Various amendments were made to the first and second draft of the proposal for the Network and this is what we understand will be happening

The new Network will be run as a component part of the WRVS from their Cardiff office, will be free to join, and will be for anyone who wants to be associated with the Work of the WRVS

It will run alongside the Association, at least in the short term

## WALES

SOUTH Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Gibbons OBE

There is very little news from South Wales to impart. We are all getting older, many members are finding it difficult to cope on their own any longer and immediate family have insufficient room in their homes for them so they are moving into Residential Care.

Doris Travis, who was District Organiser for Newport and looked after the members in the South of Gwent, has sight problems and has moved nearer her daughter in Caerleon. Unfortunately most of her members have either become ill or have died so the group no longer meet.

The Abergavenny members – like us all – are getting older but still like to meet three or four times a year to keep in touch. Marjorie Stinchcombe, who was Local Organiser for Abergavenny, has for many years arranged their meetings but ill health has prevented her from doing this for a few months and the weather has not been good on the edge of the Brecon Beacons. When the weather improves I am sure they will be lunching again at one of the very good eateries to be found in their part of Wales.

Carmarthen is the meeting place of the Dyfed group, and once again we had a very good Christmas Lunch in the Falcon in the centre of town. Some of the members are still doing WRVS work like Country Cars or Meals on Wheels but the majority of them are just enjoying life and Grandchildren.

I still work in the WRVS Hospital Shop in Morriston, Swansea and find great satisfaction in seeing old WRVS members as they come in for treatment etc. It is just so sad that the paid staff – and we could not run the shop without paid staff – have not a clue about the WRVS of days gone by let alone the WVS. It was lovely to see, in the last edition of 'Action' that there is one person working in the WRVS Headquarters in Cardiff, who does know about WRVS and its past – Mrs. Margaret Davies. She was one of our staff in Welsh Head Office in 'the old days' when the headed notepaper had to be in Welsh as well as English!

A Happy and Healthy New Year to you all as we look forward to meeting again when the weather improves and the summer comes.

First of all I must apologise that I did not send Christmas cards to anyone this year. November and December were disrupted by heavy falls of snow and I was unable to get out for nearly 3 weeks. Then January came and I got shingles!! So I have been unable to go anywhere until I am no longer 'infectious'.

Not a lot has been happening in North Wales.

The news that I have is as follows; Shirley Bellis received a well deserved award, for her service to the local community, from the Rhos-on-Sea branch of Rotary Club International. Colwyn Bay gave a birthday party for Laurette Danson. Laurette and her sister Rita joined WVS in 1938/9 and used to meet evacuees from Liverpool and Manchester at the local station. Although no longer an active WRVS member, Laurette works with SAFFA and is a local councillor. I have received a report that Miss Boden has recently been in hospital after an accident in her home. Finally I would just like to say that I would really love to hear from anyone in my area. When you get this I will no longer be infectious and the weather will be right for me to travel!

## 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](mailto:wrvsbenevolenttrust@hotmail.co.uk)

Visit our webpages at [www.wrvs.org.uk](http://www.wrvs.org.uk)

Charity no. 261931



Our founder Lady Reading

## NORTH EAST DIVISION

### SOUTH AND WEST YORKSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs June Pitts BEM

First report comes from Mrs Gillian Highley MBE of the Calderdale Group. Since our last report we have held our Annual Afternoon Tea, which is always well attended and seems to be appreciated as we provide home baking and trifle. Why is trifle always so popular? We asked the Entertainers from last year to return as they were very much appreciated and their choice of songs so varied

We were unable to have our lunch in October as there was a burst pipe in the kitchen and a new part floor was needed. We are lucky with our meeting place, the Maurice Jagger Centre that is very central and built especially for the Elderly and Disabled by a Councillor Jagger of Halifax who raised all the funds necessary

In November we attended our local Cenotaph and laid the wreath supplied by



WRVS HQ in Cardiff. We assemble at the Town Hall and process to the Cenotaph for 11am before going into our newly designated Minster for the Service. Rather a motley crew, but we still like to wear our green and maroon, we are L-R Miss Christine Holland, Mrs Dorothy Bunce, Miss Kathleen Robinson, Mrs Gillian Highley MBE. Between us we have 120 years of service

In December we had our members Christmas Coffee morning at our Organiser's house and this year everyone was able to attend. This is an opportunity to just sit and chat without having to work although we all enjoy the lunches so much that it never seems a chore to prepare them

Our Christmas lunch was cooked entirely from scratch we had pork and all the trimmings. Each member received a gift collected and donated by Dorothy Bunce and Kathleen Robinson

Our Annual Fish and Chip lunch for WRVS Association members has been held over to the New Year so that everyone can be present

#### **TYNE AND WEAR**

Div. Rep. Frances Somers

On the first Saturday of October 2010 the AGM of the Association was held in York, and it was preceded by a meeting on Friday evening of Div. Reps from across the country. The issues raised at these two meetings were both important and of a degree of urgency, so the Sunderland branch postponed their October speaker and held a business meeting instead. We discussed the future of the Association (three options were explored), and members response to proposals from WRVS HQ for a Support Network. Sunderland members were unanimous in rejecting the Support Network, and in accepting that the Association had a necessarily limited lifespan and that they would wish decisions about its future to be made by the Association itself in a timely and orderly manner.

The November meeting was our Christmas lunch; a delicious savoury buffet provided by a catering firm, followed by a selection of Sainsbury's mouth watering desserts. We drank wine, fruit juice and coffee and talked long and happily. To add great pleasure to the occasion we were fortunate to have the services of a member's husband, Hugh Bevan, whose wonderful organ playing provided a festive backing to the event.

In December we met earlier than normal for a sherry and mince pie party to gear us up for the Christmas season. This was in the depths of our "snow-in" time so attendees were fewer than usual, but those intrepid enough to make it had a most enjoyable time to round off another year of WRVS friendship.

## CLEVELAND, DARLINGTON, DURHAM, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Ros Rowntree

The very cold, icy and snow filled conditions of November/December which caused many in the Division to cancel meetings has not dampened your spirits, with all Branches having met in January.

The Harrogate report has come from chairman Mrs. Sheila Pantin who says that they managed without any casualties during December and hope to have their 'Festive Lunch' in February, weather permitting. Sadly they have lost one member during the year, Mrs Ethel Trew, a stalwart member who over the last few years had been unable to join in meetings. As usual the group have had several theatre outings and attended concerts at the beautiful Royal Hall as well as their lively monthly coffee mornings.

The Hartlepool report came from Co-ordinator Mrs Ida Hodgman. She says we don't usually have a meeting in August but this year one of our members, Dorothy Arthur, celebrated her 100th Birthday so we had a surprise party for her. She was so surprised when Ros, our Divisional Representative presented her with a floral arrangement and then she had to cut her celebration cake. Dorothy still attends all our meetings organising and running our monthly raffles!

The summer outing was to Keswick calling at a lovely farm shop and cafe on the way. The weather was not good but we were indoors having a meal during the worst rain. Our speakers have included a gentleman showing slides of a Mediterranean Cruise and someone from a local Nursery who showed us how to make hanging baskets and look after houseplants. At our October meeting we listened to two ladies telling us about a nursery school in Gambia that they are fund raising for. We saw photographs showing the building's progress. Their next target is to install doors, windows and toilets. We saw local crafts and the lovely clothing the men make. The work in them was very impressive.

We are now looking forward to our New Year lunch when we will be celebrating our 25th Anniversary hoping that the weather will be better than last year when we had deep snow.

Sadly Hartlepool lost their founding member, Mrs Edith Stamp, just before Christmas. She came to Hartlepool from Grimsby with her husband in 1964 and soon joined the WVS taking on the huge job of Children's Holiday Organiser. Later she became the District Organiser, a post from which she retired in 1985. She was then asked to form a Branch of the WRVS Association, which had its inaugural meeting in January 1986. She was chairman of the Branch until February 2009 and remained as President. Edith was a very distinguished member of the WVS/WRVS, totally committed, giving unstintingly of her time for the benefit of others. She was awarded the WVS Long Service Medal and later a



40 years certificate, both of which she was very proud to hold. Members of the Hartlepool Branch of the Association gathered at Westbourne Methodist Church, Hartlepool, for a service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance for her life.

The Scarborough Branch members enjoyed two outings in late summer. The first to Glaisdale, on a sunny day, when 25 members joined with WI members having a Soup and Sandwich pub lunch and then on to see the Esk Valley Theatre company presentation of "Second in the Sack Race". In September 42 members and friends went by coach to Helmsley for a stroll, or shopping, and then on to Ampleforth Abbey where Father Absolem gave us an excellent guided tour. This was followed by tea in the cafe.

In October, 32 members were treated to a talk by Ben Purvis of the Scarborough Fire and Rescue Service on the History of the Scarborough Fire Brigade with slides and artefacts at which several members gave their own recollections. Also discussed was Safety in the Home. In November lunch at The Coachman, in Snainton was enjoyed by 32 members and was followed in December, on a very cold day with plenty of snow and ice about, with a visit to Irton Garden Centre for coffee and scones and that last minute Christmas shopping from their wonderful display of gifts.

In the New Year, 38 members met for the AGM and enjoyed coffee and cakes. The past year was reviewed and the new programme revealed - all wonderfully put together by chairman Christine Hepworth.

The York Branch report comes from chairman Mrs Millie Wilks. We were saddened by the death of our President, Mrs Ness Venables who died in November, just weeks before her 92nd birthday. Our sympathy goes to her husband Peter who supported her so well in all her activities and to her two sons and grandchildren. Eight members from York were able to attend the 'Meeting for Celebration of Her Life', held at the crematorium on 25th November. It was a wonderful tribute to her life-long dedication and service. Unfortunately, Ness was unable to attend our 25th Anniversary celebration, which was held at the AGM on 5th October. This was sad because she founded the group in 1985. However, we were pleased to welcome our Divisional Rep. Mrs Ros Rowntree together with the newly elected Chairperson of the Association, Mrs Marilyn Openshaw who travelled from the Wirral to be with us. She brought congratulations and good wishes from the Association. After the business meeting and some reminiscences Marilyn and Ros cut a specially iced birthday cake and we enjoyed an afternoon tea (not prepared by members). Twelve members met again in January for a New Year lunch at the Blakeney Hotel, excellent as usual. We shall meet again in March at the Friend's Meeting House. Unfortunately the cost of room hire has again increased.

## **And finally from York some words about Ness Venables that have been sent in by Peter, her husband of many years**

A Christmas Day baby of 1918, Ness died peacefully at home on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2010 at the age of 91

Her first contact with the WVS was in 1941. At that time she was employed by the Food Advice division of the Ministry of Food in Liverpool, teaching housewives how to cope with meagre wartime rations. In May 1941 Liverpool suffered a Blitz which was directed to a large extent at the docks and a ship loaded with ammunition took a direct hit destroying a large area of the docks and in particular the canteen which was used to feed the dockers. Without food these men could not continue their vital work. Ness with only one other colleague was drafted to arrange for food to be provided. With the aid of the Pioneer Corps rations were brought in for 5000 a day but how were these to be cooked and given out? Ness was almost in despair when a convoy of buses drove into the park where she was working and out came what Ness describes in her autobiography as an 'army of grandmas, most of them stout and grey haired', the WVS had arrived and 'reported' to the Ministry of Food 'officials', perhaps 40 years their juniors. With WVS and Army help the dockers were fed and Ness had her first introduction to the WVS and incidentally Soyer boilers

After the war Ness moved to London to the Ministry of Food, concocting ways of cooking with the continuing meagre rations (rationing did not end until 1951). When her first son was born she retired to look after the family, being a strong believer in the idea that mothers should look after their children at home, at least in their early years. In Caterham where the family lived from 1964 to 1974 she worked for the WRVS delivering Meals on Wheels, running a lunch club for old people and representing WRVS on the local council welfare committee.

In 1974 the family moved to York where at first she worked on a Meals on Wheels round but was then approached to volunteer for the post of District Organiser of the WRVS in York. The office had had no Organizer for several years and was rather run down. Ness was instrumental in building up the service in York so that when she retired in 1983 at the age of 65 there were 650 volunteers working in York on a regular basis. One of the biggest jobs that she did was to organize the work in the then new District Hospital where the WRVS ran tea bars, a hospital shop and trolley services with 140 volunteers. She was also responsible for starting several clubs for old people and in particular one for the Visually Handicapped which she continued to be involved with for nearly 30 years until 2006 when she had to drop out due to ill health.

After her retirement, Ness decided to repair an omission which she had regretted since she was in her twenties. This was to get a University degree. She learned how to use a computer and spent six years working for an Open University

degree in literature and art history. Eventually at the age of 75 she stumped across the stage at the Harrogate conference centre, having broken her leg a few weeks before to receive her certificate.

She was asked to start the WRVS Association branch in York, which has run successfully for many years. As part of the activities of the branch she arranged an annual holiday by coach. This involved a lot of preparation, arranging for accommodation as cheaply as possible and outings to interesting places. She ran these holidays for ten years and those who went on them remember them fondly. Finally her work for the Association was that of Newsletter Editor setting up the layout, inviting contributions of articles and cartoons and of course publishing the news from branches around the country. She did this until her health made continuation impossible and she handed over to Paulene.

Although frail she was able to enjoy her Diamond Wedding and her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party with her family around her. In the last chapter of her autobiography she quoted Kierkegaard saying, 'Life can only be understood backwards but it must be lived forward' She was an inspiring lady who lived her life forward.

#### **LEICESTERSHIRE, LINCOLNSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

Div. Rep. Mike Smith

Jean Heason, secretary Bassetlaw branch writes 'Since our last newsletter we don't have a lot to report, it has been a very quiet time. We continue to have visits out for lunch, which everyone seems to enjoy and which gives us the opportunity to chat with other members that we don't see very often.

We did have the Director of Robin Hood Airport to speak to us in October and he was very informative about the trials and tribulations of running an airport. Unfortunately we had to cancel our Christmas lunch because of the bad weather but we are planning to have it very soon, can't miss out the chance to meet to eat! Hope you all had a merry Christmas and we wish you a Healthy and Peaceful New Year '

Sheila Court says that in September she was away in France for a much needed holiday, but the Rushcliffe Association members met for a coffee and chat morning after our usual August break. So October came and the first mention of Christmas was made when the menus for our festive lunch were distributed; it really does seem to arrive earlier each year. Of course October was interesting in another way as Olive Humm and I went to York for the AGM and Reunion of the Association. Once again it was great to see so many familiar faces and hear all the news, even though some of it is hard to accept. The possible end to our

organisation known as the WRVS Association hopefully will be thought about long and hard by the powers that be at WRVS HQ.

A speaker was booked for the meeting in November. Mrs. Mary Lower MBE, a former member of WRVS, and the person who had the idea for Contact Centres. Mary a JP on the family bench realised that there was a need for somewhere that families with young children could meet on neutral ground. With enormous support from her church the meetings started to take place 25 years ago and Mary told us the story behind this idea and the success that there has been setting up centres all over the UK. Her MBE was presented to her for this work. Then came the Christmas lunch at our now usual venue, the Masonic Hall, in West Bridgford. Once again we had a lovely meal, although Mike Smith was snowed in, in the north of the County and sent his apologies, as did three of the members. We do not now meet in January and February, so we all look forward to March when we see each other again.

**NORTHUMBERLAND** No Report  
Div. Rep. Mrs Sheila McCormack BEM

**EAST YORKSHIRE TO HUMBER AND HULL** No Report  
Div. Rep. Mrs Robina Priestley

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### **SERIOUS HEARING PROBLEM**

An elderly gentleman had a serious hearing problem for a number of years. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the gentleman to hear 100%. The elderly gentleman went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, 'Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again.' The gentleman replied, 'Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!'

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### **WHEEL CHAIR FOR PATIENTS**

Hospital regulations require a wheel chair for patients being discharged. However, while working as a student nurse, I found one elderly gentleman already dressed and sitting on the bed with a suitcase at his feet, who insisted he didn't need my help to leave the hospital. After a chat about rules being rules, he reluctantly let me wheel him to the elevator. On the way down I asked him if his wife was meeting him. 'I don't know,' he said. 'She's still upstairs in the bathroom changing out of her hospital gown.'

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## **SOUTH WEST DIVISION**

### **DORSET & WILTSHIRE; DEVON AND CORNWALL**

Div. Rep. Mrs Alice Cleland CBE

Not a lot to report from either the Wiltshire County branch or Swindon. Wiltshire met for a very pleasant coffee morning with mince pies at the home of Denise Smyter. This has become an annual event that we very much look forward to. Swindon sadly had to cancel their Christmas lunch because of the snow. Events are being planned for the Spring but we feel we cannot really plan ahead till we know what the future holds.

### **SOMERSET AND AVON**

Div. Rep. Mrs Sheila Scholey

We are still hoping to hold a small get together in North Somerset but the arctic weather, since well before Christmas, has meant our plans have had to be put on hold. I do hope some of you will be able to join us, when we contact you with a new date. Tentative plans possibly April/May time. In the mean time, do keep warm and well

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### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

Michael had long heard the stories of an amazing family tradition. It seems that his father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all been able to walk on water on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. On that special day they had each walked across the lake to the pub on the far side for their first legal drink.

So when Michael's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday came around he and his pal took a boat out to the middle of the lake. Michael stepped out of the boat and went straight under the water. Furious and confused, Michael went to see his grandmother

'Grandma' he asked, 'It's my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, so why can't I walk across the lake like my father, his father and his father before him?' Granny looked lovingly into his troubled eyes and said 'Because your father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all born in December when the lake is frozen, and you were born in August'

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## NORTH WEST DIVISION

No Div Rep in Cheshire, but we have news that Mrs Olive Mason BEM died in October 2010, at the age of 94.

In 1957 Olive was asked to join 4 other ladies to revive the WVS (now WRVS) in Wilmslow, Cheshire. They provided various services including cooking for Pensioners Luncheon Club, food clinics, ambulance escorts, hosting blood donor clinics, clothing store and home visits, including the Hungarian refugees who were housed at the old Styal prison.

In 1965 they started a trolley shop at the Mary Dendy Hospital for mentally handicapped people in Great Warford, Near Alderley Edge, about 3 miles from Wilmslow. Then in 1972 the hospital built a purpose made shop that Olive ran (voluntarily) with regular helpers.



During the 17 years the profits were used to provide TVs, garden furniture, toy library, sports equipment, cookery equipment, aquariums, etc.etc.

Olive was awarded the WRVS Long Service Medal in 1971 and the Clasp for the Medal in 1984 and in 1983 she was awarded the British Empire Medal (B.E.M.), for her dedication and service to others, which was presented to her by Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire, Lord Leverhulme, at Thornton Manor, Wirral. Information from her son, Richard Mason

## **NORTH AND SOUTH MANCHESTER**

Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Matthews BEM

The Bury Group set off in glorious sunshine on 8th October for their outing to the Fylde Coast. We picked up our guide for the day at the service station on the M61 and we all gasped as the lady tripped over a kerb nearing the coach - thankfully no bones were broken but she must have suffered some nasty bruising. As we approached Preston en route to the Barton Grange Garden Centre near Garstang for our morning coffee the sun disappeared and left us with a dull very misty day, which persisted until our return journey. Despite that disappointment we went on to have a fantastic three-course lunch at the Royal Hotel on the promenade at Cleveleys. Later the guide took us on an interesting "Lancashire Tales Tour" and we finished our day browsing in the shops/cafes at Lytham. It was rather a blow to discover that it had remained a beautiful day in Bury but nevertheless we all had a very enjoyable time. The Bury Group are now all looking forward to their Christmas Lunch at Park Farm on 1st February.

Our Prestwich ladies have again had the pleasure of meeting monthly at the home of Rose Walsh. We offer our grateful thanks to Rose for continuing to provide such enjoyable hospitality.

The Sal members still take turns to provide the venue for their coffee mornings. We would like to thank everyone concerned and in particular Joan Allmark for co-ordinating these events and also organising the excellent Christmas Lunch at the Hare and Hounds in Timperley. May I take this opportunity to record my heartfelt thanks for the very warm welcome I received and the lovely Christmas cards. The friendly atmosphere made it a most happy day and it was pleasing that nearly everyone was able to attend despite the extreme cold weather.

Everyone who attended the 2010 AGM in York agreed that it had been a great weekend - the hotel was very well situated and food, facilities and staff excellent. There was also a good number of Day Delegates on the Saturday. Sincere thanks again from Ken and myself to retiring Chairman Sylvia and all who were concerned in the organisation. The torrential rain on the Friday and Sunday will always be remembered (even the M62 was flooded on our return journey) but it did not mar the enjoyment and we look forward to the 2011 re-union.

## MERSEYSIDE

Div. Rep. Mrs Sylvia Hatchell

In and around Merseyside, as charged at the AGM I have visited the three active groups and spoken to the members present at these meetings. Firstly I reported on the business brought up at the AGM including the suggestion from the Div. Reps that perhaps it was time to call time on the Association. I then gave details of the proposal I had received from the WRVS as to the amalgamation of the Association within a WRVS Supporters Network. I spoke of the support promised by WRVS however the members across Merseyside were not interested in this proposal. The members were all in favour of continuing to meet as friends with no allegiance to WRVS. This message came across loud and clear from groups in St. Helens, Sefton and Wirral.

The groups all celebrated Christmas with lunches and the Wirral one was honoured with the presence of new Chairman Marilyn. The groups continue to meet regularly and enjoy each others company.....and the food at their chosen hostelries. There is really no more to report at the moment.

Diane Smith writes from St Helens to say that seven members continue to meet each month for lunch and in September we had a lively discussion about the proposal of a WRVS Supporter Network. We were saddened that the Association eventually will be disbanded if the proposal takes place but we were not surprised. We welcome the fact that the Service feels the need to keep in touch with past volunteers thus recognising the contribution they have made. However, we wonder how effectively this will be carried out? We feel this is all too late for us to benefit but we shall still continue to meet each month as friends.



## SOUTH EAST DIVISION

### LONDON NE & CITY

Mrs Win Taylor OBE DL,

For some time, Div Rep Win has been concerned about the amount of funds held by her group, as there appeared to be no way of using it for the members benefit. So following discussions with the few members that she has left, Win made two presentations at the AGM in York. £100 was gifted to the WRVS Benevolent Trust and £100 was gifted to the WRVS Association. Both the Trust and the Association were extremely grateful for the thoughtful disposal of excess assets

### LONDON SE

Mrs Grace Cleverly,

At 94 Grace feels it is time to resign as Div Rep, especially as she is no longer in the best of health. She sent several Christmas cards to her members, but only had one in return so she feels that she has lost contact with members. She now sends greetings to anyone in her area, and especially to those who used to work at St Chad's back in Mary Wilkinson's time.

### NORFOLK

Mrs Mary Harris writes from the North Norfolk Branch to report that 2010 saw the members meet for their Spring Lunch in Cromer in April and in September Jane Bowden hosted a coffee morning at her bungalow home. In December they enjoyed a Christmas Lunch again at the Virginia Court Hotel

*(Thank you Mary for keeping us up to date even though you are not 'official' - Ed)*

### OXFORDSHIRE, BEDFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Joint Mrs Jean Callaway,  
Div. Reps. Mrs Sheila Wilson,

Bedfordshire The Annual Christmas Lunch, in Great Barford Village Hall, fortunately was held a few days before the snows descended, and was well attended. The committee presented members with a very tasty buffet lunch despite their gaining access to the Hall only a short time before everyone was due to arrive. The lunch provided an opportunity to say goodbye to Mrs Dorothy Ward, formerly County and then Area Organiser of WRVS and a popular supporter of the Association. Pat Henderson-Begg, former County Emergency Services Organiser, who recruited Dorothy to WRVS when the Emergency Services were

called out to help with floods in Dorothy's village, presented her with a silver brooch.

We were pleased to welcome two new members Mr & Mrs Aitken who were able to join us at the Christmas lunch. Sadly in the last quarter we have lost two of our long-standing members Mr Eric Whitmore and Mrs Betty Spencer-Thomas.

Buckinghamshire The good news is that Margaret McRoberts is once again able to visit and chat with some of our older members: the bad news is that there is still no sign of support for her in maintaining the Association's contacts.

### **SURREY, KENT, SUSSEX**

Div. Rep. Mrs Joan Rosling,

Guildford members postponed their Christmas lunch last month due to heavy snow and it has finally been rearranged for February 2nd

Whilst in Kent, Julia Cooper reports that she went to a gathering to commemorate ten years since the Peckham area office closed. Eight members got together for a lunch at East Peckham Hop Farm. Julia is in Australia at present visiting her daughter but hopes to organise something for her members when she returns

### **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Brenda Smith,

Mary Harber sends this report as Brenda was taken ill at Christmas and is still not very well. We all hope she is soon back to full health.

The Christmas Dinner for the Rushden and Raunds Club was very well attended and very much enjoyed by everyone with plenty of chatter and a lot of laughter, Chris Carter who once again had arranged the event and who always makes it a special occasion for us was warmly thanked for all her hard work.

It is with sadness that I have to report that we have lost two long standing Members since the New Year and they are Mavis James who helped run the Lunch Club in Rushden and Muriel Allebone who was 96 years old and was our longest serving member, they will be greatly missed.

We are holding a coffee morning in May, which will be at the home of one of the members, and hopefully the weather will be warm enough to enjoy the garden.

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FOR SALE. Complete set of Encyclopedia Britannica. 45 volumes.  
Ex condition, £200. No longer needed, got married, husband knows everything

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## HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT

Joint. Mrs Beryl Adams,  
Div. Reprs Carol Milford,

Carol Milford writes that they have been unable to find a diary date suitable for Beryl, Joan and herself to discuss the way ahead, but they plan to keep trying. This comes with us all being too busy; who said you would have plenty of time when you are retired? From the last newsletter there has been a good response from people wanting to meet, so hopefully we will have some news soon.

On a personal note it has been good to become involved with my local Luncheon Club at Rowland's Castle, where they serve up to 24 meals a week to a very friendly group of ladies and gentlemen who appreciate the opportunity of a home cooked meal and time to catch up with old friends. Being part of team locally is lovely and there is a great atmosphere of amazing volunteers with lots of ideas, new recipes and good fun, which is a recipe itself that is common throughout the WRVS, I hope you are all enjoying your volunteering as much as we are at Rowland's Castle.

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### MANAGEMENT VS IT

A man in a hot air balloon, realising that he was lost, reduced altitude and spotted a woman below. He descended further and shouted, 'Excuse me, can you help me? I told a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I don't know where I am'

The woman said, 'you are in a hot air balloon, hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground. You are between 40 and 41 degrees north and between 59 and 60 degrees west latitude'

'You must be in IT, said the balloonist

'Actually I am' replied the woman, 'but how did you know?'

'Well' answered the balloonist 'everything you have told me is technically correct but I have no idea what to make of the information and the fact is I am still lost. You have not been much help at all, if anything, you have delayed my trip'

The woman below responded, 'You must be in management'

'Yes I am' replied the man, 'but how did you know?'

'Well', said the woman, 'you do not know where you are or where you are going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise which you have no idea how to keep, and you expect people below you to solve your problems. The fact is that you are in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but now, somehow, it's my fault!'

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*These contact details are for all administration of the Association including change of address notification, Membership, Subscription & Newsletter Circulation*

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Ruth Markland - Chairman WRVS

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The following address is only for contributions for the next Newsletter  
**By 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011 please**

The Editor

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

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