

WRVS Association

NEWSLETTER

Issue 76

Spring 2012

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

Dear Member

Once again it is time to compose my letter as Chairman of the Association. Time seems to go by so quickly and it does not seem very long since the last one.

I have been very pleased to attend a number of AGM's, Anniversary Celebrations and Christmas meals with various branches and enjoyed them all. It was good to meet so many people, so thank you for the kind invitations and for making me so very welcome

Our thoughts are turning already to the 2012 AGM that once again is to be held in York. A decision has been made that this will be the last AGM of the Association. The number of members is decreasing each year and although it will be very sad to see it go, we do not want to see the organisation gradually fade away. It is sad that we are facing the end of our organisation but all the groups throughout the country will, I am sure, carry on meeting just as they have always done. I wish all groups and individual members well in the future

The AGM will not be our final event as we intend having a celebration in June 2013, the 40th Anniversary of the Association. I hope that many of you will come together for a final farewell, especially as it will coincide with the 75th Anniversary of the WRVS

We have the spring and summer to look forward to and I for one will be glad when the warmer weather comes along. At least we can be thankful that the winter has not been as bad this time

I am still happy to visit you. Please contact the office in York if you wish me to meet you and your group sometime in the next twelve months

Marilyn Openshaw

WRVS Association - Linking the Past and Present

Random jottings from the Editor

Dear Members

Recently, I had one of those eureka moments, but it was in the shower, not the bath. It was while I was washing my hair, when I saw printed very clearly on the label the warning that it was 'for extra volume and body.' So, as the lather inevitably runs down over my whole body, I am getting rid of the shampoo and using dishwashing liquid instead as it promises to 'get rid of fat that is otherwise difficult to remove'. Problem solved



Now down to more serious thoughts. You will have just read that the decision has been made to close the Association, and that we want to go out with something of a celebration rather than just dwindling to nothing. So I am asking for ideas about what we could do. I would like to think that lots more people would like to attend, rather than just the few stalwarts that turn up for the annual reunion. So we are asking what you might like to do. Suggestions so far have included a meeting in London, or a coastal venue, that would probably involve at least one night away for most people. It might include a church service or a talk from a dignitary of one sort or another. Or you might have a better idea! Please let me know

The bottom line is we want to celebrate our forty years and we want you there to make it an occasion. Please let me have your thoughts as soon as possible and we can look into venues and prices – no commitment at this stage, just ideas

There are far too many 'extras' and 'fillers' in this edition, but I am sure you understand that with hardly any news from the clubs, I did want to make sure you had something to read with your cup of tea. I just hope you get some pleasure from them. I have even managed to find a few line drawings for you to doodle with; perhaps you have still got some crayons?

Most contributors have asked if this will be the last newsletter for the Association. I hope not. There will be at least one more. If you have something to say then I will be here to transcribe it to the page, so go on, write something now and send it to me whilst you still remember

Best wishes to you all

Paulene

Paulene Lambert

CHANNEL ISLANDS

GUERNSEY - NO REPORT

Mrs Margaret Chilcott

JERSEY - NO REPORT

Mrs Jill O'Byrne

WALES

SOUTH Div. Rep. Mrs Mary Gibbons OBE

My sincere apologies for not sending a report for the Autumn Newsletter. The same day I received my copy I also received a phone call from one of the South Wales members asking 'why no report?' so I am writing this in early January to make sure I am on time

Mrs. Doris Travis, BEM, was the member who phoned me. Doris was for many years the District Organiser for Newport (Gwent) and it was because of her work for WVS/WRVS that she was awarded the British Empire Medal many years ago. Last year she was asked if she would speak to a group about her work with the Service. This she was pleased to do and has since spoken to her local U3A. The City Council has now invited her to attend a Banquet at 'The Celtic Manor', which was in the news when it hosted the Golf Ryder Cup. She was of course delighted to accept and I have now heard from Doris about the presentation evening she attended. It was an 'Extra Mile Awards' Evening and I have to say it was lovely to see Doris's name in the list of award winners as having been a member of WRVS for over 40 years. As Doris says WRVS was well known and acknowledged with a great ovation; and it was a good opportunity for her to wear her 'ribbons'

The Dyfed Group had their 'summer' meeting in September – too late for going to press – and they went to St. Fagans, which is the Welsh Folk Museum just outside Cardiff. There was not a large attendance but those that went thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Most people living in South Wales have been to St. Fagans as it is a great favourite with families and school trips. In November the group had

their Christmas Meal at the Falcon in Carmarthen that was well attended. The members of this group would be delighted if other Association members living nearby would like to join them. If you contact me I will be pleased to pass on your particulars to Elizabeth John the organiser

Unfortunately the Abergavenny members have not met since 2010. Marjorie Stinchcombe, who has always organised their get-togethers, has not been too well and has not been able to do so. I live about 50 miles away so although I always try and join them for lunch I'm not really in a position to take over the organisation

For only the second time ever I went to the Association AGM last autumn. I met members I hadn't seen for more years than I care to remember. As Paulene said in the last Newsletter, it could be time for the Association to call it a day. New members have not come forward in any numbers in Wales for a long while and unless they come from the old county of Dyfed there is not a group for them to join. If you are out there and want to join up with other Association members please phone me

NORTH - Div. Rep. Shelagh Murray -No Report

We have received a sobering report of an incident that will shock many of you, and sadly this is not a joke.

A MOW van was stolen whilst it was out delivering food.

'I don't believe it', I hear you cry, but unfortunately it is true. The details of names or places do not matter, but suffice to say that the two volunteers were both shocked and frightened that this could happen in broad daylight in a quiet residential street with people looking on. One lady was en route to a client with a meal whilst the second lady was sorting out the rest in the back of the van, when someone jumped into the driving seat and took off.

It is not yet known whether they will continue as WRVS MOW volunteers, or if they will decide that the streets are now not even safe for this.

Needless to say, no one went without a meal, thanks to the resourcefulness of the office - but is it wrong to hope that whoever got the food in the back of the van also got a very, very, very upset tummy?

NORTH EAST DIVISION

SOUTH AND WEST YORKSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs June Pitts BEM

Gillian Highley MBE of Calderdale wonders if this is the last time she will be writing. We are very much creatures of habit in Calderdale and I seem to write almost the same things each time. The Editor really does well to fill each edition of the magazine with so little news coming in. I will miss it but there we go! We all miss WRVS for various reasons. It seems to be in my blood and is very difficult to put down when you remember all the good times we have had together and some of the sad ones as well. How we have changed over the years

Does everyone find that the weeks just disappear? It seems no time at all since we received our last newsletter and it is time to submit details for the next

I think we were all sorry to read of the possible demise of the Association as that is our last link with the WRVS in Calderdale except for a very small Afternoon Club. It would seem that there is no longer a role for the Association within the WRVS new set up. This is sad but I suppose a sign of the times. However all of us in Calderdale would regret it but will continue, as I am sure other groups will do

On a better note it is very gratifying to hear that the noble history of WVS \WRVS is being preserved. The archives seem to be going well thanks to the hard work of a lot of people

In Calderdale we missed holding our Annual Tea Party but are planning a bumper one for the Jubilee. Our Christmas Lunch for the elderly was a great success this year; it seemed to run smoothly and was certainly delicious. Each attendee received a mystery present carefully wrapped by Dorothy Bunce and Kathleen Robinson. The numbers for lunch have increased and we are now at full capacity

The once a month lunches are now our Association meetings and most members are there. We each play our part in the preparation of the food, the cooking and serving under the direction of our Maitre'dé to ensure smooth running. The menu doesn't vary much with meat and potato pie one month and fish the next. The dishwasher, (now that we know how to use it), is making things easier!

Never criticise your partner's faults because it may have been these little imperfections that stopped them getting a better spouse

TYNE AND WEAR

Div. Rep. Frances Somers

The office have sadly reported receiving the resignation of Div Rep Frances and 32 members of the Association, so this will be the last newsletter that they receive



One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was very old, and the well needed to be covered up anyway; it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited all his neighbours to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement he quietened down.

A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well. He was astonished at what he saw. With each shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up.

As the farmer's neighbours continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and happily trotted off!

Life is going to shovel dirt on you. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a steppingstone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up.

What is not generally known is that the donkey came back and bit the farmer who had tried to bury him. The gash from the bite got infected, and the farmer eventually died in agony from septic shock.



Moral From Today's Lesson: When you do something wrong, and try to cover your back, it always comes back to bite you.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Div. Rep. Mrs Sheila McCormack BEM

There is very little to report from the county. The small group in Ponteland continue to meet when they are able to do so and otherwise keep in touch by phone calls. I hope to attend the next meeting of the Div Reps, but I see there are fewer and fewer of us

CLEVELAND, DARLINGTON, DURHAM, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mrs Ros Rowntree

VERY SINCERE APOLOGIES to Ros and all the members of this Division. Editor Paulene completely missed out their report from the last newsletter, so Ros now includes a 'bumper' report.

You will see that all branches have discussed the future of the Association and where, how or even if they would fit into the WRVS Network. For many it has been very distressing. The common factor to come out of the discussions is that they want to continue meeting with each other.

The Hartlepool report came from co-ordinator Ida Hodgman who states that the group are still meeting monthly - except in January when we were 'snowed off'. In February a lady from the local library brought some Reminiscence Boxes full of memorabilia containing kitchen utensils, educational items and clothing. It was all very interesting - our members kept on talking about it long after the lady had gone. The AGM held in March was conducted by Ros, our Div. Rep. and June Unwin as I was at a family funeral. My grateful thanks to them both. In April a bereavement counsellor visited. Hawes Creamery was our destination for the May outing, where the famous Wensleydale cheese is made. After a lovely meal we had a cheese making demonstration and tour of the museum. We rounded up our day with a visit to Hawes village. At the June meeting a group of young disabled people came and entertained us with a 'singing and signing' session. We were then all invited to join in which made a fun morning. In July we invited a gentleman to come and speak who told us of the time he went to Bill Deedes Memorial Service and all the celebrities he met. The August outing was to Richmond (Yorkshire). We called on the way at the Mainsgill Farm Shop and Cafe on the A66 where we were served with a delicious lunch. At our September meeting we shared Holiday Memories! All very interesting but it was also a very sad month for us all as our oldest member Dorothy Arthur died just days after her 101st birthday. She had been a very active member until May and had organised the monthly raffle right up until April. In October we had a games and quiz

morning which was a change from our usual activities. The November meeting was held at the local special school and college where the students who showed us their facilities also entertained us. They run a coffee shop, a beauty salon and other enterprise projects. After tea and scones in the coffee shop we were invited to go back sometimes for a 'pamper day' in the salon followed by lunch in the coffee shop. 2012 started with an enjoyable festive lunch at a local hotel,

The Scarborough Branch members continue to meet monthly with a very varied programme organised by chairman Mrs Christine Hepworth which began with an interesting and absorbing talk on the Scarborough Maritime Heritage Centre, given by Lindy Rowley, on the work done by volunteers in cataloguing the artefacts and the setting up the museum. Lindy also brought a selection of traditional Ganseys worn by the fisherman. Members enjoyed an excellent Spring lunch meeting at the Mount Hotel in Scarborough and later a little retail therapy. In May, Robert Hartley from Filey Folk Club came with his guitars and entertained us with some traditional folks songs ending with a sing-a-long. At the June Afternoon Tea we were invited to wear something purple for Prose and Poetry readings given by Aileen Sadler, one of our own members. The Summer Outing was again to Glaisdale. The day began fine and warm ensuring we saw the heather on the moors at its best. We had a very substantial sandwich lunch at Cross Butts Farm before going on to the Robinson Institute, Glaisdale, for a production of the thriller 'Dangerous Obsession' given by the Esk Valley Theatre Company. An excellent production, with just three actors, which had us all sitting on the edges of our seats. In the autumn a talk given by the Samaritans gave members an insight into the depth and breadth of the wonderful work that they do. A lunch, in October, held at the Park Manor Hotel celebrated the 25 Anniversary of the formation of the Scarborough Branch and we were delighted to be joined by National Chairman, Marilyn Openshaw and Divisional Representative, Mike Smith. The final meeting of the year was to Irton Garden Centre for Coffee, enormous scones and Christmas shopping.

The year 2012 started with the AGM in our new venue at Wreyfield Methodist Hall when we had another discussion on the future and the 'Network'. We also celebrated the 90th birthday of Mona Huber with a special cake.

Sadly Scarborough Branch has lost two members. Mrs Kathleen Russell who sadly died after a short illness and Mrs Dorothy Greathead who died in September after a long illness. She was a very dedicated volunteer involved in many projects between 1974 and 2004 and was presented with the Long Service Medal of which she was very proud.

The York Branch met in March when 20 members listened to the guest speaker, Mrs Shead who is blind. She gave a very interesting and informative talk about the work of the York Blind and Partially Sighted Society, the help and many

appliances available to ease the lives of those with impaired sight. All were amazed at the speed with which Mrs Shead read her Braille notes towards the end of her talk, though she spoke mainly from memory. Her colleague, Harriet, who organises the volunteers, spoke about how she pairs the volunteers with housebound members of the society. In late May 15 members met for Afternoon Tea at the Blakeney Hotel. As usual, there was a scrumptious feast, and plenty of talk and reminiscence. At the October meeting chairman Mrs Millie Wilks informed members of the death of Mrs Joan Thornton at the age of 93. She had been a founder member of the York Branch and had been active until the end. She would be greatly missed. The meeting continued with the AGM including a report on the Association AGM from Maureen Hudson. Discussion on the 'Network' and related matters followed with an agreement to continue for the next year. A New Year lunch was held in January at the Blakeney Hotel, which may sadly be the last to be held there as the owners are retiring

LEICESTERSHIRE, LINCOLNSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Div. Rep. Mike Smith

Report for Rushcliffe, Nottinghamshire from Sheila Court. She and Olive Humm attended the AGM at Kenilworth and enjoyed the meeting even though the numbers were way down this year. She says it was nice to see some of the well known faces (*I am glad she did not say 'old' faces*)

It was not much of a summer but our meetings in September, October and November when we had coffee mornings and lots of chat went well. But as all of you are experiencing the numbers attending the events are fewer but we all still enjoy the get together. The last meeting of the year was the Christmas lunch at the Masonic Hall in West Bridgford, our preferred venue for many years. This year we invited Mike Smith and Marilyn Openshaw to join us so the numbers attending were swelled to the enormous total of 20, which is very good for us now-a-days.

Unfortunately during the last two months we have had the deaths of three of our members, none of whom has been able to come for some time. Our oldest registered member, Miss Phyllis Fletcher, was 101 when she died in November. Phyllis joined WVS during the war serving teas to the troops as Nottingham station and continued delivering M.O.W. for very many years.

Mrs. Doris Durling died in December, shortly after her son had died. Doris and her sister Win had moved to Nottinghamshire over 30 years ago and had volunteered at their village Luncheon Club (Cotgrave). And in January Mrs. Helen Walker also died after a fall at home which proved fatal. This was a real tragedy as Helen had overcome back surgery and cancer. We are all very shocked at her sudden death.

So a very sad end to 2011 and the beginning of 2012. But being WRVS we are looking to the future and will be putting on our thinking caps to plan something very special to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee in June.

Report from Sheila Kent, Leicester branch. We continue to meet for our coffee mornings although we have had to move to a new venue whilst the Bishop Street Methodist church venue is being renovated. This is a good room, but the kitchen facilities are not ideal. However we had quite a good attendance this week (March).

We have little else to report other than the loss of a further member and two more have requested to be taken off our mailing list as they can no longer get to meetings due to immobility.

EAST YORKSHIRE TO HUMBER AND HULL

Div. Rep. Mrs Robina Priestley

Monthly lunches have continued throughout the last year time and a close, friendly and caring group has developed welcoming new members Diane Young from Willerby and Kath Ollerenshaw from Pocklington

Sadly before Christmas I received the sad news of the death of Sheila Robins who was the Local Organiser for Bridlington for many years and who successfully organised a very large Meals on Wheels service there, until the Local Authority took it over. She will be missed by many people in Bridlington especially. I also heard from her husband, Harry, that Peggy Parsons who had moved from Wilberfoss some years ago had also died. Peggy had been a very active WRVS member delivering Meals on Wheels in Wilberfoss area and helping with the Club for the elderly in the village. She liked to hear news of her WRVS friends here after moving to be near her family

Many of our members, after receiving the last Newsletter were concerned to read of the possible closure of the Association but all agreed that whatever the outcome was we would go on meeting as usual

To end on a happy note -Congratulations to Pat & Les Dawson from Wilberfoss on their Golden Wedding on March 17th. Best wishes from all their friends in Hull & East Yorkshire Association.

Our ice cream man was found lying on the floor of his van covered with hundreds and thousands. Police say that he topped himself.

ARE YOU IN NEED OF FINANCIAL HELP?

The WRVS Benevolent Trust was set up by Lady Reading to help WVS \ WRVS people who have freely given their time and energy for the benefit of others; volunteers like you in fact

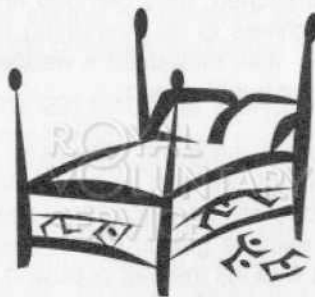
So if you ever find yourself in unexpected financial difficulties, or know of someone in that situation, you can make an application for a grant

They 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



A Four Poster Bed seems so romantic, but in the 1500's there was little to stop things from falling into the house, especially from thatched roofs.

This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection.

That's how canopy beds came into existence.

In Shakespeare's time, mattresses were secured on bed frames by ropes. When you pulled on the ropes, the mattress tightened, making the bed firmer to sleep on. Hence the phrase... 'goodnight, sleep tight'

A house becomes a home when you can write 'I love you' on the furniture

VOLUNTARY
SERVICE
THE GREEN THING

At the check out in the superstore, the cashier told the pensioner that she should bring her own bags because plastic ones were not good for the environment. The woman apologised and said, 'We didn't have the green thing back in my day.'

The clerk responded, 'that is the problem today. Your generation did not care enough to save the planet.'

True. That generation didn't have the green thing

Back then, they returned their bottles to the shop. The shop sent them back to the factory to be washed, sterilised and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycled. But they didn't have the green thing back in that customer's day

In her day, they walked up stairs, because they didn't have an escalator and a lift in every store and office building. They walked to the grocery store and didn't climb into a car every time they had to go two streets. They washed the baby's nappies because they didn't have the throwaway kind. They dried clothes on a line, not in an energy-gobbling machine burning up 240 volts - wind and solar power really did dry the clothes. Children got hand-me-down clothes from their brother's or sisters, not always brand-new clothing. There was one TV, or radio, in the house - not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief, not one the size of Yorkshire. In the kitchen, they blended and stirred by hand because they didn't have electric machines to do everything for you. When they packaged a fragile item to send in the mail, they used a wadded up old newspaper to cushion it, not polystyrene or plastic bubble wrap

They didn't fire up an engine and burn petrol just to cut the lawn; they used a push mower that ran on human power. They exercised by walking so they didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity. They drank from a tap when they were thirsty instead of using a plastic bottle every time they had a drink of water. They refilled their pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and they replaced the blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole thing just because the blade got dull. Back then, people took the tram or a bus; children rode their bikes to get around and took the school bus instead of turning their parent's into a 24-hour taxi service. There was one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And they didn't need a computerised gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 20,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest pizza place

The current generation laments how wasteful old folks were, just because they didn't have the green thing back then?

NORTH WEST DIVISION**NORTH AND SOUTH MANCHESTER**

Div. Rep. Mrs Jean Matthews BEM

ROYAL
VOLUNTARY
SERVICE

The Bury Group chose 'A Derbyshire Dales Day' for their October outing and with the help of friends we were able to fill a forty nine seat coach. Our morning coffee stop at the Peak Village Retail Outlet was unfortunately curtailed due to slow moving traffic from Manchester and a misunderstanding over the pick-up point for our guide in Baslow. We could highly recommend a visit to this outlet for other groups and we hope to return ourselves on a future occasion. We then stopped for a carvery lunch at the Greyhound Hotel in Cromford after a delightful drive through the grounds of Chatsworth. In the afternoon we were taken through pretty villages in the River Wye Valley with a most interesting commentary en route. The Matlock Garden Centre was also a good choice for our final stop

Sale members continue to enjoy their monthly coffee mornings in each others homes ably coordinated by Joan Allmark with backup from Rosemary Cooper - grateful thanks to everyone concerned. I would like to send good wishes to all the Sale members and to thank them most sincerely for inviting our National Chairman Marilyn Openshaw and myself to their Christmas Lunch in December. As always we received an extremely warm welcome and very much enjoyed the good company and super food at the Mersey Farm Restaurant in Sale

The 2011 AGM at Kenilworth was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended - our accommodation was very comfortable and the Hotel was well situated overlooking the main street and near to the Castle and extensive parkland. It was a pleasure to see Peter James and his wife at our AGM and lunch afterwards and to fondly remember Peggy his late mother as we drank a toast in her memory. Peter accompanied his mother to AGMs after his father's death and became a friend to us all. Sincere thanks to Chairman Marilyn and all concerned in the planning. We look forward to the 2012 reunion

MERSEYSIDE - NO REPORT

Div. Rep. Mrs Sylvia Hatchell

ROYAL
VOLUNTARY
SERVICEROYAL
VOLUNTARY
SERVICE**ST HELENS - NO REPORT**

Diane Smith,

SERVICE

ROYAL
VOLUNTARY
SERVICE

LANCASHIRE

Div Rep - Mary Jones,

Once again, there were no meetings in the county. All members were sent a letter reporting on the AGM at Kenilworth, unfortunately some people have moved and left no forwarding address - if you move please contact the Association office or me personally with your new address so we can keep in contact. I hope to visit as many members as possible in March and April. Finally I have to report that sadly Mrs Lorains of Lytham St Annes died in November just after her 101st birthday

The local news station was interviewing an 80-year-old lady because she had just married for the fourth time. The interviewer asked her questions about her life, about what it felt like to be marrying again at 80, and then about her new husband's occupation. 'He's a funeral director,' she answered. She was then asked if she would not mind saying a little about her first three husbands. She paused for a few moments, needing time to reflect on all those years.

After a short time, a smile came to her face and she explained that she had married a banker when she was in her early 20's, then a circus ringmaster when in her 40's, and a preacher when in her 60's, and now in her 80's, a funeral director. The interviewer looked at her, quite astonished, and asked why she had married four men with such diverse careers.

She smiled and explained, 'I married one for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, and four to go'

Classified Ads

FREE Yorkshire terrier - 3 years old. Hateful little devil. Bites!

FREE puppies - 1/2 Cocker Spaniel, 1/2 sneaky neighbour's dog

FREE puppies - Mother is a Kennel Club registered German Shepherd
Father is a Super Dog, able to leap tall fences in a single bound

Cows, Calves: Never Bred - Also 1 gay bull for sale

Joining Nudist Colony - Must sell washer and dryer £100

Wedding Dress For Sale - worn once by mistake; call Stephanie

SOUTH EAST DIVISION

We have heard from Sue Boon that her mother, Florence Macey of Sudbury Suffolk died in November aged 91.

Florence became a member of the WVS not long after its inception in 1938 and served as a volunteer all her life until old age caught up with her. She began as a volunteer in WWII serving in the canteen of the Fishermen's Mission on the quayside at North Shields. It was here that she met a young naval rating from London, my father Len. Following their marriage in 1943 and the end of the war she moved down to Wanstead and Woodford (Greater London) where she continued with her WRVS work whilst raising three daughters. When Dad retired they moved to Sudbury in Suffolk where Mum could be found delivering Meals on Wheels and helping in the WRVS office until its closure sometime in the 1990s. In 1994 she was nominated as Member of the Year; she was in receipt of a long service medal and in 2005 represented the WRVS at a luncheon given by The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at Buckingham Palace to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the end of World War II. In 2009 she finally had meals on wheels delivered to her own home! After 68 years of marriage my father died in September and Mum died just six weeks later. She was not only a devoted wife and mother but also a truly kind and gentle person who always put others before herself as her long commitment to the WRVS association testifies.

See, amid the winter's snow, Lots of cars that just won't go
It is not the drivers' fault; Councils have run out of salt.

Here, we sit the whole night long, Where have all the snowploughs gone?
If we'd known we'd be delayed, we'd perhaps have brought a spade

Say, ye cheerful children, say, why aren't you in school today?
We are skating round and round, 'cos the heating's broken down

Yes, the heating's gone berserk, Mum has missed a day at work
Though she's cross and seems on edge, we can ride upon our sledge

Sages on the weather show, said the sun would surely glow,
And, said they, we may be sure, of a glorious day in store

But they missed a detail small and the snow did thickly fall
But the met-men feel no shame – Their computer takes the blame!

LONDON NE & CITY

Div Rep Mrs Win Taylor OBE DL,

We seem to have lost some of the WVS\ WRVS/WRVS Association stalwarts recently. Ness Venables and Peggy James, have already been mentioned in recent editions of the Association Newsletter, and now three more London Regional Organisers, are remembered for their service to the WRVS

Shirley Becke, who died in December 2011, served in the Metropolitan Police during World War 2. She subsequently became a Commander of the Women Police Branch of the Service, which had previously dealt with women and children. She was instrumental in bringing about equal pay and responsibility for women in all branches of the Metropolitan Police until her retirement in 1974.

On joining the WRVS, she then became the London Regional Organiser at the office at King's Cross and was responsible for voluntary work in the London Boroughs. This work included large scale feeding in emergency situations and the provision and running of clothing stores, one of which was a large store at Woolwich from where clothing was sent to world wide disasters. Sadly, in an obituary that appeared in the Daily Telegraph, no mention was made of her work in the WRVS

Mary Wilkinson joined the WRVS in Plymouth in 1961 and trained to become a Civil Defence Instructor. She moved to Watford in 1974 and was appointed the London Region Emergency Services Organiser. Mary was responsible for Emergency Training and at that time WRVS members were often called upon in local emergencies to set up Rest Centres and handle Emergency Feeding. A yearly exercise (and training session) was the feeding of all the participants in the Lord Mayor's Show. Mary was assisted by Eve Sheppard and a dedicated team of volunteers, some of who are still WRVS Association members. In 1977 on the occasion of Her Majesty's Jubilee celebrations, Mary was responsible for feeding 1000 children in Hyde Park. She also worked closely with the Thames Tidal Flooding Group. Mary then moved to Alverstone in order to be near her daughter, Alexandra and family. She became involved with many pursuits including church sewing, family history and later with two great-grand children. She died in a nursing home, aged 89 years.

Eve Sheppard and Win Taylor kept in touch with both Shirley and Mary until a few weeks before their deaths in 2011.

A final mention goes to Ava Christophersen who died at St George's Nursing Home in Pimlico on December 28th 2011 aged 92. She was chairman of the Association from 1986-1989 and was also a trustee for the WRVS Benevolent Trust. It is hope to have more details of her service in the next issue

Feeding the Five Thousand in the 20th Century

The feeding of the many participants in the Lord Mayor's Show each November was the highlight of the Emergency Services large scale feeding exercises in London



Eve Sheppard, Win Taylor and a team of dedicated volunteers from London Area carried out the exercise and grateful thanks goes to all who helped in this way

The food was ordered and other preparations made well before the day of the show. On the morning of the big day, at a very early hour, a huge vehicle arrived from Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire bearing the favourite pies, cheese biscuits, apples and packets of raisins, which had already been packed into an individual carrier bag by an assembly line of members, on the morning of the show

The Territorial Army then helped out by transporting the thousands of packets of food together with ten large wooden stalls, ten gas boilers and ten metal urns (all these last items from WRVS stores) by lorries to Maltravers Street and Guildhall

The volunteers then erected the wooden stalls in the street, lit up the gas boilers and boiled water for making tea. During the shows interval the volunteers fed the hungry marchers and other participants. Sadly, this exercise was discontinued by WRVS several years ago

On some occasions the WRVS had floats in the show. One was an open top red bus; another was a vehicle carrying WRVS pennants showing WRVS projects. On this vehicle was a 12-foot effigy of a WRVS member in uniform. The figure had to wear trousers otherwise it would have had no support and may have keeled over. We wonder if this was the first time the WRVS were shown in trousers

At that time the Pageant Master, (the man in charge of all the shows arrangements) was the late John Reed and it became a custom to telephone him prior to the day celebrations to wish him and his staff a successful show, on behalf of all members. After his death, whilst he was still in office, his son, Dominic, succeeded him. The custom continued and last year Win Taylor received an invitation to represent all those hard workers of the past at a reception celebrating Dominic Reeds 20 years as Pageant Master

NORFOLK

Div. Rep. Mary Taylor

The Memorial Sunday wreath was very kindly laid by Mrs June Miles and her husband, on behalf on the WRVS Association. This service was at the Cenotaph in St. George's Park, Gt. Yarmouth. The Band from 901 Troop, Winterton Marine Cadets, led the procession from the Market Place to the War Memorial. Prayers were led by Rev Chris Terry team rector for Gt. Yarmouth.

Our last luncheon, and also our Christmas Luncheon were held at The Star Hotel, Gt. Yarmouth on 16th November 2011. We held the event early to ensure all our members and friends would be able to join us, knowing that many belong to other clubs, and therefore have many Christmas functions to enjoy. We had 54 friends and members attend. This was our first meeting at the hotel. The food was most enjoyable. The raffle followed, as usual. Have you ever heard 54 ladies chatting all at once? A truly wonderful sound

North Norfolk The Christmas Luncheon was held at The Virginia Court Hotel, where we have met before. 5 ladies from the Gt. Yarmouth branch joined our friends from North Norfolk. It is so nice to meet with our 'near neighbours', as they are such a small group. Also, their area is regarded as rural Norfolk. We all received a surprise Christmas present, delicious shortbread biscuits, beautifully wrapped. A most enjoyable meeting.

In Gt. Yarmouth we arranged our first event of 2012. We should have gone to Walsingham for the snowdrops, but unfortunately, the weather won. We decided it was too dangerous for our ladies to walk around the Abbey Grounds in 6cm of snow, so a quick substitute outing was arranged. We visited Holt, a lovely North Norfolk town with a very famous school, Gresham Hal where parents pay £6,175 per term to have their off-spring educated. We then went on to Bawdeswell garden Centre for lunch and browse. Food was very good, excellent choice, prompt service and well presented

Mrs M. Harris writes from 32 Meadow Close, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6JP also with news of the North Norfolk group. We had our Spring and Christmas lunches at the Virginia Court Hotel in Cromer, where we were joined by our friends from Great Yarmouth and it was most enjoyable to all meet up. Sadly during the year we lost a very dear member in Mrs Jane Bowden, who was a great supporter of our group and she will be sadly missed.

Better two reports of a lunch than no report at all! Ed

SURREY, KENT, SUSSEX

Div. Rep. Mrs Joan Rosling

This is my last report as the last Club on my patch closed down in December. Until fairly recently Guildford was thriving but in the last two years attendance at events has tailed off greatly and we had a final tea to mark the end of the year. This was not well attended as only twelve of us sat down to tea and cakes. We had thought we might have a lunch but several members told us they could not eat lunch anymore but would like a tea. We were able to give them a free tea from our funds and the balance has now gone to the Benevolent Trust

Julia Cooper, West Kent, has also closed her groups down. She has arranged several lunches, sometimes in her own home, only to find few came along.

As we have no clubs or groups left in Kent, Surrey or Sussex I am resigning as Div. Rep.

It is very sad to see the Association closing down in many places but not surprising as we cannot interest new members and those we do have are getting older, often having given up driving, so not able to attend Association events. When we had District and Local Offices we could recruit people to the Association but there is now no interest in this part of the world. I have enjoyed my time as Div. Rep. and have had good times attending many events in Kent, Surrey and Sussex and have met some lovely people. My good wishes go to those Association members who still continue at least for the time being.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Mrs Mary Harber writes from the county. At the December meeting of the Rushden and Raunds Club 17 of the 24 members met at Rushden Golf Club where they enjoyed a delicious Christmas dinner and everyone went home with a raffle prize. It was sad that our oldest member Jill, (I will not mention her age) was unable to attend owing to a hospital appointment but the youngest member Lesley was there who is only 55, so we have a wide range of ages in the club. At the dinner it was decided to send donations to 'Help for Heroes' and the local 'Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance' who are both very worthwhile and deserving charities. We are planning a coffee morning in May and hopefully a Tea afternoon in August

We all sincerely hope the Association keeps going. I have given each of our members a Registration form so I hope some of them will fill them in and send their subscriptions to the Priory Street Center

OXFORDSHIRE, BEDFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE - NO REPORT

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

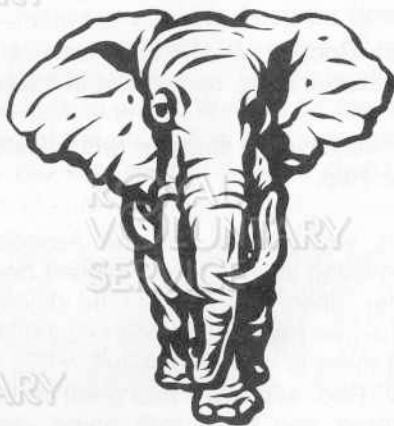
HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT - NO REPORT

Div. Rep Mrs Beryl Adams,

THE DEFINITION OF A WHITE ELEPHANT

Something no longer wanted by its owner; something, often property, requiring so much expenditure and care as to be an encumbrance or give little profit.

The Kings of Siam, now Thailand, used to give white elephant as gifts to courtiers who fell out of favour. The white elephant was not only rare but also sacred, and so could not be put to work to recoup the cost of its upkeep. Nor could it be got rid of because like all white elephants it remained the property of the King.



The gift was symbolic rather than ruinous, but the message was clear



It was the accepted practice in Babylon 4,000 years ago that for a month after the wedding, the bride's father would supply his new son-in-law with all the mead he could drink.

Mead is a honey beer and because their calendar was lunar based, this period was called the honey month, which we know today as the honeymoon

So that's the excuse for the son in law to be even more legless than usual!

SOUTH WEST DIVISION

DORSET & WILTSHIRE & DEVON & CORNWALL

No Div Rep any more

At the AGM in September we took a vote as to whether to close the Association with immediate effect or to carry on while funds allow. With the former there was the option to become part of the WRVS Network of Supporters. I voted for the first option but the majority voted for the second. I decided this made my position as a Divisional Representative untenable and I therefore tendered my resignation to the Chairman

This in no way affects my local branches. The Wiltshire group had a very enjoyable coffee morning with mince pies at the home of Denise Smyter before Christmas and the Swindon group enjoyed a carvery lunch attended by at least 24 members. Events are being planned for 2012.

As most of you know, I volunteer weekly at the WRVS Archives in Devizes. This is a wonderful way to keep in touch with past and present members of the Service. Please will you all remember to inform Matthew of any news on members and most especially when anyone dies. The Archive will write a letter of condolence, will try and get someone to attend a funeral on behalf of WRVS, will correspond with family members, and will receive papers and memorabilia. This way they will be remembered for posterity. The archivist Matthew McMurray can be contacted at WRVS Archive & Heritage Collection, Unit 1A Bath Road Business Centre, Bath Road, Devizes, SN10 1XA. Telephone 01 380 730 211

SOMERSET AND AVON - NO REPORT

Div. Rep. Mrs Sheila Scholey

In the 1500's, lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone finding them would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up: hence the custom of holding a wake

2012 - LEAPING INTO CELEBRATIONS

It will not have escaped your attention that, as well as 2012 being the year of the London Olympics and the Queen's Golden Jubilee, it is also a leap year, but what exactly does that mean?

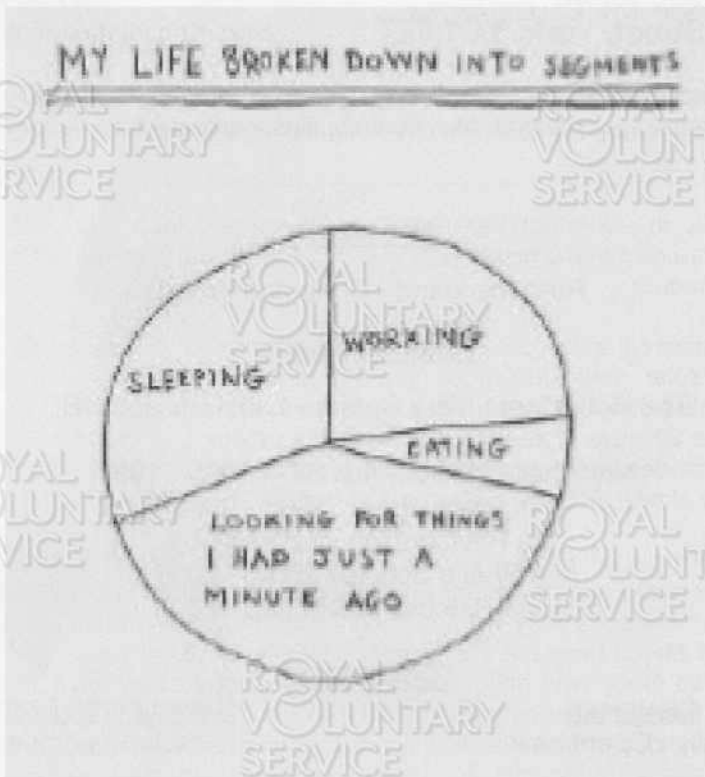
Where usually, in a common year, we have 365 days, a leap year consists of 366 days, the extra day being inserted at the end of February, possibly because it is the shortest month

In the Gregorian calendar, the current standard calendar in most of the world and a common solar calendar, most 'years that are evenly divisible by 4 (and centenary years divisible by 400) are leap years. In each leap year, the month of February has 29 days instead of 28. Adding an extra day to the calendar every four years compensates for the fact that a period of 365 days is shorter than a solar year by almost 6 hours

A person born on 29 February may be called a 'leapling' or a 'leaper'. Some people born on 29 February prefer to celebrate their birthday on 28 February in a non-leap year because they were born in February, while others celebrate their birthday on 1 March because they do not officially turn next age on 28 February. There are also those who only celebrate their birthday every leap year because they believe there is no substitute to a 29 February birthday! In some cases, their legal birthdays depend on the rules and regulations of where they live. Many countries make amendments for those born on leap days so they can be considered eligible for marriage, driving and other activities that require a legal age

Why is it called a leap year? The general consensus appears to be that if you divide the 365-day year by 52 weeks, you will see that there is one additional day. Thus, in non-leap years, if a fixed-date holiday, such as Christmas, is on a Tuesday, you know that the next year it will fall on a Wednesday. But in a leap year, the festival would fall two days after the previous years. This skipping of a day is the 'leap' in leap year. Although another possible explanation is that hundreds of years ago, the leap year day was not recognised in English Law, so the day was 'leapt over' and ignored

I'm not sure how relevant it is in modern times, but in the UK, it has long been tradition that ladies may propose marriage only on leap day. It has been claimed that the tradition was initiated by Saint Patrick or Brigid of Kildare in 5th century Ireland, and subsequently, a 1288 law by Queen Margaret of Scotland required that fines be levied if a marriage proposal was refused by the man; compensation ranged from a kiss to £1 to a silk gown, in order to soften the blow



An Italians Answer to a long Marriage

There is a district in Toronto where they have weekly marriage seminars. At one session they asked Giuseppe, who said he was approaching his 50th wedding anniversary, to take a few minutes and share some insight into how he had managed to stay married to the same woman all these years.

Giuseppe replied to the assembled husbands, "Wella, I've tried to treat her nice, spenda da money on her, but besta of all is, I tooka to Italy for the 25th anniversary!"

Giuseppe, you are an amazing inspiration to all the husbands here! Please tell us what you are planning for your wife for your 50th anniversary?"

Giuseppe proudly replied, " I gonna go pick her up."

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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

VICE-PRESIDENTS

The Hon. Dame Mary Corsar - Lady Toulson CBE

Mrs Sheila McCormack BEM 1995 - 1997

Mrs Diane Price 1998 - 2000

Mrs Pat Copping 2001 - 2003

Mrs Sheila Scholey 2004 - 2006

Sylvia Hatchell MBE 2006 - 2009

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Mrs Maureen Hudson

MINUTES SECRETARY

Linda McAvoy

VOLUNTARY MEMBER

Katherine Carmichael

The following address is only for contributions for the next Newsletter
By 1st September please

The Editor

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