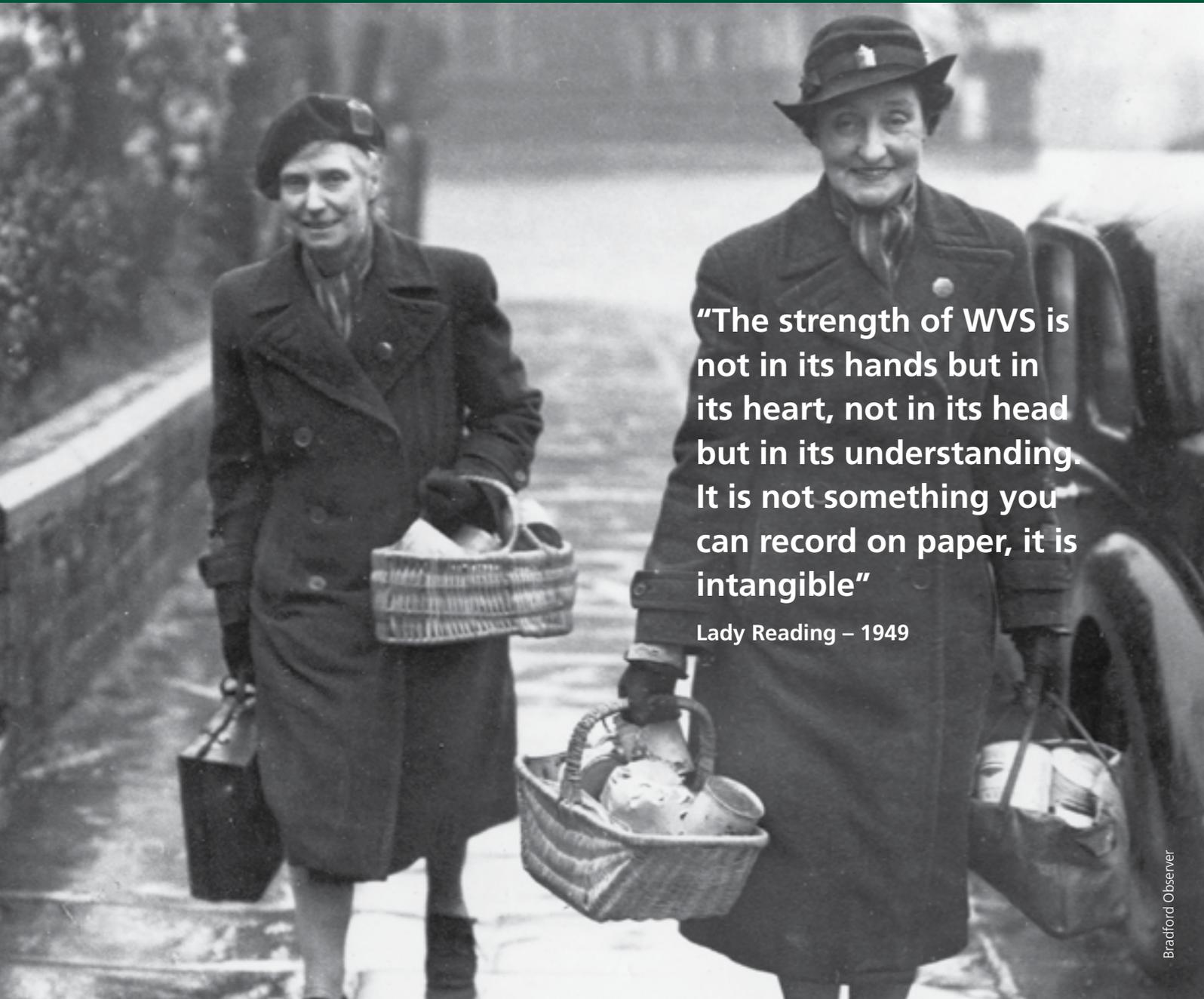


# Heritage

BULLETIN Volume 3



**"The strength of WVS is not in its hands but in its heart, not in its head but in its understanding. It is not something you can record on paper, it is intangible"**

Lady Reading – 1949

Bradford Observer

## BELOW THE SHELF

### Now and then

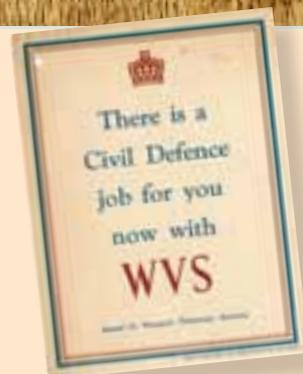
Gracing our main cover are two WVS volunteers braving the elements to shop for those in need, in the 1940s. WRVS are still here to help by

shopping for older people and by being 'good neighbours'. You can see one of our good neighbours in action by visiting [wrvs.org.uk](http://wrvs.org.uk) and clicking on the video.

### Did you know?

Many other archives hold documents about WVS/WRVS. You can find out what documents are in an archive near you by doing

a search on The National Archives A2A site [nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a). Just type WVS or WRVS into the search box.





**Matthew McMurray**  
WRVS Archivist

### From the WRVS Archivist

I once again have the honour of introducing the Heritage Bulletin to you. This edition has been very much hands off for me, as it has been mostly researched and written by one of our new volunteers here in Devizes, Tom Derrick. He is also the subject of our volunteer's perspective so you can read all about him on the back page.

It has very much been business as usual at the Archive & Heritage Collection and we have been working hard on our various projects. The cataloguing of our photographic print collection is coming on well and so far we have completed over two thousand images.

We have received a lot of new contributions to the collection in the last six months, many comprising several large boxes. It is always great to receive new material and the article on page six explains our appraisal process that every item undergoes before it is accepted into the collection.

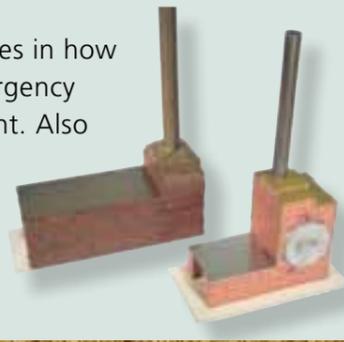
Our new larger format was so well received last time that we have decided to keep it. Thank you for all of your letters of support and memories, some of which we have reprinted. One helped us put names to the faces in one of our pictures and another inspired the centre spread article about the Ugandan Asian refugee crisis in 1972.

It only remains for me to wish you a very enjoyable summer.

### Good examples

New to the collection are these demonstration models of a hotplate and hotplate with ovencooker, used to train members of the Civil Defence Corps and WRVS

Emergency Services in how to construct emergency feeding equipment. Also in this new collection is a scale model of a Soyer boiler.



### Recently gifted

Recently gifted was this hand carved wooden bell stand by R. Musgrave in 1959. The bell is inscribed 'Oak & Bell metal of York minster burnt May 20

1840'. It was found in the Scunthorpe Meals on Wheels office but is carved with 'East Riding Yorks' and we would really like to find out where it came from originally.



### ON THE SHELF – NEW ADDITIONS

# A legacy for school children

**School children are some of the hardest audiences for WRVS to reach, but our rich history gives us a unique advantage.**

The national curriculum for both primary and secondary school children includes the study of the Home Front in the Second World War, a subject which is incomplete without the story of the army Hitler forgot, the women in green, WVS. While a few individuals dotted around the country dress up as WVS volunteers and give talks to school children (we lend them period uniforms), there is no information about WVS/WRVS out there specifically aimed at this age group.

After much deliberation we have decided to use the legacy left to us by Lindy Wood to produce learning packs for use by schools. These types of resources are very specialised and need to contain all the right information, presented in the right way, for them to both engage children and their teachers. Lindy's legacy has enabled us to engage a history education

*Mrs Cardwell Captures a German airman, a cartoon from the 40 years work film strip 1978.*



specialist who will work with us over the next couple of months to develop and produce the packs.

Our hope is that every child will know the contribution women made to the war effort, for example that Mrs Cardwell, a WVS Centre Organiser, caught the first German airman to bail out over Britain, and then offered him a cup of tea, or that WVS organised the 'Cogs', the children who helped collect salvage,

and that WVS organised and delivered three million ration books in a week and kept merchant seamen and troops warm.

The aim is that these resources will be taken up by schools and that every child will learn, not only about WVS, but about the idea of community, involvement and that WRVS are still here today.

## From the Narrative reports

### **West Bridgford, Nottinghamshire, July 1971 Darby & Joan Club**

*"July was an unfortunate month – Vandals broke in and set fire to the WRVS cupboard – everything was destroyed. Loans of cards and cribbage boards have been received."*

### **Ceredigion, Dyfed, May 1978**

*"The Round Tablers ran a Cowboy Special on the Narrow Gauge Railway and the W.R.V.S sell the Hot Dogs at the Devils Bridge Station. The children dress as cowboys and the students board the train dressed as Indians."*

### **Kingsbridge Rural District, Devon, April 1948 Clubs Overseas**

*"I want to thank you and all the W.V.S of Rural Kingsbridge for the parcels of books and magazines you have sent to us for the club. The men do appreciate your gifts enormously; it is at a time like this when so many of the normal amusements and activities are closing down as troops are reduced that extra reading material is invaluable. Please convey our renewed thanks to all who have contributed."*



Crown



### Civil Defence Phoenix

Pictured is a model of the Civil Defence Phoenix, presented by the Civil Defence Staff College, Sunningdale (December 1952) – to Miss Clemency Greatorex MBE the

first member to be seconded to the teaching staff. These models were given to all instructors on leaving the college. This was the first one ever presented to a woman.

### Enamel plaque

This large circular tin and enamel plaque came from a WVS mobile canteen which served during the Second World War. The plaques showed who had donated the

vehicle, in this case the British War Relief Society. This is the only one in the Archive & Heritage Collection and the only example we know of to survive.



## ON THE SHELF – OUT OF THE BOX

# Ugandan Asian refugees

When, in August 1972, Idi Amin ordered the expulsion of 60,000 foreign national Asians from Uganda, a refugee influx to the UK was eased by the outstanding efforts of WRVS.



Essex County Newspapers Ltd

Ugandan refugees arriving at Stanstead airport in 1972.

With thirty thousand holding British citizenship, it was no wonder the WRVS were called into action. Over 520 WRVS volunteers provided crucial front line support at Stanstead, Gatwick and Heathrow airports, as well as at the twelve resettlement centres throughout the country every day of the crisis.

There was little time to prepare as the first plane arrived in Stanstead on 18 September, carrying 193 helpless refugees, but the well practiced WRVS volunteers were there to greet it. Each volunteer was allocated a family off the plane, escorting them first to the customs hall, where the necessary but lengthy documentation process was begun. Volunteers then

ensured families were provided with tea, sandwiches and then clothing, sent in by the public.

After that the challenge was to find suitable housing in the resettlement centres and it was common for each volunteer to be responsible for families of eleven or more. The work was not plain sailing. Finding accommodation when original quarters were double booked and scouring for extra beds when not enough were set aside for the family in their care, were just some of the problems. The standard of accommodation was high, with WRVS volunteers busy making up beds and dusting down rooms.

The role of the WRVS during the

refugee influx was vital to the smooth operational provision of clothing, food and accommodation. Mrs Maureen Jones, a volunteer at Stanstead, describes how the refugees behaved with "utter patience", no doubt in large part due to the high standard of care provided by WRVS.

## Over to you

It's encouraging to have received so many letters from you, sharing your personal memories about WRVS. As an added incentive, we are offering a Mars hamper full of chocolate goodies to the best letter we receive plus a WRVS heritage tea towel to the runner up, so get writing. Here are a couple of fascinating letters that we received after the last bulletin.



### Dear Matthew

*"Listening to a radio 4 programme about Epping Forest, I am reminded of the cattle pound opposite the end of Tennyson Avenue, Wanstead, London, E11. In 1939 a warden's post (ARP) stood near it. It (the post) was good for chatting, cups of tea, and exchange of vegetables, cakes etc....quite a social asset! At night it was the master point for the volunteer firewatchers. At this time the WVS members were known as "Green Dragons". The title suited them better in St. Mary's Church Hall, where WVS ran a British Restaurant and had sometimes to deal with unruly children! (The WVS were) providing a meal for a few old pence."*  
Rev. M Laurie, Warminster, Wiltshire

## A



### Dear Matthew

*The Bulletin is an excellent publication and brings back memories. The photograph taken at Hereford station (featured on page 7 of the January edition of the Bulletin) in the 1950's is of Miss Peggy Greenland, MBE (Herefordshire County Organiser) & Miss Valerie Machin (County Clothing Officer) together with a group of children from Birmingham with their escort and a Hertfordshire hostess. The Country Holiday Scheme was just one of the many and varied activities organised from the County Office in those early days. How splendid that WVS/WRVS has gained such recognition – congratulations!"*  
Mrs Frances Hall, Bristol

### Emergency Feeding at Mablethorpe and Sutton-on-Sea

Two WVS members and a member of the Girl Guide Association serve refreshments from a Food Flying Squad Mobile Canteen, to four

the sea wall at Park Road, Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire after the east coast floods. The 3 serving ladies are from left to right: Mrs Grimshaw, Mrs Watson and Miss Milne.



WRVS/HQ/PC/DEMFO28

### WVS members handing out welfare food

WVS member handing out orange juice to a mother with small child in her arms at a WVS welfare foods service, with Mayor and her husband observing.

Location unknown.  
Date: c.1945-1949



WRVS/HQ/PC/DEMFO28

## ON THE SHELF – PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE COLLECTION

# Appraising new material



At the WRVS Archive & Heritage Collection we receive new material every week which can range from uniforms and MBE's, to letters, photographs and even silver cups. There is always great anticipation when prising open the next box! But what happens next?

“... a modern, green plastic petrol can!”

Naturally we don't just put the boxes on a shelf and forget about them. Each new collection of material that arrives needs first to go through a process called appraisal. A very simple explanation of appraisal is “determining what needs to

be preserved and what does not”. It is really important, if our storeroom isn't to overflow quickly and our costs spiral out of control, that we make sure that everything we accept into the collection adds significantly to our knowledge of WRVS. A good example of something that didn't make the cut was a modern, green, plastic petrol can!

This silly example aside, appraisal is not an easy process and requires a lot of time, thought and ultimately difficult decisions to make sure we capture our history in the most effective way possible. During the appraisal process we ask ourselves lots of questions. These range from the general, ‘Does this item have any connection

with WRVS?’ to the more specific ‘Do we already have one of these Darby and Joan club leaflets in the collection?’ and everything in between. Sometimes we have to turn away seemingly important items. Photographs are often historically valuable, but without any indication of who is pictured or where they were taken, they are unfortunately of limited value.

Our task here in Devizes is to balance the thirst for historical knowledge about WRVS with the practicalities of keeping and managing all of this material and to make sure there is room for more in the future. So please do keep sending in your material and help us improve our knowledge of WRVS.

## A CHARMing day

Matthew McMurray reports

Being the Archivist for the WRVS isn't all about hiding away in stacks of papers and never seeing the sun. In fact sometimes it isn't even about WRVS, as Matthew explains.

In July I helped to run a workshop for charity archivists, hosted jointly by the Charity Archivists and Records Managers group (CHARM) and the British Record's Association (BRA). I and my opposite numbers from other charities, such as The Guide Association, The British Red Cross and The Children's Society, to mention just three, ran a number of sessions through the day. The aim was to use our collective experience to help other charity archivists do their jobs better and hopefully learn some new things ourselves.



I helped run a session on volunteers and archives, a subject of which we have plenty of experience. Others ran sessions on ‘promoting your archive, both to the public and to your organisation’ as well as what to do with electronic records (those created on a computer), which are surprisingly much more difficult to keep forever than pieces of paper.

It was a very well attended event, with plenty of lively discussion and I was only too happy to share my experiences and learn some new skills myself.

## Why the archive is important to me?

Miss K Collins, a WRVS Association member from North Humberside, took a little time to tell us about why she thinks the Archive & Heritage Collection is so important. “I used to be a volunteer for a WRVS luncheon club in Horsley for several years. I say several years because I don't quite remember how long it's been. You see I'm 90 now! That's one of the reasons I think preserving WRVS's heritage and our own involvement is so important – with an ageing memory like mine, if I can't remember – how can I tell anyone else?” “I really enjoyed my volunteering because meeting and helping people is such a healthy thing to do. WRVS did so much good during the War, helped so many people. It's such a worthwhile cause to help. To me, it would be so sad if we couldn't share this with others. It's so important that we never forget how much good WRVS really did” Miss Collins has kindly decided to support the collection by leaving a donation to the Archive & Heritage Collection in her Will. To find out more about how you can help the collection just contact us via the details on the back page.

THANK YOU

# Volunteer Tom Derrick



## A VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVE

“ I have always been a bit of an armchair detective. And so it was I decided to embark on a new career, fulfilling a lifelong passion; working with history. Weeks later I found myself working in an archive for an organization I knew almost nothing about.

It's been a decision I'm very happy to have made! The training has been enormously beneficial for my career ambitions whilst offering a fascinating insight into WRVS.

I've been working with a variety of material, which has meant seeing many a member

smiling at me from behind a hospital canteen counter. I've also trawled through scores of papers, looking for references to member knitting groups in Doncaster!

As I discover more about the organisation's intriguing past, the overwhelming impression I have of WRVS is one which embodies resilience, a can-do attitude and a desire to act selflessly to help others. Delving deep into the Narrative Reports has enabled me to see the degree of detail in the day-to-day support offered by members and their

**“The training has been enormously beneficial for my career ambitions whilst offering a fascinating insight into WRVS.”**

versatility in providing such a range of services. I'm enjoying my time here surrounded by such a rich history as WRVS'. The effect is clearly contagious - I've even started to take my elderly grandmother grocery shopping every Friday! ”



If you want to know more about the WRVS Archive & Heritage Collection you can visit our web pages: [wrvs.org.uk/archiveandheritagecollection](http://wrvs.org.uk/archiveandheritagecollection)

If you have a story to tell or material which you would like to donate to the collection please contact Matthew McMurray the archivist.

Every reasonable endeavour has been made to find and contact the copyright owners of the works included in this newsletter. However if you believe a copyright work has been included without your permission, please contact WRVS.

Unfortunately because we need to concentrate all of our efforts on cataloguing our collection we can't offer a general enquiry service at this time, but it will re-open in the future.

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**Making Britain  
a great place  
to grow old**