

WRVS Narrative Reports

The WVS/WRVS narrative reports have been recognised by UNESCO as among the UK's most exceptional, but lesser known documentary riches and were inscribed on the [UK Memory of the World Register](#) on 14 July 2010.

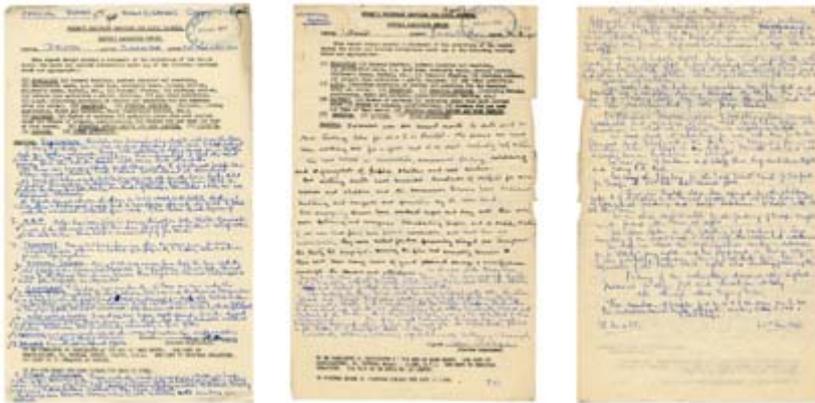
For much of its history WRVS had a centre in almost every town in the country, at its height over 2,000 in all. Each of these centres was required to write a monthly (latterly quarterly or bi-annual) narrative report. These reports were filed from 1938 until 1992 and vividly illustrate the everyday activities of centres and their volunteers and chart the ups and downs of both the organisation and society over their 54 year period. It is these narrative reports which form one of the most important parts of the Archive and Heritage Collection.

Of special importance are the month by month reports through the Second World War. These detail the wide range of essential services which the ordinary members of WVS provided the nation in this pivotal time in British history.

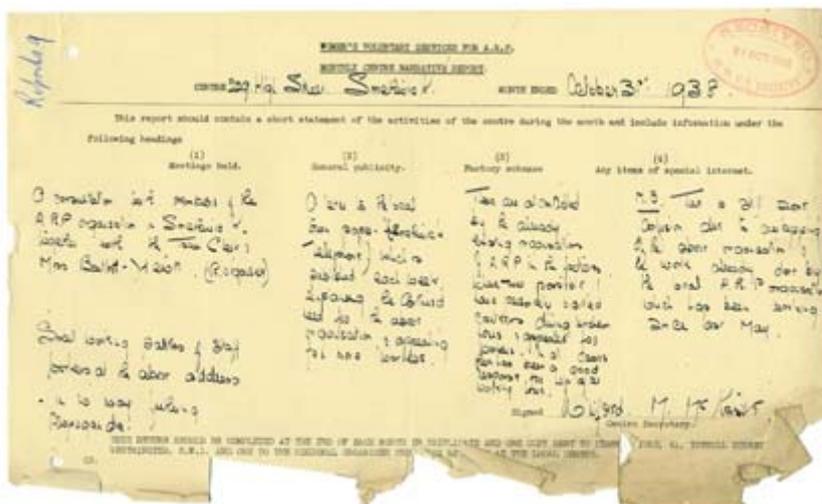
The reports were completed in quadruplicate with one copy kept by the centre, one sent to the county office, one to the regional office and one to WRVS headquarters in Brixton, London. The copies sent to headquarters make up the majority of this collection and amount to around 450,000 reports. However, a weeding process started in 1953, but never finished, means that not all reports survive for all parts of the country. London and the east of England are worst affected with only reports that were deemed 'interesting' kept. Over time though, centre, county and regional office copies of these missing reports have filled gaps in the collection.



Folders of narrative reports created in the 1950s by the first WVS Archivist Doreen Harris.



A narrative report from the WVS centre in Bristol. An example where two reports were written to cover the same period. An official report and a two page unofficial report. There is no mention in the official report of the death, while on duty, of one of their members. She died tragically when her mobile canteen went over the edge of a dock in the blackout.



This is one of the first narrative reports to be created by WVS. The Smethwick centre was among the first 11 centres in the country to open

in October 1938 and written by centre organiser Mrs McKenzie who was appointed only four days before she wrote this report.