

WVS Uniform

1939 - 1945



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The Introduction and Development of the Uniform of
the Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence

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Front Cover Illustration: Detail of wartime uniform dress of Mrs Beatrice Ricketts,
Deputy Centre Organier, Gravend Centre.

Forward

This guide to WVS Wartime uniform has been compiled with reference to documents, photographs and uniform items held in the WRVS Archive & Heritage Collection. It is not exhaustive but aims to give a history and development of wartime uniform and accessories, information on costs, rules and regulations and details of selected uniform items. The majority of WVS uniform in current circulation is from the 1950's when uniform was given free to members who joined the Welfare section of the Civil Defence Corps and as the basic design and manufacture did not change for many uniform items it is difficult to differentiate between those from this period and those from WWII.

Introduction and development

Although the Women's Voluntary Services was officially launched on 16 June 1938 it would be 7 November 1938¹ before a badge was issued and a uniform, initially consisting of a coat (overcoat) and hat, was not launched until 28 June 1939².

The uniform had been Lady Reading's idea and in a very short space of time she had managed to convince Digby Morton, the London couturier to design a suit, blouse and overcoat as a matter of public duty and talked the head of Harrods into making and supplying them.³ She had achieved the latter by guaranteeing the sale, saying she would tell her ladies that they would have to buy them!⁴

The coat and hat were for sale, from 20 outlets around the country which included: Harrods in London, the midlands department store chain of Lewis's, and Fenwick, among a select number of others, at a cost of 55/- for the coat and 6/6 for the hat.⁵ Both were initially available to "Any W.V.S. badge holder ... on production of her W.V.S. badge."⁶ It was however categorically stated that "no one is obliged to wear the garments."⁷

By October 10 events had clearly occurred which meant an authority (permit) system was required for the issue of uniform, as from this point on: "No W.V.S. garment may be sold to anyone who does not produce a written authority from a W.V.S. Centre Leader or from Headquarters at the time of purchase."⁸ This date also saw the issue of the tweed jacket and skirt as well as the red blouses and WVS overalls.⁹

On 14 December the embroidered badges, scarves and white overalls were launched and 229 shops were listed as authorised retailers.¹⁰ Name tabs for counties and county boroughs were also made available.¹¹ The first of the instructions on how uniform should be worn were also issued:

"If uniform is worn it should be complete and should not be mixed with ordinary clothes; brown low heeled shoes and no jewellery are advised"¹²

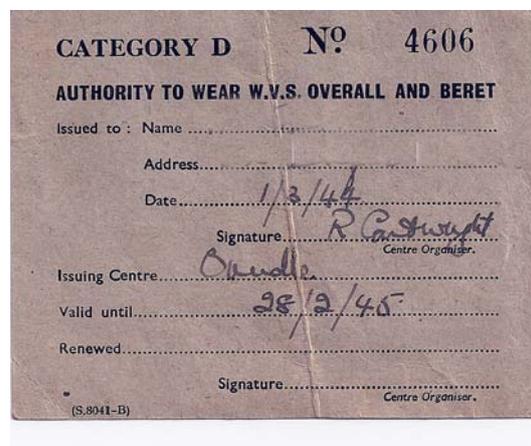
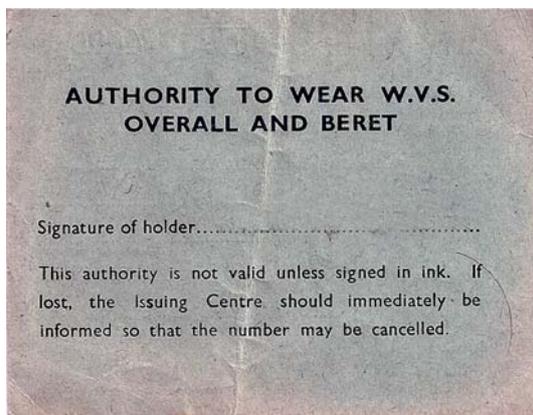
11 April 1940 the Chromium plated bar brooches indicating the rank of the wearer were issued for Regional Administrators, Regional Organisers, County Organisers, Centre Organisers and members of Executive Rank at Headquarters.¹³

While all the uniform garments were very suitable for the winter, by spring 1940 there

had been many enquiries for a suit in a lighter material for summer use. However “Owing to wartime difficulties in the supply, dying and distribution of woollen and cotton materials, it has not been possible to provide a lighter version of the overcoat or the official coat [jacket] and skirt.”¹⁴ The solution to this was the launch of the official dress, manufactured and distributed solely by Lillywhites, London. Lillywhites had obviously negotiated an exclusive contract with WVS as a circular sent out on 28 May 1940 states: “It is not permissible to copy the W.V.S. uniform dress in other green material.”¹⁵

However by 24 September this monopoly had been broken and it was announced that the dresses would shortly be available to buy from all of the authorised retailers.¹⁶ This date also saw the launch of knitted jumpers and cardigans 11/6 and 14/6 respectively, and the WVS raincoat priced at 2 guineas.

Since October 1939 an authority to wear uniform had been a simple piece of notepaper signed by a WVS organiser but from 28 June 1940 two printed cards were issued one for uniform items and one for overalls only¹⁷, coloured buff and green respectively.¹⁸



The Women’s Voluntary Services Uniform: Instructions, issued in July 1940 state that:

“W.V.S. members in responsible positions, and especially those in contact with the civil authorities, are asked to wear the uniform when on official business.”¹⁹

And goes on to say,

“Members of work parties holding W.V.S. badges by right of their services in work parties only are not entitled to wear the outdoor uniform, but will be issued with a special authority to purchase the W.V.S. overall”.

No uniform or badge could be obtained without a signed authority from the centre organiser and this authority had to be shown at the time of purchase,²⁰ and by May 1942 both a ‘Permit to buy uniform’ and an ‘Authority to wear uniform’ card was required, the latter to always be carried by members when in uniform.

On 28 January 1941 Lady Reading issued a request that all members should carry their gas masks with them at all times, “as an act of discipline to themselves and an example to the general public”.²¹ Just under a month later on 22 February epaulets were made available which members could easily sew onto the shoulders of overcoats and suits to stop the gas mask straps falling off.²²

That date also saw the introduction of the WVS Beret, which at 3/3d was considerably cheaper than the hat priced at 12/6d.²³

In April 1941 further rules were issued regarding the qualification for wearing uniform. Qualification to apply for a uniform permit now not only required qualification for the issue of a badge but also a “further minimum of 30 days regular WVS service”²⁴ as well as “evidence of intention of continuance of that service”.²⁵ The same circular also heralded the creation of a second hand uniform service, where members who had uniform but “who were unable to active part in the work”²⁶ could sell their uniform to WVS at “second hand values”.²⁷

Clothes rationing was introduced in June 1941²⁸, but it was not until 1st November that WVS ladies had to surrender coupons for their uniform.²⁹

Owing to the difficulties of supply and the national need for economy in material, early in 1942 arrangements were made with the Ministry of Home Security and the Ministry of Supply for supplies of WVS uniform to be controlled centrally. These would now be distributed not through retailers but centrally through the Ministry of Home Security, and the new arrangements came into force in March that year³⁰ accompanied by a new very prescriptive set of regulations, which are detailed below.

The expense of the uniform, as well as the fact that the standard sizes did not fit

many women, meant the material was finally released on 21 August 1942 “to enable W.V.S. members who desire to have their suits, overcoats or dresses made to measure by a tailor [or in many cases by themselves], to obtain material by the yard”.³¹ Material for overcoats was 18/- and 4½ coupons per yard, that for suits 16/6d and 4½ coupons per yard, and for dresses 10/- and 3 coupons per yard. However, members who desired to have the material made up were expected to adhere strictly to the approved designs (which were issued with order forms).³²

The release of material was a sign that Headquarters, although somewhat belatedly, had officially begun to acknowledge that not all women could afford the uniform, this continued with the creation of a scheme to loan overalls on 7 December 1942. Representations had been made that “workers at Rest Centres, British Restaurants, canteens etc. would find it convenient to have a supply of overalls which could be used by workers on the shifts and not be treated as individual issues.”³³ Although described as ‘loan overalls’ it was in fact a part ownership scheme, where three members were invited to contribute one coupon and one third of the cost.³⁴

However while these outward signs of concessions, to help less affluent members, were occurring, behind the scenes and unknown to the general membership, a confidential assisted purchase scheme had been running since 18 June 1942. Backed by the Ministry of Home Security, members who had been asked to purchase uniform (as an essential uniform wearer) but had informed their centre organiser that they could not afford it were offered financial help, though this was limited to a proportion of the cost as “In no case can uniform be given entirely free”³⁵. There were however strict guidelines as to those who would be considered eligible and members were still required to surrender the requisite number of clothing coupons.

By December 1942 a range of accessories were available from the Headquarters shop including spare buttons for all uniform items, leather elbow patches and suit edges, patching material and badges and bar brooches (the latter for positions Centre Organiser and above).³⁶

From 1 January 1943 the Ministry of Home Security substantially reduced the cost of uniform items, this effectively halved the price of many, for example the short sleeve dress was reduced to 32/6d.³⁷ It had been 62/6d in November 1940.³⁸

The next month, on 12 February 1943, 'Regional Strips' (these were the same as county and county borough name tabs but with 'Region 1' etc.) were introduced for Regional office staff below the position of Regional Organiser. Regional Administrators and Regional Organisers continued to wear the 'Headquarters' strip.³⁹

The original overalls, first sold in 1939, (an example of which is illustrated below) were of a thin cotton material and it is unlikely that they stood up to much wear and by July 1940 better quality drill overalls were available.⁴⁰ On 1 March 1943 it was announced that when stocks were depleted only the better quality wrap-over overall, price 14/-, will be produced.⁴¹

Further concessions were made to non uniformed members in 1943, when on 10 March armbands were launched for "members not in possession of a uniform but engaged on work for which some recognition of their status is desirable".⁴² The armbands were in grey [felt] with the crown and W.V.S. woven [embroidered] in red, and were also available with 'B.R.' (for British Restaurants) and 'Rest Centre' embroidered. The price was 1/3d or 1/6d for those with the additional embroidery.⁴³ It would appear though that a tsunami of requests fell on Headquarters as on 24 March the previous notice was cancelled and a new circular issued informing that there were only limited supplies available and that they were intended for members who were "engaged on work especially in emergency". Armbands were to be numbered, records kept of whom they were sold to and members had to sign a statement agreeing to return the armband if they gave up the work for which it was issued (at which time their money would be refunded).⁴⁴





There followed a period of considerable demand for the armbands which led some local authorities to apply to the Ministry of Home Security for permission to issue their own, especially to the key Housewives in their area. It was decided though by the ministry to issue a national armband, but these green armbands were not available until 2 November 1944 and demand had slackened considerably. The green armbands were distributed to Regions and issued free to members whose duties brought them in touch with the public.⁴⁵

From 8 April 1943 the stocks of some uniform items were exhausted and discontinued, The Viyella blouses and better quality coat overalls ceased to be produced.⁴⁶

Ever since the centralised system of uniform distribution had been introduced in March 1942 there had been problems with orders sent to the Ministry of Home Security, many members failing to fill in forms correctly or ordering the wrong sizes. As a remedy to this Headquarters opened the "Trying-on-room" on Tuesday 6th April 1943 located in the WVS Shop at 26 Broadway. It stocked a sample of every size of each item of uniform so that members could try items on before ordering.⁴⁷

This initiative was followed on 25th November 1943 by the introduction of "New Larger Sizes" in stock uniforms which in suits went up to (Bust, Waist, Hips, Length,) 44, 37½, 49, 28½. And in overcoats to 44, 47, 47.

On 3rd August 1943 it was announced that the King had authorised the institution of

chevrons for war service. It was however not until 14 April 1944 that WVS allowed members to apply for these and members only qualified "provided that the section of the W.V.S. in which they are enrolled is one which functions operationally during or immediately after enemy action".⁴⁸

For all those who did not qualify for war service chevrons the WVS instituted its own chevron system (maroon on grey) whereby members who undertook tasks such as salvage, school meals and canteens welfare and billeting, administration etc. could gain a chevron for each year of service after 3 September 1939.⁴⁹

13 May 1944 bar brooches were extended to positions below centre organiser these included Clothing Officer, Services Welfare Officer, Salvage Officer etc.⁵⁰

5th February 1945 the material of the dress was changed from the flannel that prevailed throughout the war to a woollen material of better quality. The new dresses were priced at £3/5/0d [65/-] reversing the price drop which had occurred in January 1943.⁵¹ However by 26 April short sleeve dresses in the new material were still not available though their price had been reduced by three shillings.⁵²

Uniform price list, July 1940

Below is a list including prices of the uniform items available in July 1940. That month the average weekly wage for men was £4 10s 0d⁵³ meaning that the suite type of full outdoor uniform would have cost £9 4s 7d, well beyond the means of most working class households.

Uniform Item	Price
Green felt hat with red band	7s 11d
Grey/Green tweed overcoat	79s 6d
Grey/Green tweed coat and skirt	79s 6d
Green cotton overall with red monogram (wrapover)	6s 6d or Oversize 7s 6d
(coat shape)	12s 6d or Oversize 13s 6
Green cotton overall with red monogram (wrapover)	12s 6d or Oversize 13s 6
(coat shape)	12s 6d or Oversize 13s 6
White overall with red monogram (wrapover)	9s 11d or Oversize
Red artificial silk blouse	6s 11d
Red artificial silk and wool blouse	9s 11d
Red Viyella wool blouse	14s 9d
Striped scarf	3s 11
Grey/Green flannel summer dress	(short sleeves) 45s
(long sleeves)	47s 6d
Red crepe-de-chine collar for flannel dress	3s

Uniform and Clothing Rationing

Members of the WVS were civilians and as such wore uniforms in place of their civilian clothes.⁵⁴ Clothes rationing was introduced in June 1941 and by 1 November members had to use their own clothing ration of 66 coupons per year⁵⁵ (by spring 1942, 60 coupons per 15 months⁵⁶) to buy their uniforms. Members who were 'essential wearers' could enter the 'Coupon Surrender Scheme' which effectively gave a coupon discount on WVS uniform items. Below is a list showing coupon values for uniform items and discounts available.⁵⁷

Description	Items covered	Coupon value	Surrender in exchange for coupon certificate
Initial outfit for essential wearer who does not possess a uniform but wishes to purchase a greatcoat or raincoat	Greatcoat or Raincoat and Suit or Flannel Dress.	36	12
Replacements of uniform for essential wearer	Any individual item of uniform	16	12
Initial outfit for essential wearer not including raincoat or greatcoat	Suit or Flannel Dress and Cardigan	18	9
Essential wearer of overalls	Overalls	7	3

Members who were non essential wearers could still purchase uniforms but they would have to surrender the full coupon value.

It was not until 1 March 1944 that the coupon surrender was reduced from 12 to 8 coupons and 9 to 6 coupons for the respective uniform categories.⁵⁸

Regulations for the wearing of WVS uniform

(Extracted from Circular Notice A2/42)

There had always been a minimum requirement for qualification for the granting of a uniform permit and as time passed the requirements became stricter. The major change came in March 1942 when “Owing to the difficulties of supply at the present time and the national need for economy in material ... It is necessary to examine W.V.S. work and to provide that only W.V.S. members engaged on work for which the wearing of uniform is essential should benefit ...”⁵⁹

Uniform permit cards were only to be issued by Centre Organisers when

1. The work which the member was actually performing was listed as work for which uniform was considered to be essential.
2. Where a member intended to and was considered likely to continue in WVS work.
3. If a member was doing full time WVS work (full time being a 44 hour week) or regular part time work of at least 48 hours a month in one of the categories for the wearing of uniform.
4. The member's credentials were in order.

The work for which uniform was considered to be essential were covered by the following

1. WVS Staffs at Centres. Information Bureaux and administrative Centres (Clerical workers not in contact with the public were given overall permits only).
2. Rest Centres – persons in charge; other members were given overall permits.
3. All WVS transport members
4. All mobile canteen workers.
5. Members in charge of Stationary Canteens; others were given overall permits.

In the case of canteen workers and WVS members on similar types of work, consideration was given to the granting of overall permits if the members were doing less than 48 hours a month but were regular shift workers.

6. Evacuation WVS billeting officers or members on other similar duties.
7. Responsible officials of clothing and other depots; other members were given overall permits.

8. Village representatives on special duties.

9. Queen's Messengers.

10. Key workers in Salvage, Housewives' Service and other activities, etc., overall permits were given to certain Salvage and Housewives' Assistants.

Members of work parties, knitting groups, etc., were not eligible for out-door uniform, but for overalls only, for which they had to give up full coupons (7).

People carrying on professional duties. i.e. canteen supervisors and cooks, heads of hostels, specialised clerical workers, etc., if engaged on paid work in connection with WVS they may have be eligible to wear uniform where the centre organiser considered the nature of the work made it desirable, provided that they were engaged on work for the Local Authority with which WVS was co-operating.

Members who did not fall into any of the essential wearer categories but who already had uniform were allowed to continue wearing it but if they needed replacement items they had to surrender the full coupon values.

It was also stated that enemy aliens were not eligible to wear uniform.

Selected uniform item descriptions

Grey/green tweed overcoat

We do not have a wartime example of the overcoat in the collection but this description is based on later examples and evidence from wartime memoranda and photographs.

Produced in a heavy tweed material in which green and grey were interwoven in a herringbone effect and fully lined in artificial silk (the colour is not known). Double breasted with 6 large buttons to the front with an additional small hidden button and tab to secure the bottom of the coat. Two large pockets at waist level with vertical openings. At the back there is a yolk and below two un-pressed pleats, held in place with a half belt and a split which runs approximately half way to the waist, also secured with a small button. The shoulders are padded. There are tabs on each sleeve, approximately 1 ½ inches from the cuff and approximately 2 inches wide, secured with a single button, the ends pointing outward/back. Some wartime uniform overcoats and suits have epaulets but these were sold separately and attached by members. Produced in Regular, Short and X Hip sizes with Regular overcoats ranging between, Bust, Hip and Length sizes of 33-36-43 to 41-45-49. Later produced in large sizes, the largest of which is noted above.



A 1950's Tweed overcoat front and rear, these were almost identical to those produced during the war apart from the loss of the sleeve tabs and the colour of the lining.



Crown Copyright 1953

Showing a wartime uniform tweed overcoat, note the button and tab on the sleeve (The Civil Defence Corps Armband is 1950's)

Grey/green tweed suit

We do not have a wartime example of the overcoat in the collection but this description is based on later examples and evidence from wartime memoranda and photographs.

Jacket:

Produced in a lighter grade tweed than the overcoats but with the same herringbone weave and lined green artificial silk with a strong diagonal bias (Later jackets were also lined and brown and by the 1950's red, the latter type are without an inside pocket). Single breasted with three buttons but with a double breasted lapel (those with a single breasted lapel were issued post 1966). Two large expandable applied pockets to front with one button each (later pockets were not expandable), also an inside pocket on the right breast secured with small four hole button. At the back a yolk and a half belt. Two small buttons at the cuff. Produced in Regular, Short and X Hip sizes with Regular jackets ranging between, Bust and Hip sizes of 33-36 to 42-46. Later produced in large sizes, the largest of which is noted above.

Skirt.

Made in the same tweed as jacket, partially lined to halfway at the back in grey artificial silk. Five panel skirt with waist band, buttoned, with zip to side (those with 4 panels and a slit were issued post 1966). Produced in Regular, Short and X Hip sizes with Regular skirts ranging between, waist and length sizes of 25½-27 to 34-31.





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This Page:

Showing the suit uniform in 1941, note the two small buttons at the cuffs and the expandable pockets. The member on the right (in the top picture) is also wearing a WVS monogram brooch at the neck of her blouse. Also note the skirt hem well below the knee.

Opposite page:

Right - Details of a late 1940's Uniform Jacket showing the material weave and buttons, the same as the wartime versions but without the split and buttons on the cuff or the expandable pockets. Left - Detail of the inside pocket.

Red blouse.

Made in three materials, artificial silk, artificial silk and wool, and Viyella and available in long and short sleeve. Unlike other uniform items the design of the blouse seems to have evolved over time. That described and shown is the first known long sleeve Viyella version Introduced in 1939 and discontinued in 1943.

Manufactured by 'Bernella' in a heavy dark red Viyella. Open neck blouse with six small red buttons grouped in pairs, with a double tuck of fabric to the right and single tuck to the left. Collar has one row of stitching to the edge (later versions had up to 9 rows of stitching which cover the collar). Cuffs are slightly gathered with a single button fastening. There is a yolk at the back the material below slightly gathered). Produced in sizes ranging between, Neck and bust, 13-32 to 16-46.





Grey/green flannel summer dress:

The original dresses were manufactured by Lillywhites and only available through their London stores and originally made in a summer weight crease resistant flannel and available in long or short sleeves.⁶⁰

The example described and shown is in a wool or wool blend serge probably from early 1945 when the material was changed. There are six buttons, grouped in pairs, from the collar to the waist. There are three slightly rectangular pockets. Two (large) on the front of the skirt fastened by a button each and one small breast pocket on the left side, all secured with three rows of stitching. Shaped to the waist with four darts front and back. The shoulders are padded and gathered at the seam, with gathering also on the front and back yolks. The cuffs are also gathered designed to be fastened with cufflinks in this case made of brown Bakelite detachable buttons. The vent on the left side, which crosses the waist line, is secured with poppers. The skirt comprises 8 panels.). Produced in sizes ranging between, Bust, Hips and length sizes of 32-35-43 to 46-49-47.







Green cotton overall with red monogram:

Two types, Coat shape and Wrapover.

Coat Shape: Produced in lightweight light green cotton with diagonal bias, Nine button holes to the front from neck to base designed to be used with detachable buttons. Three pockets, two to the front just below the waist and one on the left breast, this embroidered with WVS monogram in dark red cotton, none have buttons or fixings. The collar edged with three rows of stitching. The shoulders and cuffs are gathered at the seam the latter with same three rows of stitching as collar. The two waist ties/belt designed to button together at the back with detachable buttons. Tailored in at the waist. Produced in sizes ranging between, Bust, Hips and length sizes of 32-34-44 to 46-48-47.







Wrapover, 1942 version: Produced by JM Richie and Co Ltd for WVS in 1942 in lightweight light green cotton with diagonal bias. Two pockets, one below the waist on the right the other on left breast with WVS monogram embroidered in red. Shawl lapel and gathered cuffs with holes for detachable buttons. Fastened at the back/side by means of two ties. Loose fitting, no tailoring. Sizes available same as Coat shape.



Green felt hat with red band (1942 version):

In thin dark green felt, this style of hat came to be known as a 'Lady Reading'⁶¹. Three rows of stitching around the brim. Dark red gross grain hatband with bow on right side. Internally a light green gross grain sweatband with 1942 WVS label attached. Although always worn by the founder, Lady Reading with the crown pinched in around the back, WVS ladies wore it in a number of different ways, with the crown flattened or pinched like a trilby and with the brim in every conceivable position. The WVS metal badge was attached to the hatband at the front centre.



Beret:

Introduced on 28 January 1941. Manufactured in dark green felt with a small piece of fabric sticking up in the middle of the crown. The sweatband is formed by the folding under of the felt to create a thick edge. One example in the collection had a gross grain sweatband attached later. Instructions issued with their introduction recommend that the “metal badge, or preferably, the grey [cloth] badge ... may be put on the right side of the beret”⁶² [meaning over their left eye].



Badges and how to wear them.

Cloth badges: Sleeve badge and name tab

Introduced on 14 December 1939 and issued with the following instructions.

“The sleeve badges and tabs should be worn on the right arm, stitched flat, with the base of the name tab exactly 5 inches from the bottom edge of the coat sleeve. A space of one inch should be left between the centre of the base of the W.V.S. embroidered badge and the centre of the top edge of the name tab. The sleeve badge may only be worn on the uniform jacket or overcoat.”⁶³

Title Strips [these are name tabs by a different name] for Regional staff were introduced in February 1943.

When the dresses were introduced the sleeve badge and name tabs were sewn onto the left breast pocket, the name tab below the sleeve badge.

Examples can be seen in the front cover.

War and WVS Chevrons:

Introduced on 14 April 1943. Produced in two sizes with the large size for use on overalls and armllets.⁶⁴

“War service or W.V.S. Chevrons are to be worn on the right sleeve of the jacket or long sleeve dress, not on overcoats; and should be worn with the point upwards. On the Jacket they should be below the badge with the point of the chevron touching the centre of the scroll. On the long sleeve dress on the outside of the sleeve, midway between the seams with the point of the last chevron 4” above the bottom of the sleeve. On the short sleeved dress, they should be on the outside of the sleeve, midway between the two seams, with the point of the last chevron 2” above the bottom of the sleeve.”⁶⁵

Those on overalls “should be worn on the outside of the right sleeve, midway between the two seams, with the point of the last chevron 5” from the elbow.”⁶⁶

Examples of WVS chevrons can be seen on pages 26, 28 and 29.

Monogram Brooch:

“May be purchased by any member of W.V.S. entitled to the official badge at the price of 4s. 6d. From Headquarters. They should be worn at the neck of the dress or shirt.”⁶⁷



Bar Brooches:

Introduced on 11 April 1940 for positions Regional Administrators, Regional Organisers, County Organisers, Centre Organisers and members of Executive Rank at Headquarters. On 14 May 1944 introduced for positions below Centre Organiser including Clothing Officer, Services Welfare Officer, Salvage Officer.⁶⁸

“W.V.S. staff in uniform should wear the brooch on the right lapel of the overcoat or on the right lapel of the jacket over the buttonhole. ... Staff who do not wear uniform should wear the bar brooch immediately below the W.V.S. badge.”⁶⁹



Conclusions

Lady Reading's decision in 1939 to transform the WVS into a uniformed service can perhaps be seen as not just a move to allow her ladies easy recognition at the scenes of incidents, but also a means of placing the WVS on a similar footing as the ATS or WAAF, creating her famous 'army of women'. Her decision that members should purchase their own uniform, meaning that there would be no cost to the taxpayer, was probably the deciding factor in the Home Office sanctioning Lady Reading's request. This however inevitably led to problems; as while those appointed by the executive named positions, usually wealthy members of the upper or upper middle classes, could easily afford the cost of the uniform the majority of members who undertook the ground level tasks would have struggled to afford even a few items. Many WVS members therefore wore only their metal and enamel badge or later an armband as identification. The introduction of clothes rationing, and the requirement for members to use their coupon allowance to buy uniform, placed an added strain on members, and uniform which had previously only been permitted to be worn while on duty was allowed to be worn by qualifying members at all times. Several schemes were introduced to alleviate the burden on members; the coupon surrender scheme, second hand clothing, part purchase, the confidential assisted purchase scheme and the release of material and patterns, though how much impact these made is unknown. Save for gradual small alterations in detailing and materials the WVS uniform remained largely unchanged until 1966 though even these changes were relatively minor, and it was not until after Lady Reading's death in 1971 that a significant change of style was eventually made.

Matthew McMurray WRVS Archivist 19 March 2009

Notes

¹ Box 215 / CN 1939 / 9/38

² WRVS / 215 / CN1939 / CN14

³ Dame Mary Smieton pers. com.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ WRVS / 215 / CN1939 / CN14

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ WRVS / 215 / CN1939 / Amendment to CN14 10th October 1939

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ WRVS / 215 / CN1939 / CN28/39

¹¹ WRVS / 211 / CNCCB1939 / From Lindsey Huxley 13th December 1939

¹² WRVS / 215 / CN1939 / CN28/39

¹³ WRVS / 211 / CNCCB1940 / CCB 6/40

¹⁴ WRVS / 215 / CN1940 / CN 14/40

¹⁵ WRVS / 215 / CN1940 / CN 19/40

¹⁶ WRVS / 215 / CN1940 / CN 43/40

¹⁷ WRVS / 215 / CN1940 / CN 31/40

¹⁸ WRVS / 224 / CNRA1942 / RA A14/42

¹⁹ Women's Voluntary Services Uniform: Instructions July 1940

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ WRVS / 216 / CN1941/ CN M1/41

²² WRVS / 216 / CN1941 / CN M3/41

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ WRVS / 216 / CN1941 / CN A4/41

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ <http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/0-9/1940house/ref/clothes/rat.htm>

(viewed 29/01/09)

²⁹ WRVS / 216 / CN1941 / CN A14/41

³⁰ WRVS / 216 / CN1942 / CN A1/42

³¹ WRVS / 216 / CN1942 / CN A8/42

³² Ibid.

³³ WRVS / 216 / CN1942 / CN A14/42

³⁴ Ibid.

- ³⁵ WRVS / 211 / CNCCB1942 / CN A6A/42
- ³⁶ WRVS / 216 / CN1942 / CN A13/42
- ³⁷ WRVS / 216 / CN1942 / CN A16/42
- ³⁸ WRVS / 215 / CN1940 / CN 46/40
- ³⁹ WRVS / 224 / CNRA1943 / RA A2/43
- ⁴⁰ WVS Uniform instructions July 1940.
- ⁴¹ WRVS / 216 / CN1943 / CN A5/43
- ⁴² WRVS / 216 / CN1943 / CN A6/43
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ WRVS / 216 / CN1943 / CN A9/43
- ⁴⁵ WRVS / 224 / CNRA1944 / RA A10/44
- ⁴⁶ WRVS / 216 / CN1943 / CN A11/43
- ⁴⁷ WRVS / 216 / CN1943 / CN A14/43
- ⁴⁸ WRVS / 217 / CN1944 / CN A5/44
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ WRVS / 217 / CN1944 / CN A9/44
- ⁵¹ WRVS / 217 / CN1945 / CN A3/45
- ⁵² WRVS / 217 / CN1945 / CN A7/45
- ⁵³ <http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/0-9/1940house/ref/women/wrk.htm>
(viewed 29/01/09)
- ⁵⁴ Uniform, May 1942
- ⁵⁵ <http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/0-9/1940house/ref/clothes/rat.htm>
(viewed 29/01/09)
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Uniform, May 1942
- ⁵⁸ WRVS / 217 / CN1944 / CN A1/44
- ⁵⁹ WRVS / 224 / CNRA1942 / CN A2/42
- ⁶⁰ WVS uniform: instructions, July 1940
- ⁶¹ Sheet "When the idea of a uniform for WRVS..." Box W168.
- ⁶² WRVS / 216 / CN1941 / CN M3/41
- ⁶³ WRVS / 215 / CN1939 / CN28/39
- ⁶⁴ WRVS / 217 / CN1944 / CN A8/44
- ⁶⁵ WRVS / 217 / CN1944 / CN A4/44
- ⁶⁶ WRVS / 217 / CN1944 / CN A8/44
- ⁶⁷ WVS Code of instructions 1942, 7
- ⁶⁸ WRVS / 217 / CN1944 / CN A9/44
- ⁶⁹ WRVS / 211 / CNCCB1940 / CCB 6/40

