



WVS & WRVS NARRATIVE REPORTS

ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE HERITAGE COLLECTION

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The WVS/WRVS Narrative Reports have been recognised by UNESCO as among the UK's most exceptional documentary riches and were inscribed on the UK Memory of the World Register on 14 July 2010. They proudly sit alongside other pivotal documents in British history such as the Domesday Book, The Death Warrant of King Charles I and the scientific papers of Michael Faraday.

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 (up to 2000 in Scotland) 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 Royal Voluntary Service 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.

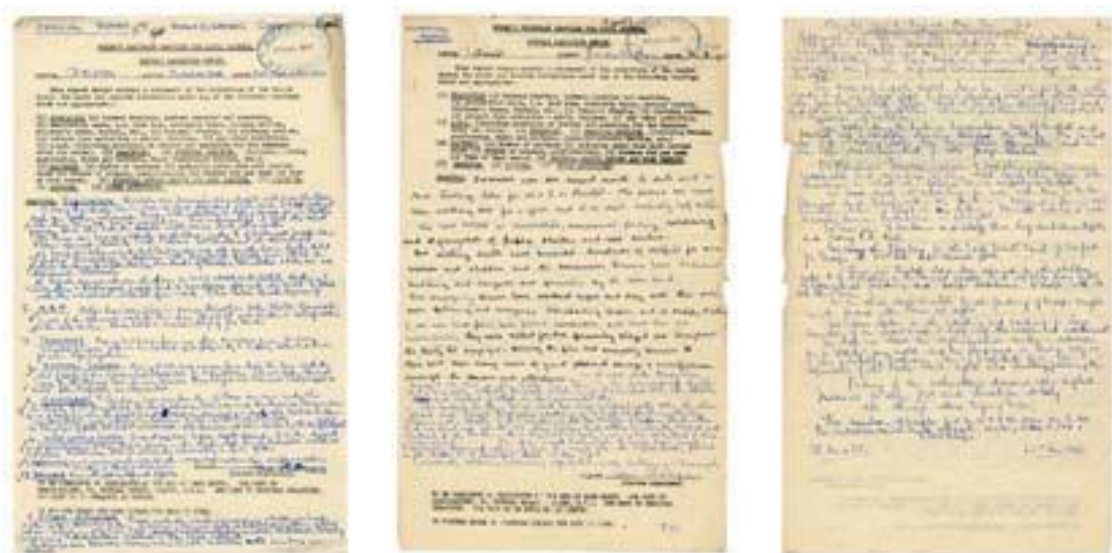
The reports were completed in quadruplicate with one copy kept by the Centre, one sent to the County office, one to the Regional office and one to WRVS Headquarters in London. The copies sent to Headquarters make up the majority of this collection and amount to around 450,000 reports. However, a weeding 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. Scotland (which kept all its documents in its Edinburgh Headquarters) has perhaps fared worst. Only a very few reports have survived for the period 1939-1941, because they were sent to London to compile a report, the rest were recycled as scrap paper in the Edinburgh office or sent for paper salvage. There are no surviving reports for Scotland for 1942-1959.

However, over time, Centre, County and Regional office copies of these missing reports from all three nations have filled some of the 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.



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