

## WRVS history

- 1938**
  - Sir Samuel Hoare, Home Secretary, gives Lady Reading permission to start The Women's Voluntary Services for Air Raid Precautions .
- 1939**
  - Name changes to Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence.
  - War is declared on 3 September. WVS had enrolled 317,415 volunteers.
  - Over three days WVS helps evacuate 1,476,000 people from the cities to safer areas.
- 1940**
  - First WVS travelling library for the forces at RAF Balloon Barrage HQ.
  - WVS appointed sole distributor of American Red Cross civilian relief gifts.
- 1941**
  - 181 centres undertake mending for the forces which includes darning of socks (and teaching men to do it!), mending of woollen items and tailoring.
  - WVS assisted the Ministry of Food to distribute 45 million ration books in one week.
- 1942**
  - First experimental 'welcome club' for American soldiers opens in Sunbury-on-Thames.
- 1943**
  - The first Meals on Wheels delivery is made in Welwyn Garden City.
  - The first Incident Inquiry Point is set up in a WVS office after an air raid in St Pancras, London.
- 1944**
  - A flying bomb hits the Guards Chapel, London during a service, killing six WVS members and many others.
  - WVS centres around the country adopt London boroughs and send household goods and furniture from their locality for bombed out families.
  - First services welfare cross the Channel to France.
- 1945**
  - By the end of the war, over 240 WVS volunteers had died.
  - The Government decides that there are too many tasks for WVS in the transitional period after the war and that the organisation should continue to operate for possibly two years.
  - WRVS opens the first Mothercraft Hostel.
  - 'For Civil Defence' is dropped and the organisation is now known as 'Women's Voluntary Services'.
- 1946**
  - Lady Reading opens the first residential club for older people in Ipswich.
- 1947**
  - Start of the WVS prison welfare scheme, helping women in Holloway Prison with domestic problems such as looking after children and pets.
- 1948**
  - WVS volunteers are entrusted with dusting the royal wedding presents while on display at St James's Palace.

- WVS opens a club at Hendon Centre for European volunteer workers, providing English lessons and a social club.
  - The NHS is created; WVS hospital trolleys are as popular as ever.
- 1951**
- Title changes to include 'Civil Defence'. This follows an appeal from HQ to WVS members to join the Civil Defence Corps which opened to applications in November 1949.
- 1951**
- A memorial to all WVS volunteers killed in the war tours the UK. A Service of Dedication for the Roll of Honour is held in Westminster Abbey, attended by HM The Queen.
  - First WVS children's holiday scheme run.
- 1952**
- Queen Elizabeth II becomes patron of WVS.
- 1953**
- WVS responds to the east coast floods. Canvey Island centre organiser is rescued and spends 14 days working at the Benfleet rest centre.
- 1955**
- One-in-Five department created to train one in five women in what to do in the event of nuclear attack.
- 1956**
- WRVS provides an experienced administrator to the British Council for Aid to Refugees and staff to assist with the demands of the influx of Hungarian refugees.
- 1957**
- WVS provides over 4,000 dinners to rescue workers in the aftermath of the Lewisham train crash.
  - WVS delivers 1,244,167 Meals on Wheels this year.
- 1958**
- Lady Reading becomes Baroness Swanborough.
- 1959**
- WVS celebrates 21 years.
  - WVS opens the Central Furniture Store in London and distributes furniture to those in need
- 1961**
- The Pacific island, Tristan da Cunha is evacuated to Great Britain due to a volcanic eruption. They are cared for by WVS at the disused Pendell Army camp.
  - WVS club and shop opens in St Francis Hospital, Haywards Heath, a pioneering project to help ease psychiatric patients back into society.
  - Launch of Tufty Clubs for road safety.
- 1963**
- WVS opens a borstal for boys in Glasgow after an anonymous donation to Lady Reading to "finance some social work of her own choice".
- 1964**
- Mr E T Mitcalfe of Darlington is the first man to receive the WVS long service medal
  - There are over 2,000 WVS centres throughout the county.
- 1965**
- Winston Churchill dies. WVS serves tea and Bovril to 82,400 people who queue to see him lying in state.

- 1966
  - Queen Elizabeth II awards WVS the honour of adding 'Royal' to its title and over 2,324 members and guests attend the re-dedication service at Westminster Abbey, many wearing the new badge.
  - WRVS members respond when a landslip at the Merthyr Vale Colliery engulfs the village of Aberfan, including the Pantglas Junior School, killing 145 people.
- 1967
  - WRVS provides garments for 242,001 people recommended by the welfare authorities.
- 1968
  - After flooding in the Home Counties and East Anglia, WRVS provides food, which the police deliver to the stranded in boats, and supply blankets.
- 1970
  - Blankets gathered for those made homeless by the cyclone and tidal wave in east Pakistan (now Bangladesh).
- 1971
  - Lady Reading publishes her treatise entitled *Voluntary Service*, the organisation's first annual report.
  - Lady Reading unexpectedly dies after a short illness.
- 1972
  - WRVS volunteers receive Ugandan Asian refugees at Stansted airport.
- 1974
  - A new project for severely disabled children is started by Hampshire WRVS in association with the New Forest Ramblers Association.
  - Runcorn playbus Cheshire opens. It serves areas where there are no public halls or play facilities.
  - WRVS sends 10,000 items of clothing to Cyprus for refugees fleeing the fighting.
- 1976
  - WRVS operates 56 rural social transport schemes, helping those cut off by reductions and withdrawal of rural buses.
- 1977
  - As HM The Queen celebrates her Silver Jubilee, WRVS operates 711 hospital trolley shops.
- 1978
  - WRVS adopts a new uniform for its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- 1980
  - Granny holidays for the elderly are arranged for the first time with hostesses much like the children's holiday scheme.
- 1981
  - The move by school kitchens, a main supplier of meals, to snack-type school meals leads to WRVS delivering frozen meals or those prepared in small kitchens and even members' homes.
  - In association with the NSPCC, WRVS helps take 200 children to holiday in Spain.
  - WRVS runs 27 victim support schemes around the country with many more planned.
- 1986
  - Eight volunteers help sort the Queen's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday cards at Buckingham Palace for three weeks.
- 1987
  - WRVS is drafted in to help distribute the EEC butter mountain.

- 1988**
  - In the aftermath of the Lockerbie air crash, WRVS supplies blankets and food.
  - Five WRVS volunteers sew 150 team badges onto the Great Britain winter Olympic team's anoraks.
  - WRVS 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother is guest of honour at Westminster Abbey Service.
  
- 1989**
  - Jubilee Children's Centre in Booth Hall Hospital, Manchester opens. It costs £80,000 and is presented to the hospital by WRVS as a gift for our Golden Jubilee.
  - WRVS volunteers assist families after disasters at Kegworth and Hillsborough.
  
- 1990**
  - First men's uniform issued.
  - 32,371 long service medals have been awarded since 1961, representing a total of 19.4 million individual duties.
  - WRVS is incorporated as a limited company.
  
- 1992**
  - WRVS is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission.
  - Gerry Burton becomes the first chief executive and the WRVS council is formed (later known as the Board of Trustees).
  
- 1994**
  - A new WRVS badge is adopted.
  
- 1996**
  - *WRVS News* re-launched as *Action*.
  
- 1997**
  - WRVS moves its head office to Milton Hill, the first time it's had its headquarters outside London.
  - Diana, Princess of Wales dies. Buckingham Palace asks WRVS to help clear 25,000 tonnes of flowers and thousands of toys left in remembrance at royal palaces. The toys are cleaned and distributed through WRVS projects to disadvantaged children.
  
- 1998**
  - Cilla Black and WRVS chairman, Lady Toulson launches the WRVS 'Give us a hand' campaign to promote volunteering.
  
- 1999**
  - Kosovan refugees arrive at East Midlands airport. WRVS prepare and staff rest centres and provide refreshments and sort and distribute donated clothing.
  - WRVS send out its first direct mail campaign to 30,000 households in Wiltshire.
  
- 2000**
  - WRVS Mad Hatters tea parties are held across Britain raising £15,552.85.
  - Formal uniforms are phased out and WRVS becomes a non-uniformed organisation. A new range of work-wear designed by Betty Davies is launched.
  
- 2001**
  - 127 volunteers provide over 2,500 hot drinks, snacks and support to emergency services at the site of the Selby rail crash.
  
- 2002**
  - Over 300 volunteers serve refreshments to mourners queuing to pay their last respects to The Queen Mother whilst she lies in state.
  - WRVS launch its new mission 'to help people maintain independence and dignity in their homes and communities particularly in later life'.

- 2004** • WRVS re-brands to the present badge of purple and orange.
- 2005** • WRVS emergency services volunteers support at the site of the Buncefield fuel depot explosions.
  - WRVS emergency services sets up rest centres in a number of London boroughs and provides refreshments at the Family Assistance Centre following the 7/7 terrorist attacks.
  - WRVS takes a stand against the sole delivery of frozen meals to vulnerable people and decides not to tender for new frozen-only contracts.
- 2006** • WRVS invests half a million pounds in community projects.
  - WRVS awarded a Heritage Lottery grant to run the 'Heritage Plus' project in Sussex.
- 2007** • WRVS launches an appeal to equip and train teams of volunteers to be prepared for future incidents following the summer floods.
  - Jean Corey is presented with the Volunteer of the Year award at WRVS' 2007. Chairman's Awards. Other winners are Ryan Wisely, Young Volunteer of the Year and the Isobel Blackman Centre, Team of the Year.
- 2008** • WRVS opens its first information centre and café in Paisley.
  - WRVS has no further guarantees of funding from the British Government.