

AVOW

In 2013 the Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham is 25 years old and to celebrate we have created this exhibition of the history of volunteering in Wrexham.

AVOW began life in 1988 and volunteers worked from their homes in the local area to help and support local charities. The organisation quickly grew and in 1996 took up permanent residence at 21 Egerton Street in Wrexham Town Centre.

In 1997 the organisation was made the official County Voluntary Council of Wrexham. Today AVOW continues to work for the benefit of Wrexham and its communities as a whole

OUR VISION

'The AVOW vision is the voluntary and community sectors achieving their missions for the benefit of the community within the county borough of Wrexham'

AVOW

Support the development of individuals and organisations within the voluntary and community sectors.

WILL

Establish and sustain good practice.

Undertake the provision of services appropriate to the voluntary and community sector.

Consult, represent and champion the voluntary and community sectors locally and nationally.

WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING?

Volunteering is a concept that has developed throughout history. It has grown alongside our towns and cities, our culture and our rules, morals and values. Volunteering occurs all over the world, often in unexpected places, and is done by a wide range of people.

The word Volunteer has links with all areas of society including health institutions, the military, caring, religion and youth groups. Volunteers have taken action throughout history, to campaign for their beliefs, to make a difference to others and their home town. Many of these volunteers are not even aware they are volunteers!

Volunteering is a widespread concept as such AVOW defines it as:

'Someone who gives their time, freely and willingly, for the benefit of others and/or their community, without expecting material reward'

WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?

Care for and support the elderly, children, disabled people, and those in isolation and poverty.

Support institutions such as play groups, nurseries, youth groups, churches, hospices and hospitals.

Campaign for social improvements in the environment and in town planning.

Clean up areas of natural beauty, run youth clubs and befriend others.

Provide leadership as scout leaders and as organisation trustees.

Run art classes, sports groups, theatres and help toads cross roads!

Restore local heritage and police our streets

Actually – volunteers do ANYTHING!

WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

To give back to society.

To learn and have new experiences

To express a different side of themselves

For fun and leisure

To meet new people and feel included

To get qualifications and experience

To improve career prospects

For character empowerment

To care for others.

To do what they feel is right

To express their own values and beliefs

To do something different

To help others

To Make a Difference

WREXHAM'S HISTORY

Wrexham has a long and diverse history. The first evidence of human activity in the area can be dated back to 1600BC evidenced by the discovery of the 'Brymbo Man.'

In 1220 our parish church was built and a settlement was beginning to grow in the surrounding areas. As the town grew so did trade and by the 14th century Wrexham was a strong market town.

During the 1700's the industrial revolution caused Wrexham's population to boom from just 3,000 people to well over 137,000. People have come and gone and our population is much more diverse.

Throughout Wrexham's history individuals and groups have worked in Wrexham to build a better society and campaign for a fairer, safer, stronger and healthier county.

Wrexham like the rest of Wales has faced many problems with poverty, poor sanitation, crime and disease. However, there have always been people working for the greater good of the community.

Philanthropists have donated money, the public have defended their freedom, campaigned for social changes, cared for one another, fundraised and completed the jobs that make a difference.

THE AIM OF THIS EXHIBITION IS SIMPLE, TO SHOW THAT:

'The people of Wrexham always have, and always will, care for each other, fill the gaps in society and work together for the greater good of the town and it's residents.'

Janet Radford, Deputy Chief Officer of AVOW

There has not been time to recognise every individual, every group and every volunteering event in Wrexham's history. The stories contained in this exhibition are those that have come to our attention but we are sure you'll agree they represent the true value of volunteering in Wrexham.

Each story shows how any individual can make a difference to the town and its communities and may even inspire you to volunteer yourself if you do not already!

If we have overlooked any volunteering stories, or have one of your own to tell please feel free to add them to our notice board, write them in the History of Volunteering memory book or tell one of our staff or volunteers today.

COULD YOU?

Below are examples of what volunteers have done in Wrexham over the last two centuries. Ask yourself could you do these?

Care for the sick and poor?

Tidy up the local area?

Work in a hospital café?

Organise and lead scouts and guide groups?

Organise fundraising events?

Act as a trustee for an organisation?

Give respite for carers?

Feed the homeless?

Police the streets of Wrexham?

Join a civil defence group?

Climb into a hole in the ground and wait for nuclear strikes?

Rescue your colleagues from a hazardous mine?

Volunteer to serve your country at war?

HEALTH

Poor health has always been a problem in towns and cities. Especially at the height of industrial boom when populations grew and people moved to urban areas.

Overcrowding, disease and poverty all became major issues. Likewise in rural areas poverty and poor nutrition featured.

Outbreaks of diseases like Cholera could devastate whole communities in a matter of weeks, especially at a time when the government did not believe it was their responsibility to oversee the health of citizens.

Public health has been recognised and conditions have improved. We now have sanitation, improved living conditions, health care services and the introduction of improved preventative care such as immunisations and less poverty.

Wrexham has a proud tradition of people coming together to take collective action to improve health and environmental conditions which continues to the present day. Charities and voluntary organisations work to provide support to the most vulnerable in our society.

OVERSEERS, RATEPAYERS & DONATIONS

In the 16th century there was no social support for the poor, no government relief systems, no NHS and no social housing. Those without work did not have an income and the sick had little access to reliable health care.

In 1601 the government introduced the Poor Law Act which required local magistrates to choose volunteers to act on a Board of Guardians or as Overseers to assess an area's poorest people and if necessary find provision for them. These people were not paid and were usually chosen from prominent community members.

The Overseers had a difficult and time-consuming role and had to judge people to the strictest criteria. The poor were divided into three categories:

Those who were poor through no fault of their own who could be offered relief and an allowance (The aged, the ill and orphaned children).

Those who became poor due to misfortune (Fire, accidents) who would be offered work and given relief when required.

Those who made themselves ill through rioting, idleness and drunkenness and were not allowed relief and would be given hard labour!

The Overseer role is one of the first 'official' volunteer roles. It has not been possible to identify those who took on the job, but a work house was built on Salop Street, Wrexham in the 17th Century, which would take in people who the overseer felt they deserved support. Workhouses existed until the early 20th Century.

The majority of the money needed to build the workhouse and pay poor relief was collected from richer members of society in the form of a 'rate payers tax.'

However, many people donated money for the care of the poor and sick in Wrexham. Many of these people remain anonymous to this day but the local great houses such as Erddig, Hafod-y-wern and Croesnewydd often donated money.

Even at this time the people of Wrexham felt the need to help others. Although workhouses were infamous for their harsh conditions it seems that without these donations the poorest members of society would not have had food, clothes or somewhere to live.

VOLUNTEER PRESSURE GROUPS

A survey of Wrexham was undertaken in the 1840's which revealed the town contained:

600 Pigsties

Three Slaughterhouses

Multiple Cesspools and Privies

No Sewerage System!

A large overcrowded population

Cramped conditions

Wrexham must have been a particularly dirty and smelly place to live!

The Vicar of Wrexham, George Cunliffe, called a meeting of like minded individuals to improve Wrexham. At the meeting the Sanitation Committee was established to attempt to clean up Wrexham and campaign for change.

Unfortunately the group did not have the financial backing to complete this task and in 1850 they petitioned the local health board to survey the town and suggest solutions to the problem.

George Cunliffe:

George Cunliffe was born into the wealthy Cunliffe family of Acton Park in 1795. He was made Vicar in 1826 and was well known for his campaigns for higher morals and living conditions in Wrexham. He was very strict in his methods and even campaigned for the closure of the Racecourse as it encouraged poor behaviour. He served as vicar until 1875.

The health board report found that a permanent health board should be established and major improvements made to the town.

In response a second volunteer pressure group 'The Improvement Committee' was established. They had similar aims to the Sanitation Committee but did not believe an expensive health board was the solution to Wrexham's problems.

Over the next five years the pressure groups continued to campaign but it was not until 1856 that the groups agreed to apply for a Charter of Incorporation and establish a Wrexham Borough Council.

Elections were called in 1857 and Wrexham's first Mayor, Thomas Edgworth, was elected. Edgworth began work on improving the town, immediately moving to close all open privy's and install a sewerage system.

Between 1863 and 1894 Wrexham:

Installed a sewerage system

Closed all open privy's

Built a public baths

Started health services

Appointed a health advisor

Opened public parks

Built schools

The death rate of the town began to fall as living conditions improved and the county became a better place to live.

Although this work was carried out by the new local government it is remarkable to think that they were made to do it by groups of volunteers who came together to make a difference. The Sanitation and Improvement Committee's hard work and pressure made a huge difference to the area. Over the years local campaign groups have started up to deal with such issues as education, environmental quality, health and social justice and been disbanded as problems are solved. The tradition continues...

THE YORKE STREET DISPENSARY

Access to healthcare in early 19th century Wrexham was limited. When it was available it was often too expensive for most people.

In 1833 Dr Thomas Taylor Griffith identified the need for a medical facility for the poor and opened a dispensary offering medicine and advice. People could join for just one penny a week and the service was heavily subsidised by donations from dispensary officials and had the backing of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn.

1833 - Dispensary Opens



By 1835 – 1,700 patients have been treated



By 1844 – 12,000 patients have been treated



By 1860 – 2000 patients were being treated every year

The dispensary was well supported by the Wrexham public and continual donations meant it was able to expand and improve.

1837 – A fund for £300 was raised from public donations to establish a ward for in-patients.

1838 – Building moves to a larger premises and a two ward unit is established from public donations.

1863 – An operating theatre was added.

1866 – Local Businessman, William Overton, donated funds to construct two fever wards.

Dr Taylor Griffith's vision was well ahead of its time for publicly funded medical facilities.

His staff were highly trained, using modern cleaning procedures and providing overnight care. By providing this solution he was able to ensure access to medicine for all.

The dispensary remained in use until 1926 when the War Memorial Hospital became Wrexham's primary medical facility.

THE WREXHAM AND EAST DENBIGHSHIRE WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

In 1918 a decision was made to begin work on the War Memorial Hospital. However there wasn't enough money to start work until 1923 when a donation of £50,000 from the William and John Jones Memorial Fund was received.

William and John Jones made a fortune in the brewing business after opening the Island Green brewery and they donated regularly to local businesses and charities.

In 1904 William Jones died, leaving £200,000 to Wrexham. John Jones donated recreation land to Wrexham in his brothers memory. This was the beginning of philanthropic giving on a grand scale locally and the William and John Jones Memorial Fund was established.

The hospital was opened in 1926 and would serve the Wrexham public for the next sixty years. On completion Roseneath House (Bought by John Jones in 1912) was donated for the hospitals use and a connecting corridor built between the two.

The War Memorial Hospital continued to be used until 1985 when wards were transferred to the Wrexham Maelor Hospital, the building now forms part of Coleg Cambria and so continues in community use.

The William and John Jones Trust donations to Wrexham medical institutions were substantial. The money provided ensured thousands of people in the area were able to receive medical treatment. The fund is still in use today and is described further in the philanthropy section of this exhibition.

HOSPITAL LEAGUE OF FRIENDS

Many hospitals are supported by a League of Friends. These groups are made up of volunteers who organise events, staff cafés and shops, fundraise and help to bridge gaps in funding.

The 'friends' come from all walks of life and use the money they raise in various ways. Often donated money is used to build new hospital buildings and purchase equipment for the benefit of staff and patients.

League of Friends groups are usually able to secure funding that hospitals would be unable to access and can make improvements all round.

PENLEY POLISH HOSPITAL

Penley Polish Hospital was originally a medical camp for American soldiers returning from Europe during World War II, 1939-1945.

At the end of the war a Polish Medical Corp was stationed here and they continued to treat wounded soldiers. Many displaced Polish people stayed in Britain with a number choosing to live at Penley. The hospital became 'a distinct Polish community in it's own right' within the borders of Wrexham.

Just after the war Penley Hospital had 750 beds and over 2,500 people living on site. By 1949 the hospital was exclusively treating the Polish Community and over the next thirty years more than 2,000 babies were born there.

After World War Two the hospital went into decline and it was decided that a Hospital League of Friends should be established to act as a management and fundraising group.

The Group aimed to:

Ensure the Polish population at Penley could retain their identity whilst integrating with the local community.

Supply new equipment.

Organise community events.

Ensure patient well being.

Fundraise.



Donald Dutton was the first chairman of the Penley League of Friends throughout the 1960's and 1970's.

Before his death in 2011 Mr. Dutton reminisced that:

'I have so many happy memories of going to Penley, not only on my own but with my wife Doreen, particularly to the annual dance with Polish style band. . . We would join forces to go to the special days that were called saints days, e.g. St John's day when the staff would be encouraged by their need to feel Polish and dress up in Polish costume. . . I also remember at Easter the custom of painting eggs. . . over the years while I was there, vast strides were taken to improve the hospital.'

The group primarily raised funds through the canteen shop in which members of the hospital volunteered. They also received money from Polish people all over the world and were of course supported by the people of Wrexham.

A number of the former hospital buildings have been converted to business units, and development of residential properties. However the last hospital ward has been taken over by the community to form the Rainbow Centre which provides much needed support services for older and disabled people living in the surrounding rural area.

Video Footage of Penley Polish Hospital in the 1960's is available to view.

WREXHAM MAELOR LEAGUE OF FRIENDS

Wrexham Maelor League of Friends have been serving the Maelor and War Memorial Hospitals for over 45 years donating over £3,000,000 worth of amenities and equipment to staff and patients.

The group fundraises by managing two shops in the hospital which are run by 400 volunteers. Throughout their history they have organised community events such as sponsored walks, concerts, Christmas and Summer fairs, quiz evenings, raffles and food festivals which raise thousands each year. In 1970 volunteers started a trolley service to wards for patients too ill to get to the shops and this service continues today.

The group have paid for and built a chapel and an assembly hall. Set up and manage Radio Maelor, the hospital radio station and as of July 2013 they had raised £218,875 this year alone.



Margaret Bryden, the current League of Friends Chair, believes that 'the hard work and dedication of the committee along with the generosity of the local population have enabled significant improvements to be made to the care our clinical staff can provide for our patients.' Margaret cannot understate how Important every volunteer is, be they running a shop, organising an event or fundraising and is extremely grateful for their work.

WREXHAM MAELOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Wrexham Maelor Voluntary Service supports the Maelor hospital. They operate cafés, vending machines and trolleys providing patients and visitors with refreshments and areas to relax.

All profits are used to purchase essential equipment. In 2012 the group donated £182,000, and throughout its existence they have donated well over £1,000,000.

The group started with one Café and one trolley. Today they operate five cafés and several vending machines offering 24 hour service, over 150 people volunteer overseen by a board of ten trustees. By offering a cup of tea and a fresh, clean environment the group make a big difference to Maelor patients, families and staff.

Originally part of the Woman's Royal Voluntary Service the group broke away in 1994 to focus solely upon the needs of the Maelor Hospital. They have donated basic equipment, saw's and even lasers!

The volunteers themselves find the role very rewarding. They enjoy speaking to customers, even offering someone to talk to when needed. They like working with one another and often comment that sometimes it is so busy they don't get much of a chance to chat!

This year WMVS were given volunteer diaries and one customer even commented that:

'WMVS volunteers are worth their weight in gold!'

NIGHTINGALE HOUSE HOSPICE

While hospitals focus on the immediate needs of patients, hospice care aims to provide the best quality of life possible to those with a life limiting illness. It was first recognised in the 1980's that Wrexham needed an institution to serve these needs.

Dr. Graham Arthur from the Maelor Hospital established a terminal care fund and gained enough donations to employ two Macmillan Nurses. By 1986 enough money had been raised to establish a day centre at the Maelor Hospital.

Demand on the day centre increased and in 1992 a Hospice foundation fund was established. The funds were quickly raised, building began in 1994 and in 1995 Nightingale House was opened.

This year volunteers at Nightingale house have been filling in diaries about their roles and experiences:

Joan

“My first involvement as a volunteer was with the income generation office about 9 years ago and my commitment was to fundraise with street collections, store collections and raffles. I also stewarded summer concerts, Christmas fairs and created press releases. My current duties are to meet and greet the patients and make them feel good in a friendly atmosphere, have a chat over a cuppa, help them with meal times, help them with any small problems they may have and if needed refer them to the qualified staff to help. My reward is meeting the patients who I feel are friends, and that I am committing to a caring, worthwhile cause. It is a most enjoyable and fulfilling experience”

Anne

'Working in day care is so rewarding the patients have a lovely day, and in most cases give their families a well-deserved break from caring which is very important. We chat and make cups of tea and coffee by the gallon. Meeting and greeting is important and there are always lots of hugs. I help with crafts, sewing, knitting, card making and sometimes play the piano for a sing song. . . . I love going there every week.'

Janet

'I came to a part in my life where I felt I was going nowhere and needed something new and challenging. It was suggested to me to do some voluntary work... my mother had been a patient at Nightingale House which brings it close to heart. I started off doing some bag packing in the supermarkets and was offered the opportunity of being a patient escort and have been doing this for eighteen months. From the moment you walk in you always get a warm, friendly atmosphere and I sometimes go out on the ambulance picking up patients so I meet lots of different people. I stop and have a cup of tea and a chat means a lot to some people. There are always lots of activities to get involved in and have fun. I gain a lot of satisfaction from my voluntary work and hope I am of some use to them. I feel very lucky to be part of this organisation.'

VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS

Soldiers may not seem an ideal example of volunteers, however there are countless examples of soldiers who were not conscripted, forced into the role or fought for personal gain. Instead they joined to protect their values, families and countries.

In the early 18th century the French writers Diderot and D'Alembert, defined the military volunteer as:

'one who enlists of his free will, without pay, contract or fixed rank, just in order to serve his king or his country, and to learn the trade of war.'

WREXHAMS ROYAL WELCH FUSILIERS

The Royal Welch Fusilier's are one of the most famous regiments in the British army. The regiment has been present at every single major battle since its formation in 1689 including:

The Battle of Blenheim (1704)

The Battle of Corunna (1809)

The Siege of Badajoz (1812)

The Battle of Waterloo (1815)

The Battle of the Alma (1854)

The Relief of Ladysmith (1899)

The Battles of Ypres (1914)

The Battle of the Somme (1916)

The Royal Welch Fusiliers started with an initial group of volunteers. In response to a Jacobite threat from the deposed James II, the new King of England and Wales, William III, ordered the raising of new regiments.

In March 1689 Lord Henry Herbert called for men from across North Wales to volunteer and form up as the 23rd regiment of foot. Recruitment across North Wales was heavy and eight companies were raised.

In total 544 men joined the regiment, each company consisting of sixty soldiers, three sergeants, three corporals and two drummers. After a short training period they were sent to Ireland and fought against James II at the Battle of the Boyne.

These men had volunteered to fight for their beliefs and support the new King. The Royal Welch Fusilier regiment would not have started without the recruitment of volunteers.

THE YEOMANRY AND RIFLE VOLUNTEERS

In the late 18th century the people of France rose up and overthrew the monarchy. The French installed a revolutionary government and embarked on a series of wars to establish an empire.

In response to this threat the British Government passed the Volunteer Act in 1793 allowing the recruitment of volunteers into non-regular troop units. If an attack on Britain came then these troops would be trained and ready to take up arms and defend the country.

Men volunteered all over the country and joined the new Yeomanry Cavalry and Rifle Units.

The Denbighshire Yeomanry formed in 1794 at Hightown Barracks in Wrexham after recruiting local gentry, farmers, farm tenants and labourers from all over North Wales.

These men were unpaid and offered their own horses and equipment.

They were often called out to deal with major disputes between miners and mine owners. Especially so when these disputes became riots. On one such occasion the volunteers of the Denbighshire Yeomanry were called to bring rioters in Rhos under control. They paraded through the area successfully restoring order.

However, there was a close call at the Battle of Cinder Hill, Rhos, when inexperienced Yeomanry Cavalry members fired shots at a protesting group in 1830. In response Sir Watkin's, in charge at the time, grabbed the soldier and quickly reprimanded him, thus resolving the situation.

THE VOLUNTEER FORCE

In 1859 the French uncovered a plot to assassinate Emperor Napoleon III. Although the would be assassin was Italian it was discovered that he had acquired the bombs in Birmingham. Tensions rose across the continent and, realising that the majority of the army were on garrison duties across the empire, the government made the decision to create volunteer reserve corps. Each corps. was attached to a regular battalion.

Men joined in large numbers and Alfred Tennyson reflected the feeling of the nation in his poem,

*'There is a sound of thunder afar,
Storm in the south that darkens the day,
Storm of battle and thunder of war,
Well, if it do not roll our way,
Storm! Storm! Rifleman Form!
Ready, Be ready to meet the storm!
Rifleman, Rifleman, Rifleman form!'*

The Volunteer Force continued to train but it was not until 1900 that its usefulness was realised and utilised. In 1899 the Boer War broke out in South Africa and many regular British troops were deployed to the area. In 1900 the army suffered terrible casualties during "Black Week", at Stromberg, Meyersfontein and Colenso. As a result the government rethought their strategy and began to use the Volunteer Force as well trained and equipped replacement troops. Regular drafts were made and volunteer regiments could be found fighting alongside their regular counterparts in major battles. They became indistinguishable from the regular force. It was the first time military volunteers were used abroad and they proved their effectiveness.

The Royal Welch Fusiliers 1st Volunteer Battalion was formed in Wrexham in 1859.

It recruited eight companies of volunteers from Wrexham, Ruabon, Denbigh, Gresford, Gwersyllt, Ruthin and Llangollen. A 2nd Volunteer battalion recruited from Flintshire and a 3rd Volunteer battalion from Caernarvonshire. The 1st Volunteer Battalion was present at the Siege of Ladysmith and later at Ypres, the Somme, Gallipoli, Gaza and Baghdad.

After serving in the Boer War the volunteer battalions were able to assign the battle honour of 'South Africa' to their title, an honour which remains individual to them and they still keep to this day. In 1918 the Volunteer force was converted into the Territorial Army.

THE HOME GUARD

'The year is 1940. Hitler has led the Wehrmacht through Poland, Belgium, Holland and France and now stands on the European coast with Britain in sight. The British Expeditionary Force has been defeated and forced to retreat. Only the channel separates the country from complete annihilation.

The British government awaits the inevitable invasion, expecting Germany to continue to deploy their speedy tactics and aerial assaults. At any moment Wehrmacht soldiers could descend from the sky, attacking the British infrastructure, taking up vital positions and making preparations for a land invasion. Extreme measures were needed to protect the nation and this measure came in the form of a Civil Defence Organisation.'

- An Anonymous Volunteer

On May 14th 1940 secretary of state Anthony Eden addressed the nation:

'Since the war began, the government have received countless inquiries from all over the kingdom from men of all ages who are for one reason or another not at present engaged in military service, and who wish to do something for the defence of their country. Well, now is your opportunity. . .

'We want large numbers of such men in Great Britain. . . between the ages of seventeen and sixty-five, to come forward now and offer their services. . . The name of the new force which is now to be raised will be the Local Defence Volunteers. . .

When on duty you will form part of the armed forces, and your period of service will be for the duration of the war. You will not be paid, but you will receive uniform and will be armed. You will be entrusted with certain vital duties for which reasonable fitness and a knowledge of firearms is necessary...

In order to volunteer, what you have to do is to give in your name at your local police station; and then, as and when we want you, we will let you know...'

The Local Defence Force was to be made up of 175,000 volunteers from across the nation. However, within 24 hours of Eden's speech 250,000 volunteers had signed up for duty. Within a month and a half the organisation had swelled to 1.5 million members. The same size as the serving regular army.

In the summer of 1940 twenty six Home Guard Battalions were attached to the Royal Welch Fusilier Regiment. Battalions in the Wrexham area included Overton, Chirk, Ruabon, Cefn, Rhosymedre, Acrefair, Wrexham and Penley. In response to Eden's announcement 4,000 men had signed up for duty across Flintshire and Denbighshire and Wrexham itself managed to raise two units.

PENLEY HOME GUARD

With Anthony Eden's announcement men from all over Wrexham took action to join Home Guard units. John Dodd, a Penley man, immediately began knocking on doors and asking others to join him. Within 24 hours Dodd had recruited twenty eight men. They were based at the Methodist Chapel in Penley and practised shooting on an improvised range close by. When the unit first started it was only armed with six shotguns and four Rifles, all supplied by the volunteers themselves. Eventually Penley Home Guard grew to a large enough size to be divided into three rifle sections complete with signal men, first aiders and dispatch riders. Penley Home Guard trained hard and often held shooting competitions to prove their superiority above other groups. They were often seen training on local fields, practicing on the shooting range and even throwing Molotov cocktails in preparation for tank invasions.

On the 6th September 1940 at 3:00 am a warning was received that enemy parachutists had landed in the Penley area. The Penley Home Guard were roused, quickly dressed, equipped and reported for duty. They met regular troops and police units, were briefed and then began a wide search of the area for enemy troops. The volunteers established road blocks, manned railway lines, ammunition dumps and protected other areas of strategic importance from possible sabotage. They held bridges, crossed river fords and waded through ditches. They searched fields, towns and villages and spent the night alert and ready in the cold temperatures. As morning broke it was confirmed that a mistake had been made. The parachutists were in fact parachute flairs and there were no enemy soldiers in the area. It was the first and last time that the group would see operational use but they proved their effectiveness and determination.

CEFN AND DISTRICT HOME GUARD

During the summer of 1940 the German Luftwaffe began a series of intense bombing raids on Britain's major cities to weaken defences and morale. In an attempt to save cities from total destruction a black out was called and enforced by local air raid wardens. Windows had to be covered out and a fine could be given for any lights visible at night.

On the night of 28th August 1940 one such bombing raid took place on the city of Liverpool. It is thought that to distract the Germans local Home Guard units, including the Cefn Home Guard, made their way to Minera Mountain and set fire to the dry heather lands. Believing that Liverpool was hit the Luftwaffe continued to bomb the area repeatedly, ejecting thousands of pounds of explosives into an uninhabited and low damage area.

Another version of events is that one German bomber overflowed the city of Liverpool and ejected its payload over the Minera Moorlands. The dry heather caught fire and burned brightly for all to see. Again causing the Luftwaffe to eject their bombs in the wrong area. A decision was then made by the Cefn Home Guard to ensure the fire continued to burn. Using paraffin drums and flashing lights they kept the fire burning for a week over a half mile streak. They risked their own lives to save the lives of countless others as the bombs were redirected to an uninhabited zone.

Whatever the cause of the fire the ruse was so successful that the German propaganda announcer, Lord Haw Haw, was heard to be saying that Liverpool had suffered a direct hit and that the city and surrounding areas had been heavily destroyed.

HOME GUARD DISBANDMENT

Throughout the war years the Home Guard served and protected the country to the best of their ability. As the allies pushed deeper into Europe it became increasingly obvious that an attack on Britain would not come. In 1944 the organisation was seen as surplus to requirements and disbanded. Although the Home Guard were never engaged in a full scale battle they proved enough of a deterrent to ensure the country and their localities remained safe.

THE ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS 17 GROUP CONTROLLED HARDENED NUCLEAR BUNKER, BORRAS

Just outside of Wrexham in Borrass there is a hardened nuclear bunker. The bunker was built in 1962 and was staffed exclusively by local volunteers known as the Royal Observer Corps. They came from all over the Wrexham area to monitor potential nuclear blasts during the cold war era. These systems were mirrored nationwide with multiple hardened headquarters and monitoring stations across the country.

Although the bunker at Borrass was not built until 1962 the ROC has a much longer history. The ROC were developed in response to concern and the need to reassure and protect the British public.

As warfare changed a fear grew around the new threat of aerial attacks on civilians. Britain's response was to establish a civilian defence organisation known as the Royal Observer Corps. Groups began to spring up across the country and further expansion was encouraged in 1932 when Stanley Baldwin caused panic by stating in parliament that:

'I think it is well also for the man in the street to realise that there is no power on earth that can protect him from being bombed. Whatever people may tell him, the bomber will always get through, the only defence is in offence, which means that you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves.'



WREXHAM OBSERVER CORPS

The Wrexham Observer Corps formed in 1939 as number 26 group and was based at Parciau Pavillion Headquarters on Belle Vue Road, Wrexham and was responsible for raid detection, aircraft identification and tracking and reporting of aircraft over Great Britain.

The original groups built their own observation posts which were of varying quality across the county. They were everything from a garden shed next to a telegraph pole to a purpose built brick building complete with sandbag defences. They were often located in fields, on hilltops, cliff edges and even on the rooftops of public buildings and factories.

Each observer post reported back to the central group headquarters that consisted of:

Plotters – Who updated enemy positions

Tellers – Who communicated with other Observer Corps sections and other military groups

Alarm Controllers – These liaised with the police and issued air raid warnings to the appropriate groups

Interrogator – Was responsible for liaising with ground radar units

Duty Controller – Was responsible for supervising the group.

In 1940 the Luftwaffe (the German Air Force) attempted a major air offensive on Britain. They were met by the Royal Air Force and the Battle of Britain began.

The Observer Corps. tracked the enemy throughout the battle, directing the Royal Air Force to the areas they were most needed and saving countless civilians from bombing raids. They were so successful in this task that the Observer Corps was honoured by King George VI with a 'royal' designation and they became The Royal Observer Corps.

A NEW ROLE

In 1953 the Soviet Union successfully tested an atomic bomb and with tensions increasing every day the threat of attack was heightened. The ROC was asked to take on a new role monitoring nuclear blasts and once again became an integral part of Britain's defences. The ROC commenced an expansion programme. A new headquarters was built with 5 control rooms, and 1,563 monitoring posts appeared across the country, situated in protective bunkers.

Each bunker had to withstand large blast effects. They were excavated to 25 feet, cast in reinforced concrete, waterproofed with bitumen and then covered with a compacted soil mound. Access was via a steel ladder into a single room with a separate toilet. Three observers were expected to work inside at once and life could be sustained for twenty one days in the event of a nuclear attack. Conditions were cramped, cold and often damp. Many surface hatches are still visible today.

Volunteers were required to enter the monitoring post knowing that if a nuclear blast did occur they would be required to man their post, with no contact with their families, whilst they slowly died of radiation poisoning. Several posts were constructed in the Wrexham area.

In 1962 Borrass nuclear bunker was built and the reformed Wrexham group moved in and were identified as No. 17 group. The bunker was protected by heavy blast doors, had roof mounted aerials and telephones for communication, its own internal water supply, and a backup diesel electricity generator.

Volunteers at Borrass were required to guard the Wrexham area 24 hours a day, seven days a week and would issue a four minute warning should they detect a missile launch. 120 volunteers from the local area trained on a weekly basis and worked, rested and slept inside the bunker when on shift.

With the collapse of the USSR the ROC was seen as surplus to requirement and stood down in 1991. The group was never official disbanded and they still regularly meet up today as the Royal Observer Corps Association. The association runs a benevolent fund for those members who fall on hard times.

On the final parade Chief Observer John Jones spoke to his members:

'We are stood down, we are not disbanded. You are all valuable people, all I want you to do is to go home, polish your boots, clean your uniform, put it in your wardrobe, keep all you paperwork together and be ready for the call out, because that will happen. And I need you all to be ready to return here. I now salute you all.'

THE VOLUNTEERS

One volunteer was Michael Shinton who joined the corps in 1981 rising through the ranks from Observer to Leading Observer in 1984, and from Leading Observer to Chief Observer in 1988.

MICHAEL SHINTON, MY ROLE AS AN OBSERVER



'My role at Borrás was... looking after the communications in the control and monitoring all incoming and outgoing information to other ROC controls and to the armed forces HQ's across the country and training in the traffic centre...

We met up every week for training with all sections in the control ensuring all equipment was working and arranging our own mini exercises. There were three crews that met on different nights for 2 hours. Each crew had about 30-35 members, who worked together as one team...

'In an emergency the control was manned with 70-75 members who would work on a rota, working, resting, sleeping and providing security. We ensured hot drinks were available 24 hours a day, that enough water and food rations packs were on site to last about 4 weeks, water was rationed, there were no showers or baths, we were only allowed a quick wash to save water. We had our own fixed generator for electric power and to circulate the air around the building.

We had exercises 4-5 times a year lasting 8 to 24 hours lock in depending on the emergency given to us. Members were told if called out they could be out for 3-4 weeks in an emergency and to make arrangements for their families in case they were called. . . We would not know what our families were doing and if they were safe or not.'



ROC UNIFORMS

(1) Officers Cap – Royal Observer Corps Badge:

The Observer Corps crest and badge show a 16th century soldier holding a flaming torch and shielding his eyes, surrounded by a wreath and the Observer Corps motto 'forewarned is forearmed.'

(2) Observers Jacket:

Marked with Royal Observer Corps Insignia, Group Number and spitfire badges. The Spitfire badge denotes the amount of times the volunteer passed the annual Aircraft Recognition and Nuclear Detection tests. A white Spitfire was received after one pass, a red Spitfire after five, and a gold Spitfire after 25 passes.

(3) Royal Observer Corps overcoat with Royal Observer Corps insignia, group number and Chief Observer badge.

(4) Observer trousers

(5) Observer beret

(6) Chief Observer briefcase

**Go to our IPAD to hear an audio recording of Royal
Observer Corp members**

WORLD WAR II CIVIL DEFENCE VOLUNTEERS

During World War II many civilians volunteered to 'do their bit for the war' and joined a civil defence group.

Fireguard:

Fireguards were responsible for guarding towns and cities from incendiary devices. If an incendiary bomb was dropped then it was the role of the Fireguard to spot the device and take action to stop a fire starting or to extinguish any that had started. Fireguard members were often positioned on the highest buildings in the area to allow a good line of sight. They often manned places of strategic importance such as large factories, community centres and churches.

The Fireguard badge below would have been positioned on the arms of the Fireguard uniform. In Wrexham rural district alone there were a total of 11,512 Fire Guard members working a minimum of 48 hours a month. (Fireguard Badge Item 1)

St. Johns Ambulance:

The St. Johns Ambulance service was founded in London in 1887. It quickly spread and today these volunteers can be found at any event requiring a medical unit. In Wrexham during World War II St. Johns Ambulance members established and ran 15 first aid points and 13 mobile first aid parties.



Air Raid Precaution Wardens:

Air Raid Wardens were responsible for enforcing black out procedures throughout Britain. They had the role of extinguishing lights and reporting persistent offenders.

They were also responsible for ensuring civilians could reach air raid shelters.

Below are an Air Raid Wardens silver badge, buttons and a pocket pen knife. In the Wrexham Rural District there were seven hundred volunteer Air Raid Wardens.

ARP Silver Badge (Item 2)

ARP Silver Buttons (Item 3)

ARP Pocket Pen Knife (Item 4)

THE AUXILIARY FIRE SERVICE

The AFS were the voluntary back up Fire Service. They would respond at busy times and when regular fire fighters were occupied. Although Wrexham was not heavily bombed the Auxiliary force were regularly used to extinguish fires. In Wrexham rural district official figures show 450 volunteers were trained during World War II. (AFS Badge Item 5)

WOMENS VOLUNTARY SERVICE CIVIL DEFENCE BADGE

The Women's Voluntary Service were responsible for making and sending parcels to the army, evacuating children and taking on any role that fell on them. In Wrexham they were responsible for evacuating:

6,400 people from Liverpool in just three days

1,200 school children to Wrexham in 1940

894 people from London during 1944

12,000 people to Wrexham throughout the war

The WVS were also responsible for finding 3,825 homes to billet young evacuees and for sourcing clothes and food to feed them all.

(WVS Badge Item 6)



You've heard of the Gresford Disaster,
Of the terrible price that was paid;
Two hundred and forty two colliers were lost,
And three of the rescue brigade.

Down there in the dark they are lying.
They died for nine shillings a day;
They have worked out their shift and now they must lie
In the darkness until judgment day.

Now the Lord Mayor of London's collecting
To help out the children and wives;
The owners have sent some white lilies
To pay for the poor colliers' lives.

Farewell all our dear wives and children
Farewell all our comrades as well,
Don't send your sons down the dark dreary pit
They'll be doomed like the sinners in hell.

THE GRESFORD DISASTER RESCUE TEAMS

At 2.08 am on the 22nd September 1934 an explosion ripped through the Dennis Section of Gresford Colliery. It is alleged a small spark ignited a pocket of gas, trapping two hundred and sixty six miners behind a wall of fire and gas.

The story of the Gresford disaster is well known in Wrexham. This is the story of the individuals who volunteered to enter the hazardous mine to rescue their colleagues. It is also the story of those people who supported the rescuers and donated to the miners family relief fund.

Soon after news of the explosion the area rescue teams were roused and three rescue teams of six men reported to the pit head, Gresford One, Llay Main One and Llay Main Two. These men were miners who volunteered to form a rescue team in case of disaster. They were highly trained and often practised in underground tunnels filled with heat and smoke.

Gresford Rescue Team One entered the mine as soon as possible and began clearing debris and extinguishing fires close to the surface. They made room for Llay Main Rescue Team One to progress further. After travelling forty yards Llay Main One's canary was overcome by gas. Equipped with breathing apparatus they made the decision to continue into the mine.

The team were met by raging heat in a twisted, unrecognisable environment. Pit falls were a constant danger and the men were forced to negotiate gaps of just three feet wide. Eventually meeting a dead end they were forced to return to the surface.

As Llay Main One returned to the surface they became disorientated and the men became isolated. At the rear, Captain John Williams continued towards the surface and one by one came across the incapacitated bodies of his rescue team. Jack Lewis, Dan Hughes and Jack Williams had all been overcome and died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

In a great attempt of bravery Captain Williams attempted to rescue his fallen colleagues, dragging their bodies a full forty yards, until he was overcome by heat and gas and reluctantly forced to abandon his efforts.

Llay Main Rescue Team Two, led by Captain Parry Davies, entered the pit. On entering the main Dennis Shaft Parry Davies described the environment as 'a death trap, fully loaded with Carbon Monoxide and unbearable heat and flames.'

Llay Main Two recovered the bodies of Jack Williams and Daniel Hughes but after several attempts to recover Jack Lewis they were forced to concede. Captain Davies vowed to return and recover the man at the next earliest opportunity. They attempted to reach the pit bottom by looping around the fires. Unfortunately they soon found this tunnel filled with gas and were forced to return to the surface.

Soon after multiple explosions occurred in the pit. Mine Management decided no man could have survived and gave the orders to seal the mine. Only eleven bodies were recovered from the mine. The Dennis Section, below Gresford is the final resting place for two hundred and fifty-five men.

Captain Parry Davies, Llay Main Rescue Team Two

'Thus ended a brave attempt by the Llay Main rescue teams to come to the aid of stricken colleagues under circumstances which were weighted against them from the start. Even if they had known beforehand the full extent of the difficulties they would face, of extremes of heat, of gas and roof falls, and the poor chances of success, it is more than likely they would still have made the effort.'

'Let me tell my readers that the rescue men at the explosion were not paid at all. No man asked what the rate of pay was. The question of payment at a time like this does not enter the minds of men. . . . They worked ungrudgingly. No thought of pay. Their only thought being to get their comrades out of it as soon as possible.'

While the rescue brigade entered the mine on the surface local volunteers came together to assist them. A chain of people carried sand to the pit head to douse fires and even the Vicar of Rhosddu was witnessed 'mucking in.'

The gates to the colliery were thrown open and a constant supply of lorries arrived with sand and other supplies.

The doctors and nurses of the Red Cross, managed by Veteran Officer Doctor J. E. H. Davies of Wrexham, made their way to the colliery and stationed themselves close by to assist any injured parties.

Volunteering and donating continued even when mine recovery operations started. One lady, referred to as, 'our good lady of Gresford,' was always waiting at the surface for rescue teams to return with a basket of food, chocolates and cigarettes. She kept this role up for three months until the mining company began providing food. However 'The good lady' was not put off and she continued to bring food and even newspapers. The rescue teams were also often visited by the Vicar of Gresford who would bring chocolates every day.

The effect of the disaster on the local community was huge. The deaths of 266 working men left 166 widows, 229 children, 130 pensioners and 194 partial dependents without an income.

In response a fund was established by the Mayor of Wrexham, the Lord Lieutenant of Denbighshire and the Mayor of London. Nationally the fund raised £500,000 (The equivalent of £28 million pounds today.) A relief fund office was opened where dependents could be compensated and assisted when needed.

Again Parry Davies passed comment, he wrote:

‘Thank God this is the true spirit of Britishers on all occasions of this description, the generous response of the country to the appeal makes the same spirit more manifest. Nearly half a million pounds subscribed. Rich and poor, both to the same extent, doing what was possible and we are indebted for life.’

Report on the rescuers from The Wrexham Leader, 1934.

'I was standing near the ambulance room not far from the pit head on Saturday morning just at the time when the ambulance men and doctors were trying to revive those who had been overcome whilst engaged below. Dr. J.E.H. Davies of Wrexham, the veteran St. John officer was in charge and the men were working for all they were worth, trying to revive them. News soon came out, however that they were dead. They had sacrificed their lives for their friends. There was scarcely time to realise the tragic nature of the announcement before another party of rescuers with their masks and apparatus could be seen coming along on their way to the pit bottom again, there to continue to fight for the men entrapped below. Few who saw these things will forget the courage of these rescue parties returning to the scene of death and passing near the building in which the dead bodies of their comrades in the rescue brigades were lying.'

The mine was eventually reopened in 1936 and work continued, however, Wrexham County has never forgotten the lives lost at Gresford. The mine closed in 1973 after coal supplies were exhausted.

In 1982 the Head Gear Wheel was preserved and made into a memorial to the miners who lost their lives. The memorial was opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales in front of the surviving relatives of those lost. In 2000 a plaque was added with the names of the deceased.

RELIGION, CHARITY AND THE VOLUNTEER

Religion is generally associated with charity and volunteering. Spiritual buildings have often been at the centre of a growing urban population. Cities, towns and villages have all sprung up around them. Throughout history religious buildings have been central to the community as a whole. The values intrinsic to many major world religions lend themselves directly to the ethos of giving, supporting others and living a good life.

THE ST. GILES GARDEN GNOMES

Religious congregations are usually willing to help others and work to improve their communities.

All over Wrexham, and the world, there are armies of volunteers who give their time and energy to their church.

This is no different for the stunning “Wonder of Wales” St. Giles’ Church in Wrexham.

Every Tuesday morning if a person wanders down to St. Giles Church they have the opportunity to spot what is known as a 'Garden Gnome' at work. Usually five or six of the Garden Gnomes can be seen mowing the lawn, collecting rubbish from the grounds, cleaning paths, preparing the church for services and undertaking general maintenance tasks. If you arrive around eleven you may even get a biscuit and a cup of tea!

The Garden Gnomes were given their name by one of the Rectors of St. Giles. He had observed the volunteers at work in and around the church and he called them together one day and decided he would name them 'The Garden Gnomes.' The comment was made in jest but the name stuck and they have been known as the Garden Gnomes ever since.

Peter Bloor is the unofficial head of the Garden Gnomes. He has been involved with St. Giles church for over sixty years and over that time he has undertaken many odd jobs for the church.

He has volunteered for administrative and secretarial roles, mowing the lawns, maintaining the premises, climbing the tower and working on the roof of the church and any other job that needed doing. He believes that the work the gnomes do makes a big difference to the church and the community. Without the Garden Gnomes the church would struggle to maintain and run such an important community building.

WREXHAM STREET PASTORS

Street Pastors are an inter-denominational Church volunteer group. They are actively involved in combating 21st century urban problems, engaging the public, caring, listening and offering advice.

Wrexham's Street Pastors can be seen on a Friday and Saturday night amongst the pubs, clubs and bars of Wrexham. The Wrexham group were established in 2006, making them the first group in Wales. They deal with the problems of binge drinking, anti-social behaviour and violent and alcohol related crime.

They have gained the backing of Wrexham Council and North Wales Police and have been recognised in having a huge impact in crime reduction and lowering costs to the NHS.

The volunteers take to the streets to:

Represent the church in the 21st century in the public eye

Build trust with young people and combat life issues

Challenge individuals to think about their life perspective

Challenge individuals to think about their actions

Offer practical advice and when needed shelter

Protect and ensure the public have a fun and safe night

In 2006 the pastors had just thirteen volunteers taking to the streets one night a week. More recently they work every Friday and Saturday night and have a group of forty trained volunteers. The group has managed to integrate into Wrexham night life and are recognised and trusted by many Wrexham residents. They regularly help those in difficult situations and are told their work is much appreciated.

Video footage of the Street Pastors at work is available to view on the projector screen.

POLICING: THE SPECIAL CONSTABULARY

The role of the volunteer police officer pre-dates the role of a paid regular officer by hundreds of years. The volunteer police officer evolved from those that took a stand against wrong doing in their communities. Those individuals policed their own towns and villages to create a safer environment and their roles developed alongside Common Law and our sense of justice.

As our town, cities and even empires developed there was an increasing need to ensure order. Lawlessness and disorder would have been rectified by town watches and local residents. These roles also included the guarding of buildings, property and town parameters in times of danger. Any serious public disorder, such as riots, were dealt with by the army.

In 1673 King Charles II passed an act allowing the creation of official Special Constables. Any citizen could now be given the power to police a town or village and were backed by common law.

Over the next two hundred years these Special Constables were used at times of need. In 1829 Robert Peel revised policing and created the first police force, the Metropolitan police. In 1831 a law was introduced to allow Special Constables to work as volunteers alongside their regular counterparts and in 1835 they were officially given the same powers as a regular officer.

Today the Special Constabulary is more active than ever. Throughout the United Kingdom there are around 15,000 Special Constables who are increasingly involved in working alongside the regular constabulary and policing local neighbourhoods.

NORTH WALES SPECIAL CONSTABULARY

Volunteers have been enforcing law and order in Wrexham for decades. The role has changed over the years with differing responsibilities, equipment, powers and uniform. Today the special is indistinguishable from the regular officer, wearing the same uniform and holding the same powers.

Again duties have differed over the years and have included mobile patrol duties, policing community events, responding to 999 calls, attending road traffic collisions, conducting criminal investigations and a wide range of other duties. According to North Wales Police the Special Constable role is 'geared towards making your community a safer place to live, work and visit.' The following extracts are taken from Special Officers pocket notebooks in different decades.

SPECIAL CONSTABLE EDWARDS

Special Constable Edwards policed Wrexham during the 1940's. Wrexham was certainly a different place to live during the war years. During World War II the Special Constabulary took an active role in guarding strategic areas of importance from sabotage.

SC Edwards carried a pocket notebook to record any events during his duties. He is very diligent in his duties and makes notes on any of the new military uniforms he witnesses in the county to ensure he could spot any potential spies.

In his notebook Constable Edwards recorded seeing:

'Polish Airmen (in) uniform of light grey and same pattern with "Poland" emblazoned on the shoulders and a Polish Eagle on the left pocket.'

'Dutch Airmen, officers wear a golden propeller under a golden crown on each lapel and on the cap a propeller crown surrounded by a laurel wreath.'

Edwards also notes the differing uniforms of the 'Free French Airmen' and the 'Belgian army.'

Either way Constable Edwards did not take risks and noted in large letters that any parachutist he found in the area 'whether British or Alien, Should be detained in custody.' Constable Edwards also noted that if needed he could requisition public service vehicles and their drivers to assist the public to 'get to shelter if possible when an attack is imminent.'

A typical duty with Constable Edwards in 1940 was recorded in his notebook and consisted of the following:

9.00pm - Commenced duty. Met Special Constable R Jarvis at Co-operative stores to discuss upcoming evening, new lines of enquiry and patrol routes. Patrol will focus on ensuring black out curtains are in place and lights are not visible.

10.00pm – Patrolled Llay, route through 10th Avenue, New House Avenue, Pentre Lane returning to Shones Lane before moving to second, third and fourth beat. No lights observed, all in order.

10.40pm – Patrol on beats 2, 3 and 4 in Llay. At 11.20pm a light spotted at 85 Shone Lane. After investigating the offender was spoken to and the light extinguished. No further issues.

12.20am – Off duty.

SPECIAL CONSTABLE BARKER

On 16th October 1953 Special Constable Barker reported for his first duty. He would contribute twenty years of service to North Wales Police being promoted from Special Constable to Special Sergeant before finally becoming a Special Inspector.

The 1950's were a different era from the 1940's. There was no longer an invasion threat and no longer a need to be as vigilant. Constable Barker still makes regular patrols but there is a move towards dealing with emergencies. On 19th June 1954 Constable Barker reported for duty at 10pm. There are no further entries except at 12am where he 'went with county ambulance with injured personnel to the hospital. Compound fracture of the leg, arterial bleeding from the knee and head injuries.'

A typical duty with Special Constable Barker in 1955:

9.00pm – Reported for duty

9.30pm – Policing highways with Police Sergeant Jones

11.00pm – Routine visit to dance hall to check on proceedings.

11.10pm - Outside the dance hall door there was a youth (and he) had been put out of the dance hall for making trouble. Sergeant Jones reasoned and talked with him telling him to go home!

‘(The youth) said that he “wanted to be locked up” and would hit Sergeant Jones. On making his fists he was arrested.’

11.20pm – Prisoner escorted to the Police Station.

12.30am - Off duty

Some aspects of policing remain the same through all decades and on December 16th 1961 Barker reports that while out on patrol he 'found a youth . . . drunk and incapable,' and was forced to inform 'his father to come and collect his son!'

Barker was eventually made Special Sergeant and took on a more operational position. He began directing and leading other constables and, with the changing times, began attending highways incidents.

On promotion to Special Inspector, Barker took on an office based role, directing operations and managing other special officers. He continued to keep one regular patrol but is only called out to more serious incidents such as overturned cars on snowy and icy roads.

THE MODERN SPECIAL CONSTABLE

Today's Special Constables hold the same powers as a regular officer. Wrexham Specials are usually attached to neighbourhood policing units and are instrumental in protecting the Wrexham public. A typical shift is usually as follows:

17:00: Arrive at police station, check emails, briefing by Sergeant.

18:00: Start out on mobile patrol waiting for jobs via radio.

19:00: Non-emergency response needed to a shoplifting incident. The offender has made off. Attend the store to take statement and view CCTV. Male offender later located and arrested.

01:00: Called to a domestic incident requiring a blue light response. We arrive and discover a verbal domestic. Male is taken to another property overnight. No further action needed. Return to station to complete paperwork. Off duty at 0230.

SPECIALS EQUIPMENT

Item One - A silver and black belt buckle - which constables would wear to identify themselves. This belt buckle dates from around 1940 and judging by the marks on the loops probably saw regular active service.

Item Two – Epaulet markers - These would have been displayed alongside the Special Constables collar number on the shoulder of the police uniform. They would also have been displayed alongside the Queens Crown Special Constable Badge which would have been positioned at the top of the Epaulet. These items likely date from the 1980's and 1990's.

By far the most powerful option a Special Constable has is the option to take a persons liberty. These are examples of the types of handcuffs used by Special Officers to restrain prisoners.

Item 3 - Haitts 104 'Darby' Handcuffs C1950. These cuffs were extremely small and it is likely they would have caused the wearer to experience a lot of pain.

Item 4 - Lightweight Aluminium TKS Patrol Type E Handcuffs. They are exceptionally hard to pick due to the restricted connecting bar.

Item 5 - Two pairs of Haitts Handcuffs from 1960. These handcuffs feature a restricted connecting bar and have a modern rotating cuff.

THE PRINCE OF WALES VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE

Fire Services were first started by insurance companies who wanted to limit the amount of damage caused to insured buildings. The Provincial Insurance Company first established a Fire Service in Wrexham in 1863 to protect their assets in the area. However, its effectiveness was found to be lacking and by the end of the year a more effective Fire Service was created under the Prince of Wales Volunteer Scheme.

The original group of volunteers consisted of 7 members of the insurance company brigade, ten local tradesmen and others from the town. They were equipped with two engines and were based firstly on Chester Street and then later moved to Guildhall Square.

Engines were horse drawn and even pulled by 'volunteer' horses loaned by local businessmen. There are even stories that these horses, after hearing the sounding of the fire bell, would independently leave the stables and gallop to the fire house!

In 1895 the Victoria Corn Mills in the Beast Market was destroyed by fire and the volunteers handling of the situation was scrutinised. In answer to this a volunteer fire brigade was formed under Wrexham County Borough Council. It was not until 1938 that it was made law for all councils to provide a fire service.

This image shows Wrexham's volunteer Fire Fighting Service. The photograph was taken near Eagles Meadow around the end of the 19th century. In it are pictured Fireman Stevens, Lieutenant Vaughan, Captain Evans, Sergeant Davies, Fireman Thomson, Fireman Frisk, Branchman Randley, Branchman Smith, Fireman Lloyd, Branchman Davies, Branchman Loxham, Engineer Lloyd, Charlie the dog and even two fireman Sams!

COEDPOETH AND DISTRICT CARE GROUP

Coedpoeth Care group is celebrating forty years of work this year. They are an inspiring group with leaders who work to support disabled people.

The group meets at Coedpoeth Parish Hall every Saturday morning to enable those in the group to socialise, learn and have fun. They also provide an opportunity for carers to relax or complete tasks such as shopping. They are a remarkable group who consider themselves to be a family. The volunteers firmly believe they gain as much from the group as they put in.

The care group was established on 9th January 1973. A meeting was held to create a group as a recent pantomime show, performed by the Dodleston Youth Players, had made more money than expected. A committee was formed and a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer established to manage the funds. Although the people holding these roles have changed the organisation aims set down that day have remained constant :

To develop the members social skills,

To develop the members physical skills,

To enable the members to engage with people of different groups and backgrounds,

To provide brief respite to members carers,

To allow the members to enjoy the time they spend together.

The group regularly take part in craftwork, games, sports, music or just chatting with friends. They visit restaurants, theatres, sporting events, safari parks, theme parks and go canoeing, climbing and fishing.

This is all made possible by the hard work of volunteers, who also organise fundraising events and gain donations from the public. The volunteers have organised, and still do organise, coffee mornings, concerts and carol services.

The current committee is made up of the Chair May Pritchard, Treasurer Mary Roberts, Secretary Elizabeth Williams and Outings Secretary B. Williams. They describe their group as 'the driving force in their life and it is so rewarding. . . Sharing time with our members is all the emotions rolled up in love, and it is the pride in their faces that puts all things in life into perspective.'

The group has made a difference to every person, and their families, that have attended in the last forty years. The group continues to reinvent itself and address the needs of its members every year.

One of the greatest success stories of Coedpoeth Care Group is that of Shaun Evans. Shaun has been a member of the group for many years and has developed a keen interest in computing and IT. He has used those skills to train others and has given many the ability to use computers to a good standard. He was recognised for his work in 2012 and was asked to carry the Olympic flame through Wrexham. This really shows how successful the group has been in developing its members and is an example of how a volunteer culture can result in the creation of more volunteers.

An interview with Coedpoeth Care Group leaders Mary Roberts and May Pritchard is available to listen to at the IPAD stand.

A VOLUNTEERS JOURNEY

As has been pointed out throughout these stories so far, volunteering can be extremely rewarding. It can also be emotional and change how people see others, the world and even their whole perspective on life.

In 2002 Jennifer Rainsbury, a retired nurse, entered the AVOW building to enquire about volunteering. She met the volunteer centre team and discussed her options. As a retired nurse Jennifer had a wealth of medical training and soon she was befriending a Wrexham lady with locked in syndrome. Jennifer believes it is fate that she was matched up with 'Virginia' and she has chosen to share Virginia's, and her own volunteering story, with us.

Virginia was resident in a care home and due to her Locked In Syndrome she was unable to move except for blinking. Jennifer vividly remembers that:

'The one fact, which shook me, more than anything was that Virginia would still have a bright and active mind meaning that she would be able to understand exactly what had happened to her. We began our friendship by setting up a communication system using one blink for yes and two for no. I visited a couple of times a week and slowly we got to know each other. . . I think that Virginia began to trust me. I decided to let Virginia tell her own story, which I found very moving, and now I have decided to share her story to show there is always hope. . . . Her story tells of a day in her life and it gave me comfort to know that in some small measure she had come to terms with her fate.'

Over a series of meetings Jennifer transcribed Virginia's daily routine through a system of blinks. This is Virginia's story.

'My day begins when the night staff waken me before they go off duty. Although I prefer to have no clocks around me to remind me how slowly time can pass. I am told every day what date, day of the week it is etc. . . so that I know where I am in the world.'

'My catheter is emptied, my mouth cleaned, and I am turned yet again before I settle down to a snooze until it is time to get up. Snoozing is peaceful, sleeping deeply is not, as I do have recurring nightmares which remind me of my life before, and are full of frustration and regrets around what could have been.'

'I don't have medication to help me sleep, but I have consented to various other pills and potions and I have been known to refuse new medication and treatments from time to time. My wishes are taken into account generally, it makes life bearable as it is my only control in life. Having choices, however small, even down to what I wear each day is so important to me. Eventually the day staff get me up, and I have my shower which I do enjoy. Touch is something I miss a great deal, and having someone to wash me is one of life's pleasures.'

'After this I go into my chair for the day which on the whole is comfortable. I do however get muscle spasms down my right side, these are painful and mean I need to have my limbs moved so that I can get some relief. Having physio is a good feeling as my joints and muscles stiffen otherwise. I wish I could have more as it really feels so good.'

'I do tend to feel uncomfortable in my chair at times. I can contain myself for a while, but eventually, in order to draw attention to this, I really let rip until someone has to do something about it. As a rule people are pretty good at guessing what the problem is, and I have to go back to bed when things are really bad.'

'As I said before, I do miss touch, especially the magic of a hug, and I like people to touch me, perhaps as they talk to me, or when I need comfort.'

'I really miss being able to chew and swallow food, and I would really prefer not to be around at meal times when I am reminded of this lost pleasure by other people eating. Instead I am fed liquid nourishment through a tube directly into my stomach. It has been so difficult to accept, but there are no choices around something so fundamental as food.'

'After I have chosen what to wear, I am taken down to the lounge which I mostly enjoy, but which can be a bit manic sometimes. I am now in a downstairs room which I mostly like, sometimes I just need peace and quiet and my room gives me just that. I tend to doze a bit during the day, I do have mind routines in order to keep my brain cells ticking over, I do reflect a lot on my past life and mostly I feel accepting and resigned to my present life.'

'There are things I still enjoy doing. Listening to music, local radio and almost all sporting events, especially football and Manchester United in particular. I watch T.V and enjoy the soaps and some comedies, especially the old favourites.'

'Bed time is around 10pm and I have to say it is nice to get between the sheets. Apart from dreaming and being turned my slumbers are usually uneventful.'

JENNIFER:

'The ending of her life came when one day she told me she had had enough and wanted to die. She gave me permission to share this wish with her doctors. Virginia developed a chest infection and was offered treatment, which she refused, choosing her own time to die. I saw her in her last days and she was comfortable and peaceful and I was privileged to have been her friend.'

Though Jennifer and Virginia were limited in their communication options they become strong friends. Jennifer's visits made a difference to Virginia's life and she was even able to track down lost family and encourage them to visit. There are many befriending schemes like this in Wrexham, these schemes are rewarding, fulfilling, emotional and even life changing. You can become part of these schemes – see the [Volunteers and Staff](#) here today for details of how to get involved.

THE WALTER ROBERTS PANTOMINE COMPANY

Walter Roberts was a Wrexham born ironmonger. He worked from his shop at 44 Hope Street, well known due to its distinctive copper kettle sign, and was a keen member of the local amateur dramatics groups. He especially enjoyed taking part in pantomimes and in 1906 he began to produce, direct and star in his own productions.

In 1906 Walter Roberts invited people to volunteer for roles in his productions, any money raised from the show would be donated to charity. The groups first pantomime was held at the Beast Market as part of the Wrexham Carnival. It was so successful that by 1907 the pantomime formed as a fully independent group and performed their second pantomime 'The Queen of Hearts.'

In 1908 the group moved to the Empire Music Hall in Lambpit Street, performing Sinbad the Sailor and Robinson Crusoe the year after. The group grew quickly and were soon considered the top form of entertainment in Wrexham.

Unfortunately Pantomimes were cancelled due to World War One. However, undeterred Walter continued to perform and travelled to training camps to entertain the troops. In 1919 a victory pantomime was held and the performance of Cinderella was so successful that the group raised £1,009, which they donated to the Wrexham Infirmary. In 1920 a performance of Aladdin raised £910 for the infirmary.

In 1923 the performances moved to the Hippodrome on Henblas Street and continued to break fundraising records. The Daily Mail stated that 'The company led by Mr Walter Roberts has raised more money than any other amateur organisation in the country.'

Wrexham's Pantomime

A Brilliant Production.

The Walter Roberts' Company's
Crowning Achievement.

"Cinderella's" £1,230.

HOSPITAL'S RECORD CHEQUE FROM PANTOMIME.

TOWN
GOES
PANTO MAD.

IRONMONGER ACTS
AS PRODUCER.

The group stayed at the Hippodrome until 1940 before moving to the Majestic Theatre, the Public Baths, the Church House and finally to its current home of William Aston Hall in 1959. They donated thousands to local hospitals and even financed the establishment of the Pantomime Children's Ward at the War Memorial Hospital.

Walters work was recognised in 1927 when he was made a Justice of the Peace and again in 1937 when he was made a freeman of the borough and a lifelong governor of the hospital. He died in 1942 but the spirit of his group continued on and in 1946 the group performed Robinson Crusoe to 24,000 people in one week, raising £2,830. The group continued to fund local hospitals and even contributed beds and other equipment.

In 1966 the group was renamed the Wrexham Pantomime Company. It still remains loyal to donating profits to local hospitals and care groups. Although the local hospital has now changed they still retain a Pantomime Ward.

There are several examples of Pantomime programmes from Walter Roberts' era on display.

WREXHAM SUPPORTERS TRUST

In 1864 members of Wrexham Cricket Club formed a football team in order to undertake sport during the winter months. Their first game was played against the Prince of Wales Volunteer Fire Fighting Service on 22nd October 1864. Thus began a love affair between the people of Wrexham and football. To this day the club is an integral part of the county and thousands flock to the Racecourse Stadium every week.

Wrexham FC has undergone good and bad times over its long history. The misfortunes that have dogged the club have been well documented and this exhibition will not explore those issues further, however, it does intend to mark the work of the Wrexham Supporters Trust.

In 2011 the club's finances were in a poor state and the club was faced with a winding up order.

A group of volunteers established the Wrexham Supporters Trust in an attempt to save the club.

WST started a campaign to raise funds from fans in order to buy the club. Donations came from all over the county and enough money was raised to make the purchase. Wrexham FC are one of the few British football teams owned by their fans.

Wrexham Supporters Trust continue to fundraise and manage the club and members regularly involve themselves in community events. This year they developed a partnership with the Alzheimer's Society and supported the Memory Walk.

Under Wrexham Supporters Trust the club has gone from strength to strength, clinching the FA Trophy at Wembley and narrowly missing out on promotion in the 2012/13 season.

A recent quote to the press: 'Two years ago, this club was on it's backside, we were on the verge of not being allowed into the league and you (the fans) climbed mountains and donated money to our cause. We'd hit rock bottom. Move forward two years and you'll see the progress being made all the time. The club is in the best hands it can be and that's with you, the fans.'

PHILANTHROPY

Throughout Wrexham's history people have donated money to good causes. From large donations to institutions to small change dropped into a bucket, public donations have Made a Difference to the community.

Although Philanthropy in its true sense refers to the improvement of society for the greater good it is generally associated with donations from wealthy people. Societies, gentleman's clubs and mutual associations began to flourish from the 1700's and the upper-classes increasingly adopted a philanthropic attitude toward the disadvantaged.

Wrexham has had its share of patrons of churches, the arts, health, education and welfare.

ELIHU YALE

Elihu Yale was one of Wrexham's greatest benefactors. He gave money to local churches and institutions and is now buried in the grounds of St. Giles church, Wrexham.

Yale was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1649 into a wealthy family of a Merchant from Wrexham. They returned to Plas Grono in 1651 for a short time before settling in London. The young Elihu grew up in London and in 1671 joined the East India Company as a writer. He was sent to India where he worked his way through the companies' administration chain and was eventually made governor of Fort St. George in Madras.

Whilst in India he took advantage of his trading connections and set up numerous trade routes, making a fortune in the process. Yale left the position of governor in 1692 and returned to Britain in 1699.

On his return to Britain Yale began donating his wealth to many charities, religious groups and organisations in Wrexham. One of Yale's biggest benefactors was the parish church of St. Giles.

Between 1707 and 1721 Yale donated the following:

Erection of a gallery in the Church's east end of the nave

A pulpit and sounding board

A clock dial

A carving of the royal arms

Reflagging the altar space

A new altar table with a marble top

Due to his large donations Yale was eventually given permission by the church Vestry to 'being at his own charge . . . to make what alterations he thinks fit.'

Although Elihu Yale spent little of his life in Wrexham he considered himself part of the community. His gifts to the parish church and his affinity with Wrexham led to his body being transported from London to be buried in the grounds of the church. His donations and status was considered to be so important that during World War II Yale's tomb was often assigned a guard of soldiers for protection.

Other causes also received donations from Yale, including:

The Society for the Propagation of the gospel,

Campaigns for a Welsh Prayer Book,

Yale University in Connecticut received large donations and due to this named the university after him.

Yale College in Wrexham (now Coleg Cambria) was also named after him.

ENGRAVING ON ELIHU YALES TOMB

'Born in America, in Europe bred,
In Africa travell'd and in Asia wed,
Where long he liv'd and thriv'd, in London dead
Much good, some ill, he did; so hope all's even
And that his soul thro' mercy's gone to Heaven.
You that survive and read this tale, take care,
For this most certain exit to prepare:
Where best in peace, the actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom in the silent dust.'

WILLIAM AND JOHN JONES TRUST

In 1856 two brothers established the Island Green Brewery in Pentrefelin. Both had grown up on Caia Farm, running the family business brewing beer. John Jones had continued with this trade, perfecting his brewing process and producing fine ales. His brother, William, became a solicitor and later an auditor. It is likely that whilst John brewed beer his brother kept watch on the business accounts. The brothers business was very successful and they made a fortune. They became prominent members of Wrexham society and often donated to local causes.

In 1904 William died leaving £213,359 to the people of Wrexham. His brother John donated the William Jones Recreation Ground in Rhosddu to Wrexham in his brothers memory.

John Jones continued to donate to the county of Wrexham and eventually established the William and John Jones Memorial Trust. This fund would be used to pay for many good causes in Wrexham and established:

St. Johns Church in Hightown.

Start up funding for Wrexham's War Memorial Hospital.

Two Convalescent homes in Minera and Rhyl, for the use of local miners, offering access to a healthy environment.

The fund is still in place today and offers grants to those in Wrexham who are sick, convalescing or disabled.

DAME DOROTHY JEFFREYS

The Jeffrey's were a well-known family in Wrexham In 1683 Dame Dorothy Jeffrey's (as she became) married into the family. She established a fund to be used for the education of young persons and apprentices in the Wrexham area. The fund was started with a £400 donation.

Later her daughter, Margaret, donated a further £120 to the fund which was then allowed to earn interest until there was enough money to purchase land in Holt in 1753.

In the early 1800's this land was sold and the money divided equally between the funding of the Boys National School in the Beast market and the Girls School in Tenters Field. The last of the money was eventually used to pay off the interest on the building of a new national school.

WREXHAM ROTARY CLUB

Wrexham Rotary Club was formed in 1928 by Joseph Lloyd, a member of the Rhyl Rotary Club. Joseph organised the meeting of 12 eminent and influential Wrexham men to form the club and build membership.

By the end of 1928 membership had grown to twenty nine people and Wrexham Rotary Club was now ready to begin fundraising and supporting local services. The group set up a home base at the Wellington Café and agreed to work to the Rotary Club Code of Ethics.

They continue to raise money for local charities and still meet today at the Ramada Hotel to discuss fundraising opportunities for the local community.

THE SCOUTS

In 1907 Lord Baden Powell took twenty boys to Brownsea Island on the Southern Coast of Britain. Over the next eight days he taught the boys basic survival and living skills. This event was the first Boy Scout Camp and since then the scouts have spread across the world. In 2006 it was believed there were 28 million scouts based in 216 different countries across the world.

The Scouts have become part of almost every community in Britain and their structure has been heavily replicated by other youth groups such as Guides, Cubs, Beavers, Brownies, Rainbows, Air Cadets, Army Cadets and Sea Cadets. The group encourages its Scouts to show 'leadership, initiative and citizenship.'

Scouts themselves are well known for volunteering through their badging and bob-a-job schemes. Scouts are heavily involved with volunteering in their own communities and they have been recognised for Civil Defence during World War II. The Scouts built air raid shelters and even guided fire engines to the areas they were most needed during air raids! None of this would have happened without those who make Scouting possible, the Scout leaders.

Lord Baden Powell visited Wrexham in 1908 and spoke to a large crowd at the Army Depot. He outlined the aims of the Scouts and established Wrexham's first three Scout groups, 1st Wrexham, 1st Hope and 1st Rhosnessni. There are now 73 different Scout groups in Wrexham county borough and a similar number of Girl Guide groups.

A report on Baden Powell's speech is available to view nearby.

RONALD EDWARDS: A SCOUT FOR LIFE

Ronald Edwards has been scouting since he was a young boy and has over sixty years volunteer service as a Scout leader. He has fond memories of assisting his father, an Air Raid Warden, whilst dressed in full Cub Scout uniform.

Ronald first began volunteering as a leader with Wrexham Scouts in 1953. He believes he became a Scout Leader 'by accident.' His elder brother ran Southsea Scout Group and left to join the Royal Navy, his father, a Scout Commissioner, asked Ronald to take his brothers place. This was the beginning of a lifelong journey for Ronald, giving countless hours, teaching thousands of key life skills, training others to be Scout Leaders and even meeting his wife through the Scouts!

RONALD EDWARDS SCOUTING CAREER

- 1953 – 1958 – Scout Leader of 1st Southsea Scout Unit
- 1958 – 1960 – Scout Leader of 1st Coedpoeth Scout Unit
- 1960 – 1974 – Scout Leader of 3rd Wrexham Scouts
- 1974 – 1981 – Assistant District Scout Leader
- 1981 – 1990 - Scout Leader Trainer
- 1990 – 2000 – Scout Leader of 1st Rhosnesny
- 2000 – Present – Wrexham Scouts Archivist

Ronald currently spends his time archiving Wrexham Scouts vast collection of artefacts, photographs and documents.

Ronald has particularly fond memories of fundraising events, making Christmas decorations to sell and of course meeting his wife, another scout leader. He enjoyed organising and taking part in the regular Scout Jamboree's, organising annual camps and teaching the Scouts to put up a tent, clean, cook and light fires.

Ronald firmly believes that by teaching the Scouts he knew that 'if the worst came to the worst they could light a fire and cook themselves a meal under any conditions.'

He believes he has volunteered with the Scouts for so long because of the sheer enjoyment it provides and also because 'somebody gave up their time in order to let me do what I wanted to do, get badges and go to camp, it was my turn to do the same.'

A digital story with Ronald Edwards is available to listen to at the iPad Stand.

THE GUIDES

The Girl Guides were not to be outdone by the Boy Scouts. In the early days of the Boy Scouts, girls would often arrive and so it was not long until the Girl Guides were formed.

The Guides were heavily involved with supporting the war effort during World War II and often would knit clothes for soldiers, clean and restore abandoned buildings for evacuees, distribute gas masks and even white wash kerbs so people could find their way during the black outs of World War II.

Thousand of girls have been and are currently part of the Guide movement in Wrexham.

GUIDE BADGES THROUGH THE YEAR

On display are various guide badges that have encourage the guides to volunteer, learn new skills and make a difference in their community.

SCRAPBOOKS

On display are scrapbooks created and written by the Scouts and Guides in Wrexham. They explain why their group is important, its history and what they get from scouting. Please feel free to look through them.

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Caia Park Environmental Group was established in 1999 and campaigns for healthy, sustainable living and environmental improvement.

The Caia Park Environmental group:

- Has adopted and cleans a section of the River Gwenfro.
- Works to educate local schools and communities in recycling, composting, energy saving and carbon reduction.
- Runs community allotments to teach others how to grown food.
- Promotes healthy living through walking and cycling schemes.
- Refurbishes old bikes and supplies them to local residents.
- Educates residents in animal welfare.

The group has won a number of awards, and its Chair and founder Dorothy Mitchell continues to work tirelessly.

PHILLIP YORKE AND ERDDIG HALL

Erddig Hall was owned by the Yorke family for over 240 years and in its time has had a turbulent history. In 1684 Joshua Eddisbury began building the hall but by 1709 he was bankrupt and forced to sell to John Meller. John Meller decorated and expanded the property with two 'rooms of parade' on the north and south wings.

Mellor died in 1733 and the property passed to his nephew Simon Yorke. The house then passed through the Yorke family with each adding their own changes to the property. Simon's son Phillip Yorke added a Saloon, a library, new furnishings, a kitchen, offices, stable yards and redeveloped other areas of the building. In 1804 the property passed to Simon Yorke II who added a large dining room. Simon Yorke III made alterations to the garden and building exterior and built a music room. He died in 1894 and passed the property to his son Phillip II who continued restorations.

Simon Yorke IV inherited Erddig in 1922 while the family were in financial difficulties. The house was also suffering from the effects of subsidence due to mining beneath the property. Simon broke contact with the outside world and rarely left the estate. As such the building fell into disrepair and was isolated from the rest of Wrexham.

Phillip was 61 when he inherited the property in 1966 and immediately recognised the need to restore the property. Phillip could often be found giving lectures on the hall and its history and camping out on freezing nights to protect the building armed with a gas light and a sting of cans on a line for an alarm.

Phillip Yorke decided he would be unable to restore the building to its former glory and in 1973 donated it to the National Trust. Phillip believed it was more important to preserve the building for future generations to enjoy rather than keep it under his own control. At the time James Lees Milne, a previous head of the National Trust, as 'one of the most splendid acts of generosity in all the years I have been associated with the National Trust.' Phillip Yorke died in 1978.

Today Erddig is enjoyed by thousands of visitors every year from all over the world. The building now houses multiple historical exhibitions and the grounds provide a beautiful area for a walk. The house and gardens and visitor experience are maintained and enhanced by volunteers.

In 1999 a Youth Club was formed at Erddig to offer the young people of Offa a place to socialise. The group was very successful and was renamed Erddig youth club to allow access to more funding. They have further developed their relationships with local councils and promote community work in Erddig.

Young people aged between 11 and 18 are welcomed to the club and there is no charge to attend. Instead the youth club asks that their members volunteer on the Erddig estate. This can be through conservation work, litter picking and helping create and staff annual events.

Erddig youth club is now recognised as an exemplar of good practice across the whole of the National Trust. The club have completed a scrapbook which is available to view today.

THE GLYNN VALLEY TRAMWAY TRUST

The Glyn Valley Tramway was built in 1873 by quarry owners in Glyn Ceiriog to transport stone and slate to the Shropshire Union Canal. The roadside tramway was originally horse drawn but was converted to steam traction in 1888. The tramway continued to provide transport for goods and passengers until 1935 when competition from road transport rendered it uneconomic.

The Glyn Valley Tramway Trust was established in 2008 to restore the tramway. The group is entirely run by volunteers and is working towards full restoration in Chirk and the Ceiriog Valley. The trust aims to redevelop the tramway as a local tourist amenity, contribute to the local economy, restore an important part of local and cultural history, educate future generations about their past and offer opportunities to volunteer rebuilding and running the tramway.

The volunteers are provided with training to undertake the restoration work and the trust offers first aid training, traditional stonework techniques, hedge laying and woodland management. The trust has a full range of tools for clearance of the track bed, repairs and rebuilding of structures. Regular work parties are formed to undertake the work and are overseen by a project manager.

The volunteers enjoy their work as it provides healthy exercise in the open air and the opportunity to acquire new skills. There is of course a social side in meeting other volunteers from all walks of life. Finally there is the satisfaction of doing something which is worthwhile and which will ultimately provide enjoyment for many people in future.

THE FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERING

In 2012 John Gallanders, Chief Officer of AVOW, assessed the state of the voluntary sector in light of the recent economic cut backs. He wrote,

'Organisations are facing reduced funding and increased competition from within and outside the sector. . . The Jewel of the Sector is its strength and its ability to adapt to need.'

Due to these cuts the voluntary sector must adapt. Volunteers have operated for hundreds of years with little money and due to cut backs in the public sector it is likely the volunteer role will be needed more and more. They will be required to be more active to bridge the gaps left due to cuts in funding and to defend those services most important to the local area.

However, volunteering has been and always will be a mainstay of society and will continue regardless of economic conditions and government policy. It is the desire to help one another, to belong, to improve and to evolve that will drive volunteering on.

The stories in this exhibition are examples of what it means to volunteer. They are events that belong to Wrexham, they happened in Wrexham, to the people of Wrexham and for the people of Wrexham.

We urge you to take these stories with you, share them with others and consider taking the time to volunteer yourself.

So now it is **YOUR** turn. This is where **YOU** take action, this is where **YOU** can make a difference. Volunteer groups always need volunteers to continue the services they provide and to expand them. Churches, care groups, local communities and campaign groups always need support. They are always looking for people like **YOU**.

AVOW challenges **YOU** to make a difference!

Getting involved is simple. Come to Ty AVOW, speak to the volunteer centre staff, arrange an interview here today or simply give us a call. Whatever you are interested in our staff will be sure to find a volunteering opportunity to suit you. (We also help groups to recruit more volunteers so come and talk to us about that too.)



JOANNE EVANS

I have been with AVOW for almost 3 years. I enjoy meeting new people and helping them to achieve their goals. I gained my role here through volunteering and so I hold it in very high regard. I look forward to meeting you at the Volunteer Centre.



VICKY HAND

I have worked for AVOW for nearly 12 years as a Volunteer Recruitment Officer. I help individuals find fulfilling and interesting placements. I enjoy meeting people and I would encourage anyone considering volunteering to give it a go, it's a great way to learn, gain a qualification, meet people and have fun!



TEGAN SOLLIS

I have worked in the AVOW Volunteer centre for 6 months as the Youth Volunteer Development Officer. I deal with young volunteers and help to find them interesting, enjoyable and rewarding placements. The thing I enjoy most is seeing people get the most from their experience. Volunteering gives is very rewarding, so why not give it a go!



ANNABEL BOYCE

I joined AVOW Volunteer Centre in September 2013 as the BIG volunteering officer. I help people with extra support needs to volunteer in their local community. I enjoy seeing volunteers develop from supported volunteering to independent volunteering. It is all about finding the right placement for the right person.



VAL CONNELLY

I have worked in the voluntary sector for 15 years and have recently joined the Volunteer Centre. I enjoy meeting new volunteers and securing them interesting and diverse placements. The value of volunteering cannot be underestimated. It improves future prospects and is a great way to meet people.