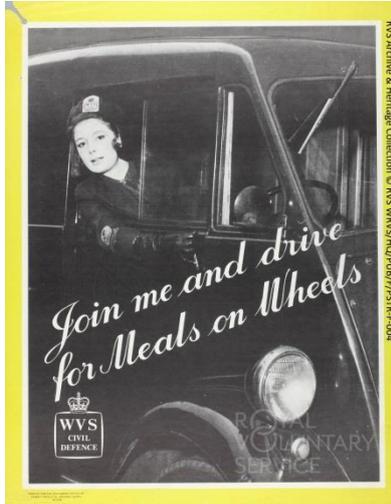


## Meals on Wheels



Meals on Wheels provides “a nourishing meal right into the homes of people” who are housebound or otherwise unable to provide themselves with a home cooked meal. Volunteers regularly visit older people in the community and keep an eye on their welfare.<sup>1</sup>

The first ‘Meals on Wheels’ were delivered by the WVS in Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire in 1943. A second round was established in Letchworth in 1944. It was officially recognised as a service in 1945 and according to Lady Reading it was named “at home over lunch by her driver”.<sup>2</sup>

After some early experiments to try and keep meals warm, the solution came in the form of Hotlocks in 1954; this was a metal box heated by charcoal. The Hotlocks were used right up until the 1980s by WVS/WRVS volunteers who delivered meals. In the 1990s volunteers used thermal bags and polystyrene boxes to keep meals warm.

The responsibility for the provision of Meals on Wheels had been taken over by local councils by 1975 and recipients had to be referred by Social Services however WRVS still had a key role in their delivery.<sup>3</sup> Volunteers would often deliver meals in pairs with one taking the role of the driver and the other the deliverer.

The number of meals delivered by volunteers increased rapidly from the 1950s; in 1956 WVS were delivering one million meals, by 1962 it was four million, 1972 numbers were reaching over ten million and in the 1980s it rose around fourteen million meals a year.<sup>4</sup>

Royal Voluntary Service still delivers meals today to people who have difficulty with shopping, carrying food home or cooking for themselves.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Royal Voluntary Service Archive & Heritage Collection (RVS Archive), WRVSA&HC/WRVS/PUB/WVS004, Report on 25 Years Work 1938-1963, n.d., RVS Archive, 682, Headquarters reports 1978-1986

<sup>2</sup> Matthew McMurray, The Origins of WVS Meals on Wheels, 15 October 2007

<sup>3</sup> RVS Archive, 39/4, Department of Design Research Royal College of Art, London, Report 154 Extension of Meals on Wheels, October 1975

<sup>4</sup> RVS Archive, WRVSA&HC/WRVS/PUB/WVS004, Report on 25 Years Work 1938-1963, n.d. WRVS, 682, Headquarters reports 1978-1986, Annual Report 1982, 1986/87

<sup>5</sup> Royal Voluntary Service Website, Meals on Wheels, [www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/get-help/services-we-provide/practical-support-at-home/meals-on-wheels](http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/get-help/services-we-provide/practical-support-at-home/meals-on-wheels), 08 October 2015