2011 No. 2

LIONESS



Vol. LXXXV 2011 No. 2

THE WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION

(Incorporating the QMAAC & ATS Comrades Association)
REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 206184 Founded in 1919

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Front Cover
Brigadier Anne Field CB CBE

Back Cover
Army Ladies' Golf Tour

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Editorial



Hard to believe that almost 6 months will have passed by the time *Lioness* 2/11 hits the streets. New Team 2011 is settling into the WRAC Association Headquarters and I have at last almost mastered the art of ensuring that the photographs you send do actually make it into the *Lioness*.

Lioness 2/11 marks the end of an era with the death of Brigadier Anne Field CB CBE. Her contribution to the WRAC is fully detailed at the beginning of this edition and I know that many members of the Association will have their own memories of Brigadier Field whether they actually served with her or not. Should any member wish to share their memories please do send them for the next edition of the *Lioness*.

This edition of the *Lioness* is, in the main, about the many and varied activities that the Branches of the Association are participating in. These range from garden parties, coffee mornings, fund raising events and attendance at more formal events such as with the Not Forgotten Association. I am very grateful to the Chairs and Secretaries of the Branches who continue to send their reports in and embellish them with photographs – you can never have too many photographs in the *Lioness* and I will continue to try to include all of them as much as possible. I am particularly pleased with the follow up to the "New Uniforms" story in *Lioness* 1/11. A mystery completely solved. Also with the news from Australia about the 60th Anniversary weekend they celebrated in February of this year.

The Grand Reunion is centre stage in this Edition. It will be a fantastic event and more than a follow on from Blackpool in 2009. Please ensure that you complete your attendance form quickly and book early to avoid disappointment.

As ever my thanks must go to Denise and Noreen for their patience and understanding and their invaluable support in getting the *Lioness* to print.

I finish with a return to my message in *Lioness* 1/11 and at the AGM. As most of you will be aware, the *Lioness* is now placed on the web site and members can access it through the log on process. I have no immediate plans to reduce the distribution of the *Lioness* as it is clear that the hard copy publication is still a welcome arrival. However, as time goes by, it does make sense to re-visit the balance between the need for a hard copy publication and wider access to the internet; no immediate decision but something for the near future. It also makes sense to have a think about the longevity plans for the *Lioness* as the contributions change in nature and focus. This will continue to be on the Agenda at Council and as ever I am always open to any suggestions on format or style. The really good news is that, thanks to the new website, the number of applications for membership of the WRAC Association, both Life and Annual, has been almost overwhelming; just brilliant to see our numbers growing.

Whereas I was a bit confused about *Lioness* 1/11, I have almost enjoyed putting *Lioness* 2/11 together. By the time it comes to *Lioness* 1/12 it will all be very smooth – I hope!

Update on WRAC Association Website

I thought it would be of interest to update our members on the overwhelming success of the new website. As promised in the last edition of *Lioness* the user name and password is as follows. Don't forget you have to be a member of the WRAC Association to access the members pages:

User name: wracassociationmember
Password: oo7oo8oo9

The Members pages will continue to be developed over the next few months with each edition of the Lioness now being posted. The website was launched on Tuesday 1st February 2011 and received 9,198 hits as at Sunday 24th July 2011. A total of 156 visitors had left messages on the Guestbook and a further 166 messages had been received through the "contact us" option, the vast majority of which have been handled by the Chief Clerk. The website has generated 50 new Annual Members and a further 19 Life Members. The shop has proved popular with £501.50 raised from sales of memorabilia. Future plans for the website include developing the Members pages, developing the virginmoneygiving page and developing social networking and links if demand is indicated by our members.

Alison Brown

Message from the Vice President



It is with much sadness that I begin this edition of the *Lioness* with the news of the death of Brigadier Anne Field on 25th June 2011 – the end of another great era in our Association's history. Brigadier Anne Field was Director WRAC from 1977 – 1982, Deputy Controller Commandant from 1984 – 1992 and Deputy Colonel Commandant of the newly formed Adjutant General's Corps from 1992 – 1994. She was a staunch supporter of both the WRAC Association and the ATS and WRAC Benevolent Fund serving as Vice President of the Association from 1998 – 1997 and Chairman of the Council from 1991 – 1997; she was appointed a Life Vice President of the Council in 1999. Her significant contribution to the WRAC and the WRAC Association is well documented and you will find a full obituary following this message.

Brigadier Anne's funeral took place in her beloved Keswick; 14 of us represented the Association and our National Standard took pride of place between the Standards of the Royal British Legion and the Aden Veterans. A Memorial Service to celebrate Brigadier Anne's life will be held on Monday 17th October 2011 at 12 noon in the Guards Chapel, Wellington Barracks – all are very welcome. It would be wonderful to see the WRAC Association out in force that day particularly as other organisations like ABF – The Soldiers' Charity and the Aden Veterans (of whom she was Patron) are likely to be well represented. I have passed on the Associations' sincere condolences to Brigadier Field's family who were very touched ; they look forward to meeting Association members at the Memorial Service. Brigadier Anne always lived life to the full and touched many lives during her long and distinguished service – she will be remembered by us all with much gratitude and affection.

Turning now to the main event in the Association's calendar, our Grand Reunion next March in Bristol. This *Lioness* carries the all important application form for the Reunion Weekend. If you are planning to stay at the Bristol Marriott (2 Lower Castle Street in the City Centre – there is another Marriott in Bristol) you need to book there as soon as possible to avoid disappointment and please return the application form to Association HQ at your earliest convenience too. Can I also encourage you to sell the Grand Draw raffle tickets which come with this edition – and if you feel you can sell more, contact the Association HQ for extra books. The prizes are well worth winning – First Prize is £1000! I also hope that you will all enter in the spirit of the Themed Dinner on Friday 23rd March – it is a real icebreaker and gets the Reunion of to a great start.

I conclude with a heartfelt plea to all Association members but particularly to hose ex WRAC members – please support the Grand Reunion and encourage others who are not yet members to join. It is so easy using our new website to take up membership and join online. As I have said many times before, the future of the Association rests entirely with the WRAC membership – we have never needed your support and commitment as much as we need it now. I look forward to seeing you all in Bristol!

Sue Westlake

WRAC ASSOCIATION FLEECES

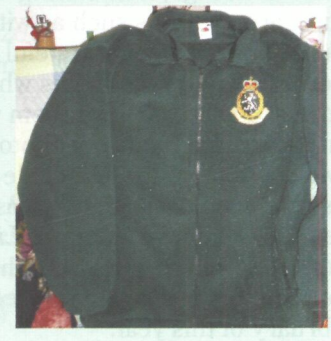
The WRAC Association now has a stock of dark green Fruit of the Loom fleeces embroidered with the Association badge on the left side. We now have them again in all sizes but if you are unsure, please check first. The ones left from the original batch are very generous but the new ones are more realistic. If you are in any doubt, please ring before placing an order.



Each fleece costs £25 which includes postage and packaging.

Cheques should be made payable to
WRAC Association and sent to
WRAC Association, Gould House, Worthy Down, Winchester
SO21 2RG.

If you want to check the actual sizes before placing an order, ring
01962 887478



Obituary

BRIGADIER ANNE FIELD CB CBE
25 June 2011

Brigadier Anne Field, who has died aged 85, was a former Director of the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC). A forward thinking and extremely able staff officer, she believed in the employment of servicewomen in a wide variety of roles along side, with, and on behalf of their male counterparts. She worked towards introducing changes which paved the way to the integration of women into the Corps and Regiments of the Regular Army. She was admired by her male counterparts for her overview, her grasp of staff matters, her tenacity, her dedication and her convivial company and commonsense.

Anne Field became Director in 1977. She was aware that married women officers were leaving the service and wished to stem that loss. She championed the simple solution of co-locating postings with their husbands. She also encouraged the theme of integration by backing a trial of mixed platoons, one Infantry and one Royal Artillery. There were real and practical issues to overcome and as it turned out the experiment was not, at that time, continued. However as Director she successfully negotiated that the WRAC College at Camberley should become the 4th College of RMA Sandhurst. This was a significant step forward towards equality and integration.



DWRAC 1977–1982

Anne Field (nee Hodgson) was born on 4th April 1926, at Keswick, in Cumberland. Her father, Captain Harold Derwent Hodgson, who had served in the Royal Engineers, was a company director. Anne was brought up in a close family in Keswick and went to the local grammar school before moving to St Georges, Harpenden. She subsequently took a place at the London School of Economics but left to join the Auxiliary Territorial Service in September 1947. She became a Lance Corporal Clerical Instructor until December 1948, when she was commissioned into the ATS, which became the WRAC in 1949.

Her first postings were as a Platoon Commander in UK but, with the background of a communist insurrection in Malaya, she travelled to Singapore to take up the post of Officer Commanding 4 Independent Company WRAC which had a company strength of 400! In 1953 she returned to England to attend the WRAC Staff College at Frimley Park. Following this 6 month course, she had Staff and Regimental Duty appointments in the Old War Office, with the London University WRAC OTC, as Adjutant of 317(Scottish) TA Battalion WRAC in Stirling and in Catterick. In 1956 Anne married Captain Anthony Field; this marriage was dissolved in 1961.

In 1961 she was promoted Major becoming Chief Instructor at the WRAC Centre, Guildford, under the Command of Colonel Lucy Davies, a wonderful character, with whom Anne shared a love of Horse Racing, style, and a sense of fun. 1963 found her in Aden, another hot spot, as DAAG Manning, with the added responsibility for the WRAC personnel, employed with Signals, RMP and as Clerks. Anne dealt with casualty notification and compassionate leave for the Command and ensured that she understood the terrain and the dangerous tasks with which her colleagues were involved.

It was back to the UK in 1965 to be Deputy Assistant Director WRAC at Lansdowne House, Berkeley Square. This was situated over the top of the Colony Club, of which George Raft, the famous American gangster, was Chairman and host until 1967. The Army Legal Corps and the Inspectorate of Physical Training were also installed in the building so it was a most convivial and interesting time. On promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in 1968, she assumed an MOD appointment working on redundancy and short term career planning until she was posted to BAOR as Assistant Director WRAC based in Rheindahlen, responsible for WRAC employed in BAOR and Berlin. This posting gave her the chance to travel extensively across Germany visiting units as well as being able to discuss policy, manning and other matters with her male colleagues.

Promoted Colonel in Dec 1971, Anne became Commandant of the WRAC College at Camberley, where she was responsible for Regular and TA Officer Cadet

training as well as Warrant Officer and NCO training. It was here that she struck up close ties with RMA Sandhurst experiencing at first hand what needed to be achieved to ensure the future integration of male and female Officer training. She moved to Wilton in 1975 as Deputy Director WRAC at HQUKLF. This HQ was brimming with good minds and interesting companions both on and off duty. They included, FM Lord Bramall, Commander-in-Chief, UK Land Forces, and his wife Avril, who became long standing friends.

She achieved the pinnacle of her career in June 1977 when she was promoted Brigadier, Director WRAC and Hon ADC to Her Majesty the Queen. She was then able to put her experience into practice by encouraging and actively moving towards the integration of women into the Army Corps and Regiments. She retired in April 1982 and was awarded a Military CB.

Brigadier Field continued to be a staunch supporter of the WRAC after retirement and gave it and its members her considerable and lasting support. She served first as Deputy Controller Commandant from 1984 – 1992 and then as Deputy Colonel Commandant of the AG Corps until 1994. She also held the following appointments: Chairman of the ATS & WRAC Benevolent Fund from 1984-97, Chairman of the WRAC Association Council 1991-97, Vice President of the WRAC Association 1984-97 and Life Vice President from 1999. Her love of comradeship led her to be Chairman of the ATS Dinner Club from 1996 to 2011. She was also a long term supporter of the Army Women's Lawn Tennis Association. In 1995 she received a Civil CBE for her services to the WRAC Association.

She made her home in West London and returned to her beloved Keswick for holidays. She was made a Freeman of the City of London in 1981. In 1982 she became a Director of London (West) Regional Board of Lloyds Bank plc until 1991, and her interest in the City was reflected in her membership of the London Guild of Spectacle Makers from 1990. She was appointed one of her Majesty's Commissioners at the Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover from 1989–2004, to which she gave her accustomed 'all'. She did the same for the Army Benevolent Fund (now ABF – The Soldiers' Charity) and served for 23 years on its main grants committee. She was a Trustee and a supporter of a number of other ex-service organisations, including the National Army Museum, and the Royal Hospital Chelsea. She was thrilled to be remembered by the Aden Veterans who appointed her their first Patron in 2002.

Brigadier Field loved all sports but, in particular, Horse Racing, Tennis, Rugger and Cricket never missing annual trips to Ascot, Wimbledon, Twickenham and Lord's. She enjoyed a glass of good wine, entertaining companions, lively discussion, and was a generous friend and a formidable adversary. She was a loyal member of the Army and Navy Club ('The Rag'), where she regularly invited friends and family; she was particularly pleased to be the first woman member of the Redsocks lunch group. Family and heritage were most important to her, especially her younger brother, David, who pre-deceased her. In her last year her underlying and debilitating health problems sorely tested her. She dealt with failing sight and other frailties with her usual strength of character, and with a little help from her niece, neighbours, and friends. Anne Field was a bright, brave, feisty and fun lady. A legend to those who knew her, Brigadier Field died on June 25th.

Sue Westlake



Grand Reunion 2009



At the House of Commons Lunch
From L to R: Bobbi Chilton, Cas Bolland, Brigadier Field,

Memorial Service Brigadier Anne Field CB CBE

The Memorial Service for Brigadier Anne Field will be held at the Guards Chapel, Wellington Barracks on Monday 17th October at 1200. General the Lord Guthrie will give one of the Eulogies. Details will also appear on the WRAC Association website. There will be a Reception at the Officers' Mess, Wellington Barracks. The Vice President knows that you will all support where possible. Due to Brigadier Anne's connections with various other organisations it is hoped that there will be a large turnout. It would be really great if the WRAC Association were out in force that day.

Ser 26/;

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

11th July, 2011.

Dear Major Shanahan

Thank you for your letter of 29th June to Sir Christopher Geidt which informed us of the death of Brigadier Anne Field, the former Director of the Women's Royal Army Corps. I have passed this information to The Queen who asked me to thank you for your thoughtfulness in informing her.

Yours Sincerely

Doug King
Assistant Private Secretary to The Queen

Major (Retired) G.M. Shanahan.

File 3102

Seen Spr 12 17

GS 11/7

WREN HOUSE
PALACE GREEN
LONDON W8 4PY

TEL 020 7937 2730
FAX 020 7937 7567

11 JUL 2011

6th July 2011

Thank you for your letter dated 29th June and informing us of the death of Brigadier Anne Field. I have informed The Duchess of Kent who was very sorry to learn of this news.

Thank you for keeping us up to date with WRAC matters.

Chloe Hill

Personal secretary
Miss Chloe Hill

Major G M Shanahan

Remembrance

THE WESTMINSTER FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE

Jo Young

Following on from Carol's article in *Lioness* 1/11 about the WRAC Association Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph in 2010, I would like to take you back a few years to the slightly less well known event, the Westminster Field of Remembrance which was opened in 2010 by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.





The Field of Remembrance, a carpet of scarlet poppies on Remembrance crosses, has been laid out by the Royal British Legion every November since 1928 on Westminster Abbey's North Green. The Field pays tribute to service men and women who have served in the Armed Forces since World War 1 to the present day, with thousand of crosses in over 230 plots listed by regiment and military associations. The WRAC Association is one of the military associations to be granted a plot.

Last year I was given the honour of representing the Association at the Opening Ceremony supported by one of our Chelsea Pensioners, ex ATS and WRAC members. After a short service HRH The Duke of Edinburgh walked through the Field of Remembrance stopping to speak to us, as well as many other representatives. This was the first time I have attended this event and it was a very moving occasion. However I have to report that our plot was sadly deficient of poppies, perhaps only 20 in all. The reason for this article is therefore to encourage all of our members to think about contacting the Royal British Legion prior to Remembrance 2011 and requesting a Remembrance Cross is placed in our plot.

There are two ways in which you can do this. For those of you who have access to the internet you can log on to the Royal British Legion website and follow the links through Field of Remembrance and Dedicate a Cross. For those of you who do not have internet access, you can telephone the Royal British Legion Supporter Helpline on **0845 845 1945**. You do not need to give a specific name against your dedication and whether you give a donation at the same time as dedicating a Remembrance Cross is left entirely up to you.

The Remembrance Crosses are provided so that ex servicemen and women, as well as members of the public, can plant a cross in memory of their fallen comrades and loved ones with the Field remaining standing as a touching symbol throughout the whole period of Remembrance. I very much hope to attend this years Field of Remembrance event at Westminster Abbey and it would be wonderful to see a WRAC Association plot full of Remembrance Crosses.



Over to you Ladies

REMEMBRANCE WEEKEND LONDON 2010

Grace Fatherley ATS – Newcastle Branch

My daughter escorted Rene Crouch and I down to London. The British Rail staff were very good helping us with our cases and made sure we got our seating right. On Saturday we went to the Albert Hall. The show was great and a big tribute was made to the RAF Battle of



Outside Westminster Abbey

Britain veterans. Some of our troops from Afghanistan were there. They gave us a wonderful display of gymnastics and we gave them back a thunderous applause. They all looked very proud men. On Sunday we made our way to Westminster Abbey. The Service was beautiful and it brought tears to our eyes. After the Service we went over the Field of Remembrance to lay our Remembrance Crosses.



Laying our Remembrance Crosses

It was such a nice weekend. British Rail staff were at Kings Cross to help us get back up to Newcastle. I do hope we can repeat the journey in November 2011.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER?

The WRAC Association now has badges to denote how long you have been a member of the Association. The badges are based on a plain version of the Association badge and the silver one is for 25 years membership and the gold coloured one is for 40 years membership.





You can buy the badges from WRAC Association HQ at Worthy Down. The silver coloured ones are £3 and the gold coloured ones are £4. Cheques should be made payable to "WRAC Association".



Across the UK, thousands of veterans have been seen proudly wearing their HM Armed Forces Veterans Lapel Badge. The Veterans Badge was launched in May 2004 and was given to those First and Second World War veterans travelling back to the battlefronts that year under the Heroes Return Scheme. The badge soon became so popular that the Ministry of Defence decided to extend eligibility to other veterans. It has now become a symbol, identifying veterans as a distinct group within the community and one that deserves special recognition and thanks.

The badges are issued by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency from their offices in Blackpool. Demand is high and to allow the process to be properly managed, entitlement has gradually been extended in steps. However, since January 2008, **anyone who has served in the Armed Forces can apply.**

HOW TO APPLY

Telephone:
Call the Veterans-UK Helpline on 0800 169 2277 (UK only)
or 0800 169 3458 (Minicom users).
The helpline is also a source of help and advice on any other issue or problem faced by veterans.

On line:
visit www.veterans-uk.info
Click the Veterans Lapel Badge button on the homepage. Complete the application form, sign and date it then either fax it or return it by post to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency.

Email:
lapelbadge.team@spva.gsi.gov.uk

By letter:
Write to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency at: Veterans Badge, SPVA, Room 6108, Norcross, Thornton-Cleveleys FY5 3WP.

Articles of Interest

ARMY GOLF ASSOCIATION –
LADIES TOUR OF SOUTH AFRICA
Lt Col (Retd) ML Woollard MBE & Maj Alex Pettitt RLC



At the Cape of Good Hope
From L to R: Mary Woollard, Chris Ronan, WO2 Dawn Buckley, Kim "Lofty" Lofthouse, LCpl Becky Mercer, Sgt Clare Singleton, Val Laycock

The biennial Army Ladies Golf tour took place at the end of March, the destination Cape Town, South Africa with 16 members from the Ladies Army Golf Association of mixed ability, from Army players to players new to the game.

Day 1: Meeting at Heathrow airport on Tues afternoon at Terminal 5 was meant to be the start of our Army Ladies Golf tour. Little did we know that it would be another 24hrs before we left the UK bound for Cape Town. Technical difficulties on the plane followed by a night (with 5am fire alarm) in the Hilton Hotel, Gatwick; yes a quick trip around the M25 at midnight was not the intention.

Day 2: Finally checked in, flew the eleven hours to Cape town, made better by the in flight entertainment, BA stewards and the joviality of the group. Landed at dark o'clock in the rain. Hire cars collected and a quick game of inter car Karoke, Hangman, and eye spy finally saw us arrive at Dunvegan Lodge. Never give out hand held radios to maintain comms unless you want them to be forms of entertainment.

Day 3: After an admin morning we finally got to Clovelly golf course. Coaching under the watchful eye of the Team Coach, Karen Nicholls was followed by 9 holes. The course was in immaculate condition; the grass like a fluffy carpet, the backdrop a spectacle in every direction and the greens true and fast. The players all enjoyed the chance to hit a few balls even if they did go in every direction as well as peppering the greens. Even the sun shone for the duration. Day 3 ended with a smile by all.

Day 4: The day was spent playing golf at Milnertown Golf Club just north of Cape Town with Table Mountain as the backdrop. A few beers were had in the bar afterwards on the balcony overlooking the very large beach and table mountain in the background.



19th Hole at Milnertown Golf Club
From L to R: Kym "Lofty" Lofthouse, Lt Col Ishbel Thomson, Maj Daisy Munday, Chris Ronan

Day 5: A day off from golf. The group split into 2 for the day. Those who needed more beauty sleep and those who wanted to see the townships of Cape Town. Group 1 headed to the Cape, leaving at early o'clock. Daisy Munday quickly impressed the group with her ability to spot animals from a mile away. They saw Big 5 – the striped mouse, ostrich, zebra, black lizard and baboons. Each animal was photographed many times, (thank goodness for digital cameras and the delete button). Having completed a wildlife experience they went on to visit a Township; which turned out to be more of an afternoon at the Church; music, BBQ and beer and lacking the poverty and extreme hardship that some were looking for on the trip. Group 2, after a leisurely breakfast headed to the Cape and enjoyed the same views and animals, although Kim, (Lofty) Lofthouse's close encounter with a very ugly baboon was highly amusing, albeit not so funny for her!

Day 6: A busy sightseeing day; table mountain and Robben Island. Left early to get up Table Mountain; no clouds and great views to the Cape, Cape Town and beyond. We took a quick lap around the top and then back down to the waterfront to get the boat to Robben Island.

The Robben Island trip was awesome; an ex-prisoner (1985-91) showed us around the main prison, telling first hand accounts of prison life and that of Nelson Mandela. We then got a bus around the island with an exceptional tour guide giving us the background and understanding to Apartheid and the antiapartheid movement. We all finished the day slightly more aware of the South African history. The day finished with a meal at the Victoria & Albert waterfront; another wonderful place with nice shops and restaurants.



Spectacular View of Cape Town



Val Laycock and Capt Helen McChelry on Safari

Day 7: We drove up to the Stellenbosch area (1hr away) to play the Everglen Golf and Country Club. The scenery was stunning; backdrops of mountains and vineyards.

Day 8: First match of the tour against Westalake Ladies Team. The day started with some coaching from Karen down at Clovelly; we headed off for Westlake Golf course. Final scores were 4 – 2 to the Army. Not bad at all seeing as one member of the team, Sally, was playing her first ever golf match and won. It was then on to the hosting; a few ales and sandwiches later as well as a streaking baboon which was chased off convincingly buy the green staff.



Maj Jayne Errington on the 18th Tee

Day 9: Golf at King David's golf course. The course was parkland; tree lined fairways in fairly good conditioned. Many of the team likened it to the Army course in Aldershot. The opponents were a strong team, with the win going to King Davids Ladies Team. The takeaway was that if the match had been in matchplay conditions the result would have been Army 4½ to 3½. The post match tea was the best so far; hand made cakes, nibbles and dips; a nice end to a hard fought, friendly game of golf.

Day 10: Day off from Golf. The group went and did different things today. One group went searching for some wildlife, which they found in abundance. The group went north to Buffelsfontein, near Darling to do a safari. The stories on return made the trip sound awesome; stroking cheetahs, chasing giraffes and watching buffalo, elat, ostrich to say but a few. They then went to do the obligatory shopping for souvenirs down at Cape Town's waterfront. The second group decided to go and try the wines out in Stellenbosch. Some went to play the golf course prior to wine tasting; the final group went on a mountain bike vineyard tour, which again was excellent. All in all everyone had a great time seeing another part of South Africa.



Keeping Fit for Golf!

Day 11: Golf match against Clovelly Ladies. The day started with some coaching from Karen down on the range; bunkers and putting practice. We then went onto the match. Unfortunately, we lost 2-5 playing matchplay. Local knowledge seemed to count. The evening being our last night we had a final dinner in the clubhouse and then stayed for the clubs fundraising cheese and wine evening. This with a spot of live music and some interesting dancing from all proved to be a great round off to the tour.

Day 12: The final day in South Africa; it had to be shopping by the girls. We all headed down to Simons Town, the next town along to grab the souvenirs and

bargains. The favourite buy were painted ostrich eggs. This was followed by a bite to eat and then off to the airport for our flight home. Thankfully this time it was on time.

This was a great trip. A visit to Cape Town is highly recommended for golf or a few days sightseeing. The hospitality was fantastic as was the organization; a big thank you to the Team Manager, Diane Walters, Lt Col Ishbel Thomson & LPGA Golf Professional Karen Nicholls for organising such a great trip.

The whole Team is to be seen on the back page of this edition.

From L to R: Kym "Lofty" Lofthouse, Capt Helen McChlery AGC (SPS), Maj Jayne Errington, Lt Col Ishbel Thomson AGC (SPS), Maj Alex Pettitt RLC, LCpl Becky Mercer AGC(SPS), Lt Col Mary Woollard, Sgt Sally Amandini AGC(SPS) Welfare, Diane Walters, Val Laycock, Maj Lizzie Stillman RLC, Karen Nicholls LPGA Professional, Maj Daisy Munday AGC (ETS), Chris Ronan, WO2 Dawn Buckley AGC(SPS), Sgt Clare Singleton RLC.

FOUNDERS DAY AT THE ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA

Leona Barr-Jones and Alison Brown



In Pensioners on Parade

There are few institutions in the United Kingdom with an unbroken three centuries of service and none of them is so close to the heart of the nation as "The Men (and Women) in Scarlet", the Chelsea Pensioners, and their home, the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Founded in 1682 by King Charles 11 and intended for "succour and relief of veterans broken by age and war", the Royal Hospital, with its Grade 1 listed buildings, still serves its original purpose and intends to continue to further its role into the 21st Century.

Designed by Christopher Wren, the Royal Hospital Chelsea has changed little in its long history. From its distinctive red brick exterior to its beautifully designed interiors the Royal Hospital remains a remarkable and historic building. The In-Pensioners living quarters, known as Long Wards originally offered 6 foot square berths, but they have been greatly modernised now with all mod cons available.

We have three WRAC Association members who are In-Pensioners; SSgt Madge Cole WRAC, Sgt Dorothy Hughes ATS and WO2 Win Phillips ATS/WRAC. The WRAC Association was invited to attend The Founders Day Parade on 9th June 2011 to see both Madge and Win on parade. The Association was represented by Gabi Shanahan, Leona Barr-Jones, Maggie Purkis and Ali Brown.



The Fabulous Four

So it was a glorious day on the 9th June 2011 that we all found ourselves loitering outside Hyde Park tube station designated as the meeting place. We were all dressed to the nines and once we had finished watching the amazing hats all around the tube station we made our way to the Royal Hospital Chelsea complete with the "cat on a twig" in a large suitcase on its way to being repaired. This very very heavy suitcase accompanied us throughout the day and we were lucky that there was a succession of men to carry if around, some less willingly than others!

Having walked the short distance to the Royal Hospital we joined the crowds entering the formal parade area. This was my first visit to the Royal Hospital and I loved the architecture of the parade area and the formality of the layout. For those that do not know, The Royal Hospital Founder's Day is held on a day close to the 29th May. This is the birthday of Charles II as well as the date of his restoration to the Throne in May 1660. It is also known as Oak Apple Day as it commemorates the escape of the future King Charles after the Battle of Worcester (1651) when he hid in an oak tree to avoid capture by the Parliamentary forces. The Pensioners are usually reviewed by a member of the Royal Family. During the course of this celebratory day the statue of Charles II in Figure Court is partly shrouded in oak leaves, and all the participants in the Parade and spectators wear sprigs of oak leaves to commemorate the day. The statue was re gilded in 2002 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

Having got our sprigs of oak leaves and negotiated our way up the stands, complete with **the** suitcase, we waited for the parade to start. At 1100, with the Pensioners formed up in front of us and the fanfare trumpeters, looking very grand on the roof of the main portico, HRH Prince Harry of Wales entered with the Governor General Sir Redmond Watt (Retired) KCB, KCVO,CBE.

The parade then got underway with the Inspection. The Reviewing Officer took his time and made sure he spoke to as many of the Pensioners as he could including the veterans and those disabled in Afghanistan who were visiting the Royal Hospital for the day. As Prince Harry went up and down the assembled ranks the Band of the Welsh Guards entertained us with a varied and grand programme of music. It was just great to see two of our ladies on Parade. Just as the Inspection started the heavens opened for about 10 minutes leaving us struggling for umbrellas but luckily the rain soon passed.



HRH Prince Harry of Wales



On Parade



HRH Prince Harry of Wales meets the Veterans

The end of the Inspection marked the beginning of the March Past and this was completed with extreme dignity and pride by the assembled ranks. The March Past was concluded with nine Pensioners driving bright red electric carts complete with flying pennants attached causing the on lookers to break into spontaneous applause. A really great Parade and March Past and in such glorious surroundings. Prince Harry of Wales then delivered his speech clearly expressing his delight at being in the Royal Hospital for the day, praised the residents for their extraordinary military service to our country. He added "The Royal Hospital – this world famous place – represents all that is great about our Country, beauty, tradition – and the wisdom that goes with that – selflessness and duty". Prince Harry also said "I do have some experience of soldiering. The comradeship that comes with it is one of the things I treasure most in my life. The Army for me and thousands like me is a family. In that respect, for veterans coming here, it must be like coming home. That is why this place matters and always will". He then finished with a remark about his brother's ability to do drill!



The March Past – Scooter Style!



Proud and On Parade



The Formal Inspection

After the Parade there were refreshments available and we enjoyed these, particularly the red wine on offer, and passed a very pleasant few hours catching up with each other. As the marquee gradually emptied we decided to go in search of food as most of us had yet to get around to having breakfast. We visited the newly opened café named for The Right Honourable Baroness Thatcher but they had long run out of food so we ventured into the streets of London and found a café serving large panninis and coffee – still complete with the heavy suitcase and the "cat on a twig".

Having had breakfast and lunch in one meal we went our separate ways back to various parts of the UK having had a great day out and the "cat on a twig" went off to the Silver Vaults, in the safe custody of Gabi Shanahan, to be repaired.



WO2 Phillips at the Chelsea Flower Show – another event much enjoyed

WRAAC 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Louise Green W.R.A.A.C. Association (N.S.W.) Inc

Editor's Note: On page 47 of Lioness 1/11 there was an article on the Alliance with the W.R.A.A.C. formed in 1956 and the following visit to The WRAC Depot, Guildford in 1960 by the Director of the W.R.A.A.C. The WRAAC Association celebrated its 60th Anniversary this year and I am extremely to Louise Green for forwarding to me the DVD of the celebrations and the publication "A Unique Corps 1951 – 1985". The following article has been drawn from those sources.



The WRAAC Association was formed in 1977 following a visit to Australia by HRH Princess Margaret who was Colonel in Chief of the W.R.A.A.C. from 1953 – 1984. The Association has as its members those who served in the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS 1942 – 1947) and the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC 1951 -1985). With the emergence of the Cold War and the threat of conflicts in Malaya and Korea it was recognised that the Australian Army was seriously undermanned. National Service was introduced in 1950 and special recruiting campaigns were initiated. Cabinet gave approval in 1950 for the raising of a women's Corps within the Australian Military Forces (AMF) to be briefly known as Australian Women's Army Corps (AWAC) before the Women's Australian Army Corps was formally announced on 5th April 1951. Two months later King George VI granted the addition of "Royal" in recognition of the wartime contribution of the women's services. Colonel Kathleen Best OBE RRC was the first Director and the Corps was firmly built on the example of the WWII Women's Service, the AWAS and the AAMWS, to release servicemen for more active roles. After initial training at Studley Park, NSW and in Victoria, the WRAAC School was relocated from Mildura to Georges Heights in 1958.The Kathleen Best Memorial Gates were erected by members and ex-members of the Corps following the premature death of Colonel Best. Officially opened in November 1959, they came to symbolise the Corps and remain in the memory of all WRAAC. Initial roles for the WRAAC were steadily expanded and with the decision made to fully integrate women into the Army, the Corps was disbanded in 1985. The WRAAC School closed in December 1984 and the gates were relocated to RMC Duntroon where they now front the Commandant's residence completed in 2005. Many WRAAAC continue to serve and uphold the Corps traditions.

The Anniversary celebrations were held over the weekend of 11th – 13th February and was attended by over 500 members at the unveiling of a memorial plaque at the old WRAAC School at George Heights with 300 members, including some ex WRAC, attending the formal dinner oh the Saturday evening. The letter from the Vice President of the WRAC Association was displayed at the Dinner as part of a slide show of memorabilia from the members.

On the Sunday there was a formal Church Parade at the Garrison Church and this was followed by a Harbour Cruise in Sydney Harbour. The following is a letter received from one of the WRAAC Association members and sums up the mood of the weekend very well.

To the President of the WRAAC Association (NSW) Inc and ladies of the 60th Anniversary Weekend

Thank you. It seems so cliché. However, I say again thank you. What a wonderful job was done by all of you. I can only imagine how much midnight oil you have all burned. From the arrival and meet and greet on Friday night to the fabulous end to it all on Sydney Harbour, the weekend was a delight. The thoughtful gifts included in our presentation packs, the DVD showing passed members, the book and of course the chance to purchase mementos of the day will, I am sure, be held in high regard by all those who purchased them.

In this busy life we all lead, it is easy to immerse ourselves in the day to day mish mash that is life. Thoughts of our mates who trained with us, learned with us, sacrificed with us, laughed with us and sometimes

cried with us can be pushed into the depths of our conscious thought. What you gave us on that lovely weekend in February was an opportunity to re-acquaint ourselves with what was, to many, a re-awakening of our formative years. To enjoy again the spirit of the wonderful women who are the fabric, the heart and soul in many cases of what it is to be Australian, to love this country unconditionally, who would defend and safeguard our shore and our history. Women who marched into, or assemble proudly, within the hallowed interior of the beautiful Garrison Church on the Sunday to present the banner and sing proudly and loudly to the wonderful strains played by the band members who unselfishly give up their time for us. Women who assembled one more time, at the call, to march proudly for review by the Governor. Then take a wander down memory lane and marvel at how well maintained the old barrack blocks are, to recall long forgotten adventures, giggles, terrifying encounters of the NCO kind and to enjoy again all those other tales, liberally embellished of course, that came flooding back. To read sadly, on Saturday night, "VALE", a list much too long. Who will ever forget the proud young Australians who came down to the dock to send us off by playing renditions of our all time favourites? How wonderful that was. How fantastic they looked.

To enjoy excellent food and conversation, exchange email addresses and promise to be there again in five years time....Carolyn asked the question, "If we put it on again will you come? Your reply Ladies was a deafening and resounding **YES**. See you there.....

From Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) SJ Westlake
Vice President

THE WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION
(Incorporating Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps and Auxiliary Territorial Service Comrades Association)
Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

President: HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCHESS OF KENT, GCVO

AGC Centre, Worthy Down, Winchester, Hants. SO21 2RG
Tel: General Secretary 01962 887612 Chief Clerk & Fax: 01962 887570
E-mail: wracassociation@googlemail.com

30 January 2011

Dear Friends

On behalf of all members of the Women's Royal Army Corps Association, it gives me great pleasure to send greetings to our Sisters-in-Arms in Australia as you celebrate your 60th Anniversary over the weekend 11-13th February 2011. Very many Congratulations Women's Royal Australian Army Corps Association on your Diamond Jubilee! We salute you!

We are so proud of our long affiliation with you and are only sorry that we will not be represented next weekend in Sydney to share your celebrations with you. Your programme looks action packed and I know that you will all have a wonderful time, meeting up with old friends and reminiscing about your service together. The esprit de corps and comradeship never fades, in fact, it only grows stronger as the years go by.

Rest assured, we will be thinking about you. Keep the flag flying and long may the WRAAC Association continue.

Best Wishes

Sue Westlake

Letter sent by the Vice President of the WRAC Association sending greetings

MEMORIES OF THE ATS

I am the husband of Jeannie (Betty) Stratford, one time ATS corporal in 594 Mxd Ack Ack Bty RA on wartime gunsites in South Wales and Yorkshire. For many years I have been a dedicated and interested reader of the *Lioness* and have accompanied Betty at Ack Ack reunions in York and National reunions at Blackpool and Cardiff. In the *Lioness* I have found quite a lot of interest in the articles and letters and as I have learned more, my respect for your readers' service during the war has grown. Because of Betty's role I have, of course, taken an interest in the life and work of the girls in the mixed Ack Ack batteries and one letter in the recent issue from Mr Mendes in Canada, prompted a reply from me concerning Betty's experiences and we have been exchanging useful information since.

My first encounter with the ATS was during the first months of the war while serving with the Argylls in Stirling Castle. Unfortunately an enforced spell overseas put a stop to a very enjoyable period but purely by chance the first girl I met on my return was Betty, seated with three other ATS girls, all very attractive of course, at a nearby table on my first night out with pals at my new unit. We were married in August 1946. That was 65 years ago this year and during that time we have had a happy and interesting life, if not always running smoothly. That was because after our marriage Betty spent the next 18 years as an Army wife, subject as many were in the post-war years, to long separations, sudden moves, strange new units and locations more often than not having to arrange our own accommodation whether at home or on tours abroad. Betty coped extremely well and took all in her stride even with two young children to look after. I am sure that her ATS service helped her to deal with the uncertainties of life in an army that was not exactly front page interest at that time.

Naturally I think Betty is special and I was particularly pleased to be with her on two special occasions in October last year. The first was her 90th birthday celebrations. It was a great success. With my son's help we had a lunch for 45 family, neighbours and friends of the various organisations with which we are, or have been, involved with during our 45 years settled existence in the same house. Note: After our rather unsettled life hitherto I had firmly decided to stay put and now I have too much clutter to think of moving.

The second occasion was a result of Betty becoming 90. Last year Kent County HQ, Royal British Legion, had asked branches for names of ex-Service members, 90 years old that year, for those who would be prepared to feature in the County Poppy Appeal Launch to take place at the County Hall in Maidstone. This was to mark the 90th Anniversary of the Formation of the British Legion in 1921 and the first Poppy Appeal. Surprisingly, of the names submitted from all branches, two of the five veterans selected, were from our branch, Betty and Fred, an ex-RAF friend of ours. They were to be featured at the launch with four young serving soldiers, veterans of the current conflict. The veterans received their formal invitation from the leader of the County Council to attend the launch on 28 October and each could have one companion. They were to assemble at the RBL County Offices, on the outskirts of Maidstone, from where we would be taken in vintage cars decorated with poppies to be met at County Hall by the Council Leader, the media and the public. The vintage cars supplied by a local

vintage car club were family cars of the 20s and 30s. Betty was in a very nice Morris Cowley two-seater with a dickey seat at the back. I was in the back seat of an Austin Seven Ruby saloon, not the most spacious of cars, with a veteran less able than me who squeezed in the front. Can you picture us getting in the one door first to the back seat then the front seat, knees up to our chin and turned sideways? It was a laugh but all part of the fun. Memories came back when I saw our driver sticking his arm out of the window to give the correct hand signals when wanting to turn left or right.

On arrival at County Hall there were lots of photographs taken before we went inside to a large reception hall where everyone mingled while official and media photographers and reporters singled out the veterans for special interviews. Betty got quite a lot of attention being the only female veteran and she was asked about her experiences in the ATS. In due course we were shepherded into the main assembly room where the local mayors, dignitaries and other guests were already seated. The veterans, young and old, were seated well out at the front, facing the assembly and separately introduced with a brief account of their Service life. Young schoolchildren from local schools then came forward and presented a poppy to each veteran, giving us some touching and amusing moments. After an act of remembrance and speeches, all present retired to the reception room where a buffet had been prepared. Eventually after having had our fill of eating and talking we made our way home. Altogether it was a most memorable and enjoyable day and we have many photographs to remind us of it.



On arrival at the County Hall with the Chairman of KCC, Mr Bill Hayton



In the Reception Hall with our friend Mr Fred Hurley



Betty with two of the children

ASSOCIATION REUNION – 13 MARCH 1965

Editor's Note: I received a programme for the Association Reunion dated 13th March 1965. It was not possible to scan in the programme for the Lioness but below is a brief summary of the events at the Reunion. Hopefully somebody out there can add something to the occasion especially if you were there!!

The Reunion started at 7.00 pm with the formal Assembly and the members were entertained by the WRAC Staff Band for the next 30 minutes. The Band was under the direction of Lt E Crowcroft LRAM ARCM, By Kind Permission of the Directorate and Officers WRAC. The programme of music included the Sound of Music, Camelot, The Grenadiers and the Blue Tango. After the Fanfare the Address of Welcome was given by Councillor Mrs John Walford JP, The Worshipful Mayor of Kensington. This was closely followed by the speeches. Firstly from HRH The Princess Royal followed by Brigadier J E Henderson ADC Director WRAC, and Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan GBE, LLD, DSc. The Vote of Thanks was given by WO1 M J Evans, Depot and Training WRAC.

At 8.15 refreshments were served and again the WRAC Staff Band played a selection of music including Pickwick, Pony Express and Porgy and Bess. The evening finished with Auld Lang Syne and the National Anthem.

WRAC FLEECE

Lynn James

Fleece arrived this morning, thank you. Nice snug fit for when I'm in my wheelchair, no bits flapping about. You were right XL does fit size 28. I put my badges and Pingat Jasa Malaya on straight away. I'm off to the Militaria fair at Malvern tomorrow with my husband and son. I'm going to show off my new fleece and hopefully get more attention for the WRAC than previous years when I have been inundated with questions about my beret. Its surprising the number of men who don't

recognise the fact that women are/were soldiers, also I can now tell them about the Association as well.



Modelling the WRAC Association Fleece

SERVICE OF DEDICATION AT THE AGC MEMORIAL, NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

Editor's Note: Thanks to Jo Bright from the AGC Association for passing the following photographs to me. The occasion was the Service of Dedication at the AGC Memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum and shows AGC personnel on parade along with the AGC Band.













A montage of the Day

HARROGATE A TOP NAZI TARGET

Editor's Note: This article is reproduced from a local newspaper dated Friday 8th April 2011.

It seemed that the poster was a list of targets connected with the 1940 bombing raids on the United Kingdom that the Nazis planned as a precursor to their Operation Sea Lion.

Mr Walker had seen the poster on a wall at Hughenden Manor during the broadcast of an Antiques Road Show programme with Michael Aspel. During the Second World War Hughenden Manor, once the home of Benjamin Disraeli, was code named Hillside and used by top secret intelligence. The maps for the Dambusters raids were drawn up at Hughenden, and the whole establishment played a vital role in the allied war effort. Accordingly, it was Hitler's top target for Luftwaffe raids.

As Mr Walker had told me that Harrogate featured on the list, I was naturally interested, and telephoned Hughenden Manor to learn if the poster still existed, at which a very helpful member of the National Trust promised to send me a copy. That copy is reproduced above for the interest of Advertiser readers. It may be seen that the poster is a list of Luftwaffe pilot targets in the United Kingdom comprising barracks, military command posts and military teaching schools. The top target was Hughenden Manor and such important places as the London Air Ministry at Number 13, or the London War Ministry at Number 11. RAF Ruislip was placed at Number 4 and Bomber Command Stanmore at Number 3.

What may be surprising to some is that at Number 2 and second only to Hughenden itself is Harrogate, where the Hotel Majestic and the Hotel Esplanade are highlighted as being staff quarters for the Air Ministry.
The story of the bombing raid over Harrogate of September 12 1940 has often been told and I have a copy of the map given to the Nazi pilots, but the list is especially important as it disproves the often told story about the pilot just jettisoning his bombs before returning to Germany.

OUR GIRLS IN GERMANY – HOW ARE THEY GETTING ON?

Editor's Note: I have been sent a newspaper article with the title above. It is not possible to re-produce the article as it is of too low quality to scan in, which is a shame because the pictures are interesting, but the following is an extract. Again if anyone out there can add any detail please do!

The article written by Hilda Marchant is supported by photographs by Haywood Magee and leads with the paragraph "Some parents have been disturbed about the life our girls lead in the Women's Army in Germany. We sent a woman reporter and cameraman to find out the facts. We think theirs is an honest and a reassuring report". It goes on to say..... Please remember the article is written in the language of the Day.

To begin with the trivia first. It was Mrs Jean Mann MP who asked the House of Commons recently whether members of the Women's Royal Army Corps in Germany had access to gin. My answer is slightly longer than Mr Shinwell's "No". It is "Yes". We saw them drink gin on their Friday night carnival dance in the Kirhaus of the Garrison town Bad Oeynhausen. More, they have boy friends – exclusively British serving officers – and we have to report that on occasions we saw them holding hands. So there it is – they sing, dance and drink together – and if it had been otherwise I would not have believed it. But this picture should arouse no more disapproval than Saturday night at any Palais at home. Indeed the Army has a better chance than more parents have of control after the all is over, as we saw when two rigid women military policemen shepherded the Cinderellas back to billets before midnight. Again we were told with a new and welcome frankness of the occasional girl who had slid too easily into the tepid, relaxing, unreal world of this Garrison town – the girl who drank too much, the one who had become man mad, the one who had been caught up with a "bad egg". They had been sent back for a six month "cooler" in Britain.

No. There are far more significant questions to ask about the Women's Regular Army Corps (the article's mis-print, not mine) now that, since February, they had become part of the Regular Army. Is it necessary to have women soldiers in peacetime? Does khaki life toughen a woman? Must she surrender the gentler qualities of her nature to take to the barrack square successfully? There are arguments of expediency. Other military men liked the WRAC because "they are so damned reliable". Here we had some delightful conversations. There was the sergeant-major who had 18 years of service and confessed that the nearest point of mutiny in his career was when he was put in charge of a unit of women drivers. His conversion was touching. Then there was the very regular colonel who had refused to acknowledge the existence of women in khaki until he was given a WRAC secretary.

Their work and usefulness is not in doubt – once they are in. But why do they join and what sort of women are they? The physically superb policewoman who looked too big to do anything but apply the rules, yet made such unexpected and intelligent observations on human misbehaviour. The pretty one, the very pretty one, who began as a blonde blank, and who developed the next morning at work as one of the most capable woman doing a very technical job. And then there was Jane Rankin. She is a junior commander in charge of rationing for army establishments and families in Berlin. It is a sticky job. Nobody can be pleased – the bacon is too fat, the meat tough and the flour damp. She has to command a mixed bag of German civilian men and women, national servicemen and the odd regular NCO. She proved daily that she knew more about her job than

any one else did. But there was absolutely no streak of aggressiveness in her, and she had developed a persuasiveness which, I was assured, made all the serving soldiers adore her, to the point of working overtime.

Here is the most important reason for young girls joining the regular Army. They want to get away from home ties and home town – not running away from mother and father, but to be independent which is a good thing in any young girl. But it takes almost a foolhardy courage for a girl to go marching out into the big bad world alone. The Army gives her just that amount of protection she feels she needs – at the risk, it may be thought, of losing her identity.

They are also in the civilised surroundings of new and strange towns which they absorb – but only the sight of the masonry. Here is a real criticism. The servicewomen who go into German homes or have German friends are few. Some learn German, but it is exercised only on the bus conductor.... In this respect the WRAC may as well be on Salisbury Plain. There are no parades or drill. This was another surprise, because now they are regular Army, I had presumed they would be more brass-hatty. Women tend that way towards their own kind. But it is a policy to have the minimum military show or display as far as the WRAC in Germany is concerned. All of this leads back to Controller Toft, who is in command of the women serving in Germany.

We did, of course, meet the occasional woman officer with a voice like a buzz saw and heels that clicked like castanets. We also saw the odd one that toadied up to the head prefect, and, for her information, the Controller has a word for it – "lack of confidence".

Despite the ominous staff officers' course of nine months now starting – it used to be two – with its broadening of military teaching; or the move to get women to do technical, but non combatant jobs on arms; or the creation of a women's army class, many of the young women coming in are doing so because their mother was in the ATS..... I hope they remain "not manly". For the disastrous day would be when no woman MP could ask questions about drink and camp following. Then indeed we will have let loose a new race of Amazons.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION REMINDERS

Are you an annual member? If so, your membership runs out at the end of September. If you belong to a geographical Branch, please you're your Secretary or Treasurer your subscription renewal in good time. If you belong to Headquarters Branch then you must send your subscription directly to WRAC Association, AGC Centre, Worthy Down, Winchester SO21 2RG.

Cheques should be made payable to WRAC Association and arrive as soon as possible after 1 October.

It is very important that you renew your membership in good time. If you leave it too late, you will not receive your *Lioness* at the right time and it will cost more in money and time to update your membership records accordingly and to post out your *Lioness*.

PLEASE HELP US TO ENSURE YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS KEPT UP TO DATE

PS Why not become a Life Member and then you will not need to worry about renewing your subscription each year? A bargain at £50. Why not ask your family and friends to club together and buy it for your Christmas or Birthday?

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PLEASE let us have your new address as soon as you can and help us to reduce the number of *Lioness* magazines which are returned undelivered.

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Articles from Serving Soldiers

EXERCISE DAHAB EXTREME SURF

Captain Sarah Allardice AGC(SPS)



A great time was had by all

I couldn't believe my luck when the phone rang on a particularly cold and dreary day and I heard the words "Can you get away to go windsurfing in Dahab in February?" I didn't need asking twice and went straight to my boss to find out whether I could be released. The thought of a week windsurfing in the warm waters of Egypt in the middle of what was proving to be a very snowy winter in Germany was like music to my ears.

The exercise was being organised by one of my colleagues who is heavily involved in Army windsurfing. He explained that the aim of the exercise was to introduce new blood into the sport whilst at the same time provide a week of training ahead of the Forces Open Windsurfing Championships in May. Initially, places were offered to personnel serving in the other Corps, but owing to the high operational tempo there were some last minute cancellations, which meant that despite being AGC cap badged, I was given the opportunity to attend. I was therefore the only AGC person on the exercise, but that didn't bother me.

However, being a complete beginner, it did make me wonder whether there were many others in my position within the Corps who would have jumped at the chance of a week's introduction into windsurfing. I also pondered as to whether there were any other accomplished windsurfers, or sailors as they prefer to be called, in the Corps who may have been able to use the week as a training week because it seems a shame that with so many people, we as a Corps don't have any representation (as yet) at the annual Windsurfing Championships.

There were a total of 40 personnel ranging from those with instructor qualifications to the likes of me, who had never touched a board before. On arrival at Sharm-el-Sheik airport we got our transfer to Dahab and checked into our hotel. Yes, we actually stayed in a hotel whilst on exercise. It was a decent one too, located right on the beach front with its own swimming pool and a couple of bars/restaurants etc. I couldn't believe my luck.



Team AGC

There were 15 other beginners and by the end of the week we had all passed our Start Level One windsurfing qualification. In order to pass you have to demonstrate amongst other things that you can sail around a triangular course which was made slightly more difficult by the gusty winds. Dahab is famous for windsurfing because generally there is always wind and the waters are relatively flat, which makes learning much easier. I fully intend to continue windsurfing in the future, especially if I get the opportunity to practice in countries like Egypt. Everyone who attended had a great time, and I would definitely recommend the sport to anyone who has never tried it before.

TREASURE ISLAND – EX JURASSIC SHARK

Corporal Jenny Beck AGC(SPS)

After months of anticipation the day had finally arrived for the start of Exercise Jurassic Shark 3, a Joint Services sub-aqua diving expedition to the Cocos Island National Park, 535 km off the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. The aim of the expedition was to electronically tag 15 hammerhead sharks providing Pretoma, a Costa Rican conservation group, with evidence about both the habits and distribution of these amazing sharks. This was the third expedition to bear the name Jurassic Shark. The expedition leader, Major Andy Reid ETS put the expedition together for 15 personnel from across all three Services. This was an opportunity that just couldn't be turned down.

After a long flight and a night in Costa Rica, we had a three hour drive until we finally got to see our home for the next 11 days. Having never been on a diving expedition, or even a diving holiday, I was a bit wary of the sleeping arrangements. All we had been told was that we would be based on a live aboard boat called the MV Argo. Unfortunately, the 36 hour trip out to Cocos Island came complete with the inevitable sea sickness. Most of the 17 team members (we had now been joined by 2

scientists) suffered with it. The journey even had our one and only Matelot looking somewhat green around the gills, yet even this failed to temper the buzz and excitement as Cocos Island drew ever closer.

Finally, three days after departing London Heathrow, we awoke to the beauty, splendour and incessant rain (7 metres per year) of Cocos Island. This speck in the ocean, so alive with legends of pirate hoards of plundered loot, is the original Treasure Island and is thought to be still home to at least a billion dollars worth of buried treasure. It is also the notional setting for the film Jurassic Park so you can imagine what kind of place it is.

Diving with and tagging sharks was not something I thought that I would ever be doing. During the month leading up to this expedition, I felt all sorts of emotions, running from euphoria, because I had managed to get on this expedition having only done 40 dives, to pure panic and fear induced nausea. I had worked myself up so much that I actually thought about pulling out despite the £2,000 initial cost, before grants started arriving. As a result I had many conversations with the team about the practicalities of being in the water with sharks and came to realise that their media image does not reflect the reality.

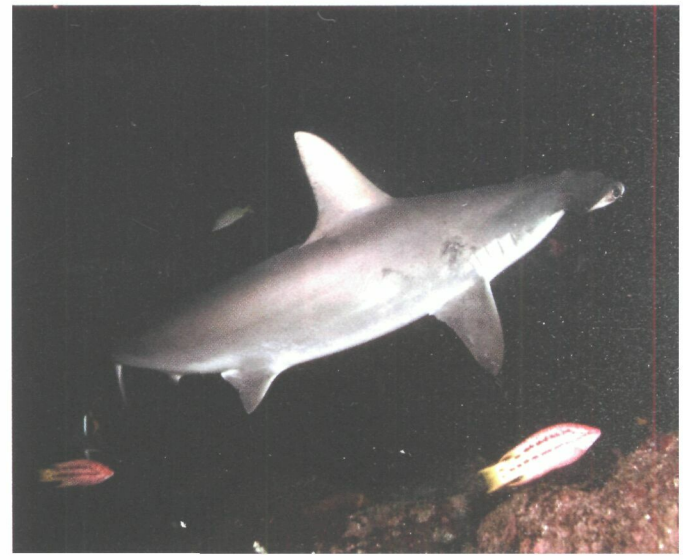


Have speargun will travel!

At last the time came for the first dive. As soon as we hit the water there were sharks everywhere and my air consumption rocketed. I later learned that white tip reef sharks are practically harmless as sharks go. Up to then I thought that all sharks wanted to do was attack people. This attitude was all about to change.

Pretoma is a Costa Rican non profit Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) specialising in shark and turtle conservation. It is the largest conservation group in Costa Rica and has now worked alongside the Joint Services Shark Tagging Team (JSSTT) on two of the three Jurassic Shark expeditions. These expeditions expose military personnel like me to the world of sharks; helping to give us a real understanding of sharks and the conservation issues that surround them.

Humans kill more than 70 million sharks a year, mainly just for their fins, which are cut off while still alive and then the immobilised body is thrown back into the water leaving the animal to sink to the to bottom and suffocate to death. The fear is that these misunderstood creatures could be wiped off the face of the earth in less than ten years, leaving marine ecosystems in chaos.



Hammerhead Shark

Cocos Island is home to many different species of sharks of which one is the iconic scalloped hammerhead shark, which still swim in their hundreds around these waters and were the centre of our attention. I am not exaggerating when I say that the first three days of diving were the best days of my life. On day one we were in position to start tagging when a Tiger Shark simply cruised by. I just couldn't believe it; wasn't this feared and brutal shark supposed to come and eat me? On day two, I helped capture and tag the first of the 12 Eastern Pacific Green Turtles that we were to catch over the next eight days.

Day three was the absolute highlight of my life. Dropping onto a site called Alcyone we were surrounded by hammerheads. Armed with a spear gun complete with £250 worth of acoustic tag I settled into an ambush position, the current was pretty strong and after an unsuccessful 30 minutes I still had not even fired my spear gun by the time we began our ascent. Patient waiting is, after all, what shark tagging is all about. On the ascent, however, we met a whale shark. I could not believe my luck as he swam up and right towards me and I was able to stroke the enter length of his body. Totally humbled I watched him swim into the distance, and finally ascended the happiest woman on the planet. I later learnt that most people wait a lifetime to even see a whale shark.

Jurassic Shark 3 was a dream come true; we travelled half way round the world to do something that very few people can even contemplate. If you think for one moment it was the sunny paradise you would be wrong, it rained every day. Overall, we managed to tag all 15 sharks, plus 12 Green Turtles. Above everything we were privileged to be in the water with one of the most beautiful species in the sea and learn first hand about the dangers they face. My only hope is that if I ever have the honour to dive in these waters again, these wonderful creatures are still there.

NEEDHAM MARKET RAFT RACE 2010

Lieutenant Sarah Bennett AGC (SPS)

East Anglia is known for its rural countryside views, beautiful beaches and quiet villages. The sleepy village of Needham Market, close to Wattisham Airfield, is no different. Once a year, however, Needham stirs from its slumber and becomes a battle ground. The Needham Market Raft Race takes place every year and has become a prestigious and fiercely fought competition.

The 4 Army Air Corps AGC Detachment could not ignore this challenge and the team to take it on: Tash Tambo, Wallace Matshobaw, Adrian Jones and myself.

Each year a theme for the raft race is decided upon and this year's theme was The World Cup. The categories which would be judged on the day were fancy dress or speed. We decided we would enter the speed competition.

Under direction of Adrian Jones we set about building the winning vessel for this competition. Adrian brought the tools, the Quartermaster's department provided the materials and the remainder of the detachment brought unlimited enthusiasm. After much head scratching and trying to remember our physics lessons and the laws of water resistance we finally decided on a simple design of four barrels and four pallets. We had roll mats for comfort and flag poles for pride and the raft's name.....HMS Vuvuzela.



The Team aboard HMS Vuvuzela

On the day of the Raft Race the weather was fantastic and spirits were high. The team, however, were a little nervous about what lay ahead. We had not had an opportunity to test our raft, never mind to practise paddling so with everything crossed we made our way to the start of the race. We were in the fourth heat of six which gave us the advantage of learning from others mistakes as we saw what not to do. It did not, however, do much for the nerves of the team as many of the rafts did not survive contact with the water.

After dubiously launching our raft into the water we all climbed aboard. Tash Tambo and myself up front and Wallace Matshobaw and Adrian Jones at the back. We made our way to the start line with Adrian Jones calling out the timings ready to do battle against the team of Red Indians on the raft next to us. With jostling and splashing the starting whistle sounded, the race was on. The route, around four coloured buoys, looked relatively short but proved to be pretty exhausting. Adrian Jones remained in command of our vessel and showed himself to be a very capable commander of HMS Vuvuzela.

Unfortunately we did not qualify for the final but we are already planning next year's entry to the Needham Market Raft Race. The event was a fantastic day for the detachment and their families and we will certainly be entering next year. There are several teams from Wattisham Airfield who entered the race and all military personnel were received very warmly by the local community and the organisers. Well done to the 4th Regiment Army Air Corps detachment team and the supporters.



Survived!!

ARMY LIAISON OFFICER TO UKRAINE

Major Kirsty Baxter AGC (ETS)

I have had the pleasure of being the Army Liaison Officer and Assistant Military Attaché in the British Embassy in Kyiv. This is the Ukrainian name, rather than the Russian 'Kiev'. It was a new post set up after the visit of the Chief of the General Staff in 2008, when the need to improve Army to Army cooperation was identified.

Few people are aware that Ukraine is the largest country wholly within Europe, but with a population 75% that of the UK. It voluntarily gave up its nuclear arsenal on independence and has undertaken significant reform in the last 19 years, including reducing its Armed Forces from 780,000 to the current 200,000. It is neither a member of NATO nor of the European Union (EU), but is the only partner to contribute forces to all NATO operations and has allocated troops and other assets to support EU Battle Groups over the next two years. Unfortunately, the recession hit the Ukraine hard, with its Armed Forces currently receiving only a fraction of

the funding they need. Despite this, it is implementing its Annual National Programme, with the goal of reform and better interoperability with NATO countries, though it will not seek NATO membership. In February 2010, Viktor Yanukovich, the loser of the 'Orange Revolution' in 2004, became president in elections found to be generally fair and free by international observers. This resulted in new foreign policy initiatives, including rapprochement with Russia, but has not affected Ukraine's participation in international operations.

It has been a busy 10 months for me, notwithstanding the difficulties of living in a country that was covered in ice for 4 of them. Within 2 weeks of arriving, I was meeting the Ukrainian Commander in Chief of the Army with Major General Mungo Melvin and visiting the Crimea with 14 students and staff from the Royal College of Defence Studies. It was then back to the UK with 2 Ukrainian officers to observe an EU Battle Group certification exercise on Salisbury Plain, which succeeded in encouraging the contribution of ground forces to future battlegroups. It was then off to Vyškof in the Czech Republic to visit the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT), which takes at least 4 Ukrainian personnel on its 12 courses per year. The pace continued with the visit of 69 staff and students from the Army Command and Staff Course to Kyiv and the Crimea. I have helped secure large scale British participation in the United States/Ukraine Exercise Rapid Trident 2010 Command Post Exercise and in-country training by the BMATT in October 2010 in Ukraine for peacekeepers deploying to Kosovo in 2011. I was also lucky enough to be a short term election observer in a slightly chilly minus 27 degrees Celsius, over the second weekend of the presidential elections. I am currently working on a programme of short term attachments and exchanges of Ukrainian personnel to British Army units and continue to assist the Defence Attaché with issues such as defence equipment sales and war memorials.



Presidential Election Monitoring 2010

It's been a productive time here in, now sunny, Kyiv and remember, Defence Section Kyiv is always happy to support battlefield studies and adventurous training.



The RN laying wreaths at the British Crimean War Memorial

AGC SQUASH TOUR TO HONG KONG

Major Yvette Kennedy AGC (SPS)

There has been a recent revitalisation of the Hong Kong squash scene with a well-developed junior programme and an active club league competition ensuring a wealth of players as worthy opponents. In September 2010 the AGC squash team travelled to Hong Kong to undertake a challenging schedule of training and matches against them.

Eight serving members of the Corps as well as three honorary players, met at Heathrow Airport for the journey to Hong Kong. Some had served there previously prior to the Chinese handover and were looking to relive old memories, whilst a few others had never ventured that far and were hoping to experience the delights of the Far East for themselves. In addition, the Tour Manager had put together a fairly demanding itinerary of squash training and matches to keep the team youthful and challenged throughout the tour.

The Hong Kong Football Club, nestled within the famous racetrack at Happy Valley, had kindly agreed to provide us with temporary membership for the duration of our stay. This meant that not only did we have access to perhaps the best squash courts in the country for our daily training sessions, but also that we could use the pool, gym and dining facilities when recovering from our exertions on court.

After the initial acclimatisation, in particular adjusting to the humidity, the team played seven fixtures in total, not just within Hong Kong, but also further afield in Macau (the first British military side to do so) and Discovery Bay. Our opponents included junior boys and girls who were aspiring to be national champions for their age group, extremely fit and agile Chinese ladies who were proof that ladies do not sweat, and wealthy expats who also happened to be quite good at squash. Perhaps the biggest mismatch (both in age and height) was between Ian Waller and Chau Piu Lam, an extremely gifted 11 year old from the Cornwall Street Park Squash Club, who quickly dispatched the old timer during their game.

Despite the final results appearing a little one-sided (1 overall win out of 7 matches), every member of the tour gave 100% and benefitted from the regular match play and high standard of training. Congratulations to Phil Ashman, our number one player, who actually managed to win more games than he lost.

Apart from squash, there was plenty of opportunity for the team to take in some sightseeing, and one particular highlight was the visit to Macau. Macau is an ex-Portuguese colony neighbouring Hong Kong. Busy re-inventing itself as the 'Las Vegas of the Far East', it was amazing to see the scale of development of the hotels, bars and casinos, which the team visited to drown their sorrows after another defeat. Another highlight was the junk boat trip organised for the rest day. The crew looked after us extremely well, providing us with regular refreshments throughout the day and enabling us to make fools of ourselves on the banana boat and speedboat. Luckily, Colin Jackson showed more prowess on the squash court than he did in the water during the tour.

It has been a very successful tour; the team were warmly received throughout and astounded by the hospitality shown towards us. This proved that the strong affinity between Hong Kong and Britain still exists, some ten years after the handover.



The Team outside Hong Kong Football Club

Furthermore, there is no doubt that the AGC squash team are better prepared for the start of this year's season and that we will mount a stronger challenge at the Inter-Corps Championships as a result of the tour.

AGC BASKETBALL

WO2 T Hill AGC (SPS)

Since the Corps formed there has been minimal Corps Basketball coverage in the AGC Journal. This is mainly due to the timing of the Inter Corps Championships which are played in November each year, the same time as the AGC Journal is published. However, this year the Corps teams travelled to the United States on their inaugural tour. Hence this article focuses primarily on the tour to Chicago which took place in April 2010.



Practice makes perfect

The Corps runs two men's and one ladies team. Established players represent the men's 'A' Team and the 'B' squad consists of players under 25 years of age aspiring to secure a place in the 'A' squad. Teams are well represented by all branches of the Corps and are highly regarded within the Inter Corps as strong competitors.

Both teams have had successes in the last ten years. In particular the ladies team have dominated the sport with seven consecutive wins and were unlucky last year when the Army Physical Training Corps narrowly beat them in the final. The men's team have also won the competition and over the last couple of years have reached the semi finals. Within both the male and female teams we have players who have represented both the Army and Combined Services.

As mentioned previously the Corps had never toured and this was partially due to team commitments both work related and personal. The Chairman, Lieutenant Colonel Ian Pendlebery decided the time was right to make this happen and asked for a volunteer to organise the tour. Captain Jake Denny-Morley volunteered to ensure the tour took place. I offered to assist him with the other 95% of the organisation.

After three successive years of reaching the Inter Corps semi finals, the AGC basketball team decided to visit the United States for a basketball education. Our travels took us to downtown Chicago where we would play local teams and receive professional training.

Our main effort for the tour was to improve as a team in order to progress in the Inter Corps championships. We looked to the home of basketball to refine our personal skills and develop our tactical capabilities.

On the evening of 6 April 2010 filled with excitement and anticipation myself and 24 other team players, both male and female made their way to Worthy Down for the start of our epic journey. On the same evening we played a training game against the Salisbury Suns; despite losing it was a much needed refresher and allowed court time for a number of players. The following morning the Regimental Colonel bid farewell to the team and we left

behind a cold and wet England only to arrive in a cold and windy Chicago.

Our first day and a half was basketball free which gave the team time to settle in and sightsee. The team was more than thrilled to watch the Chicago Bulls take on the Cleveland Cavaliers, but before watching the game we took time to take pictures with the statue of Chicago Bulls legend, Michael Jordan. The game, which was extremely close, was a fantastic experience for all the team as the Bulls won 102-101.

The next morning saw the visit of our opening opponent's coach to the hotel. He came to discuss timings, rule changes and his team's ability. He was a talkative chap, who consistently played down his sides physical and playing capabilities.

As our first game day arrived, we set off from the hotel in a stereo typical American style yellow school bus. Our destination was the local university, Illinois Institute of Technology. A well equipped arena with ample spectators. It was clear from the warm up we were in for a very tough day. The other team were bigger, taller and possibly more athletic than us.

The game started at a furious pace and it was obvious early on that there was a large cultural difference between the way we play and the way they did. We adapted to the physical nature of the game quickly, but we couldn't stop their rapid rate of scoring. We were outclassed in every department but that didn't stop us, we continued to push. In hindsight the score didn't matter, the game clearly showed us where we were as a team and where we wanted to be.

Unfortunately our second game was cancelled due to the opposition failing to raise a team. This gave us an opportunity to work on areas of our game which were identified in the previous match. Our venue was a Military High School with a well maintained gymnasium. It was a gruelling four hour session working hard on offensive plays and breaking defensive traps. For any basketball player, it is a privilege to play in such grand facilities.



In front of the Michael Jordan Statue at the United Centre Stadium

Despite our losses to college teams, everyone was looking forward to the training day at the Chicago Bulls Basketball Academy. The venue provided a spectacular setting and the coaching staff taught us so much giving us a really memorable experience.

On Tuesday 13 April 2010 our trip was nearing the end. No more worrying about playing against proficient basketball players, the AGC team packed, ready to fly home. An entire morning dedicated to last minute shopping, purchasing souvenirs and gifts for family and friends. Later that afternoon, the AGC team checked in at the airport ready to board the British Airways flight to Heathrow airport.



The AGC Team – A Great Tour

As the aircraft touched down at Heathrow, the expressions on faces was sufficient to decipher the relief not only for a safe landing but also the satisfaction in what seemed to be a sign of gratitude for the experience the team has been through. As the divergence naturally occurred when everyone picked up their bags off the rolling belt at the baggage claimer, to the admin team and organisers, a big thank you for the privilege of being part of this experience.

This tour was an eye opener to every member of the team on how the game should be played. My advice to aspiring players is to invest more in practise time.

Thanks to all the players for their contributions to this article.

OVERSEAS PAYMENTS

Please note that in future, all payments for subscriptions, postage and memorabilia will only be accepted in Sterling. Please ask your bank for a Money Order or Sterling Cheque.

We regret to have to impose this restriction, but due to the vagaries of exchange rates, the majority of overseas payments fall significantly short of the amount due.

Branch News

Editor's Note: As most of you are aware Branches are sadly having to close due to falling numbers. I thought we should note these in the Lioness. So far I have received notification that Bolton, London, Hastings, Crewe and Wilmslow Branches have closed since the publication of Lioness 1/11. Wales and West Branch is now officially open.

ABERDEEN BRANCH

Greetings to you all.

Aberdeen Branch is still going strongish. Our May outing took us to a pub called The Black Dog (a good title for a mystery novel) where ample portions of fine food helped to increase our waistlines. We have been trying to have a talk on "What you remember about your Granny" for a good couple of months now but have failed for a variety of reasons. Hopefully we will succeed this next meeting. It should be a rather interesting as the grannies in question would have been born in the 1890s – 1900s.

Two of our members will again be marching in the Armed Forces Day down Union Street. I do hope the weather is kind. Sandra Lemmon and Joan Bartlett will be attending the Scottish AGM in Porth in October. I will again be buying raffle tickets for those who cannot come. It can get a bit hectic at times! I have been busy knitting a scarf for the competition. The scarf is an interesting spiral thing but I don't go much on the colour. It is known up here as Sharnce Green. Well I was given the wool!! Now that Summer (?) is on the way and our minds are on where to go for the Christmas Lunch. There go the waistlines again!

We wish you all well from the Granite City.

BAND BRANCH

I have had a busy time fund raising for our branch, and was fortunate enough to be allowed to have a free table at a local shopping Mall. After putting up with all sorts spread around the house off we went to a successful Tombola and table sale, helped by "Chad "my sister and a friend. I am glad to say the result was worth it and along with two very helpful donations from our ladies we are now in the black.

I will be doing another table on November 26th. And have already begun to collect for it. I am making sure we shall enjoy a healthy bank balance. Please remember to pay our yearly subs by August 3rd this year.
I now have to Thank Joan Ellis for arranging the 15 year of the 49's Meetings in Guildford on the 7th June. We were all delighted to have two Directors of Music with us, Mrs Jean Collyre (Major Mac Dowel) and Lyn Hopkins. We were 14 in total and we all enjoyed it immensely, including meeting one who had not been seen in 50 years. The nostalgic travel around Guildford was surprising as nothing triggered "I remember when" accept a brief glance at what was once the Severn Stars site. The Cathedral was different, it was the 50 years anniversary on Sunday the 5 th June, and that brought back memories of when we purchased bricks for the building. It was also lovely to see our Stained Glass Window. We followed on by a trip around Queen Elizabeth Park (camp) and found the streets named Macdowel, Stevens, Hopkins and Goddard. It is a great shame the two stone plinths do not identify the reasons. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Grand Reunion next March, and wish you all a very Good Summer.



Mall Table Sale





Guildford 49's Meeting

BEXHILL BRANCH

That was a surprisingly long and bad winter, wasn't it? We don't meet in January any more, so were looking forward to February's get-together, but at the very last moment with the snow falling heavily on the still icy pavements, 3 of us took a few members' telephone numbers each and very soon the phone lines began to heat up as we explained that 'tomorrow's meeting was off'. I will not say that we melted the snow but you will understand that ladies of a certain age don't do short messages, so with the knowledge of the births of 17 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren (only a slight exaggeration) plus 3 hip operations for us to forget about, we were able to hand up our receivers and collapse into our beds quite exhausted and ready for an early night.

We finally met in March when we were told that our speaker was in hospital and that her talk had been re-arranged for August. We listened to HQ news delivered by our Secretary, half-heartedly took part in a quiz and whole-heartedly settled down to cap each other's horror stories about snow, talking being our very favourite occupation.

In April we had hot cross buns and a Bring and Buy sale. In May we had a good speaker from the local branch of the Citizens Advice Bureau. A bottle of red wine was ready for him, but our Chairman (conveniently?) forgot to give it to him, thinking her fulsome thanks and general applause were enough. A discreet elbow in the ribs from the Secretary brought her to her senses and robbed her drinks cupboard of a happy addition until the next opportunity arises.

Our June speaker from Canine Partners has cancelled his visit to us at short notice. This may possibly be re-arranged for some time next year. In the meantime our Chairman is hastily trying to cobble together a talk about "My time in the ATS", what else?

The enclosed photograph was taken by a photographer from the local newspaper when he and a lady reporter dropped in unannounced to interview us. She wrote a very nice half-page piece about how we all look after each other which, indeed, we try to do. The teddy bears in the picture are waiting to be judged for a competition that was at our November meeting of last year.

It was such a pity that Hastings Branch had for various reasons to close down. They had been such a successful and long-lived branch. Some of us went to their 30th anniversary celebrations which was beautifully organised and we had a lovely afternoon. There were other occasions, too, when we attended each other's celebrations. HQ has told us that Hastings is now officially with Bexhill and we shall welcome those who are able to journey over to us.



Bexhill Branch

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH

We've had a great time here in Birmingham Branch, starting in March with a talk by the recruiting team from the Armed Forces Careers Office. Major Bob Bath and his colleague LCpl Juliet Holmes-Bailey explained the process of joining up in 2011 and the possibilities for girls in the Army today. Our own Betty Webb, who had been the recruiting officer in Birmingham in the late 1960s and Sharon Joyce from Hereford Branch particularly enjoyed themselves re-living their days in the recruiting office. Tamworth Branch were brave enough to invite us to play skittles again and we turned out in force. Although we didn't win the individual trophy this time, The Brummies were team winners. Go Brummies!

It was lovely to spend time with honoured guests at our Birthday Lunch in May, when we were pleased to welcome Major Gabi Shanahan, Maggie Purkis, Irene Hall and members from Hereford, Tamworth, Wolverhampton and Leicester and Nottingham Branches. The Brittania Hotel looked after us in grand style, resulting in very little food left on plates. Our Branch joker, Joan Baldwin kept everyone amused with her antics and we all went home with a big smile on our face.



By the time you read this we will have been on a trip to Bletchley Park, taken part in Armed Forces Day and held a quiz. We are busy girls in Birmingham. For those of you who are au fait with Facebook, Birmingham Branch has their own page. Search for us as: Birmingham Branch WRAC Association and be our 'Friend'. We post photos and keep people up to date with the general goings-on. Please feel free to browse our page.

Maureen Deeley and her minder, Babs Blay took a lovely big amount of cash raised at a line dancing event to the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine at Selly Oak. They were very grateful and assured Maureen that it would be spent directly on the injured troops to make their stay in hospital more pleasant. Well done Mo.



All having a great time

On a sadder note, we have sent three members to the big parade square in the sky. Many of us turned out to say goodbye to Violet Horsley. It was standing room only for us as Vi had a very large family of 10 children. She was a founder member of Birmingham Branch and attended meetings until she became really ill. Frances West of Nuneaton and Joyce Smith BEM have also passed away. Joyce had been attending meetings until shortly before her death and several of our members attended her funeral. Unfortunately, we hadn't seen Frances for a long time.

To celebrate her birthday one of our ladies decided to get a new tattoo. She chose to have the WRAC Association badge emblazoned on her right thigh. It is rather dramatic. Anyone visiting us can get a peek as she isn't shy about showing off her adornment. Alternatively, you can ask Babs Blay to show you a photograph. We have been pleased to welcome new members to the Branch. Lisa Beech, Maureen Lay and Marilyn Preece have all become regular attendees and have jumped straight into being active members. One or two of our ladies have been ill recently and we wish them a speedy recovery. Come back soon, we miss you.

If any of you find yourselves in Birmingham City Centre on the first Wednesday of any month except January, please feel free to join us for lunch at the Brittania Hotel on New Street at 12.30pm.

And remember – *You can count on Birmingham Branch, we have an abacus.*

BLACKPOOL BRANCH

Congratulations go out to Mrs Mary Doreen Stubbs who reached her 90th birthday in December 2010.

Due to the very bad weather only 7 members were able to attend our Christmas Lunch held on Friday 17 December. Although low on numbers an excellent time was had by all. May we take this opportunity of wishing all Branches a very healthy and happy New Year 2011. Also due to the age of our members and the very bad winter, we suspended our meetings until April – again 7 members were in attendance and we all had plenty of news to impart and catch up on.

Please convey our best wishes to Eileen (Leigh) Telford and wish her a very speedy recovery after her recent ill health – it was very nice to see her at April's meeting.

BOURNEMOUTH BRANCH

The year 2010 ended with our Branch Christmas Lunch attended by 30 members and a few guests. It was very special for 2 members – Connie having celebrated her 94th birthday the previous day and Merville celebrating her 89th on the day. The photograph shows the Girls in Pink – Merville on the left and Connie on the right.



Birthday Girls

Meetings so far in 2011 have included a Bring & Buy Sale, an address by Dorset Fire Service on fire prevention, and a most interesting talk on 'The Story behind the Story' by author Edna Dawes, who is a Branch member. We are now keenly anticipating the S&SW Area Reunion to be held in Plymouth, but due to the distance to travel only 9 of our members feel up to the journey.

BRISTOL BRANCH

I cannot believe how fast time has gone these past months since our last report.

I had good news for the New Year, I was awarded the MBE in the New Years Honours List for my work with the War Widows and Veterans It was a lovely surprise and I received many cards of congratulations including one from our Association. I would like to thank everyone who sent to me. Our Branch meeting in January, needless to say, was giving out the information about my honour. It was very enlightening especially as we had been having some horrible weather, so this brought a bit of cheer to everyone.

February we had our Annual Lunch attended by Maj Maskens McIntyre, also Anne from the Not Forgotten Association accepted an invitation to join us. It was good that she was able to come, they do so much for the veterans; it was nice to give something back.



February Lunch – Maj Maskens-McIntyre with Chair of the Branch and Pat Carter

At our March meeting Secretary told members that she had attended the meeting for Armed Forces Day in June, and would keep them informed of planned event. Some of Bristol members went to AGM in London, they thoroughly enjoyed it and said it was nice to meet and talk with other members from the Branches.



Bristol Members with Anne from Not Forgotten Association

We have been busy planning for our Days out, we have booked a lunch in June, and another for August.

In May I attended Investiture at Windsor Castle where I received my MBE from Her Majesty the Queen, I was overwhelmed with the whole event, everything was perfect, my two daughters came with me and were very proud. I shall be wearing it with pride in Veterans Parade at Weymouth in June.



At my Investiture at Windsor Castle with family

Sadly one of our members Mrs Pauline Barlow ATS who had not been in good health passed away in May. I was unable to attend funeral, but at her daughters request sent a copy of our Association Prayer which was read out at service.

Here we are in June; we are looking forward to Armed Forces Day events, just hope that weather is good for us and that we have a good summer. Many of our older members are not now able to attend meetings, we do

think of them, and remember them, and hope that they will be able to join us for one of our events.

On behalf of all members of Bristol Branch I wish you all a happy sunny summer. Bye for now.

CAMBRIDGE BRANCH

Hello Ladies

This is a report from the Cambridge Branch. As you can see it is almost identical to my previous reports – we stick to a very rigid routine. Here are some of the activities since my last report.

The Branch was invited to a luncheon by the Chelmsford Branch to celebrate their 20th Anniversary which was very enjoyable (photographs were in the last issue of the Lioness).

Jean Farrington again kindly held a Lunch/BBQ in lieu of our August meeting. Avril, Jean and Wendy attended the WRAC weekend in October – a great time was had by all. A Christmas dinner was held at the University Centre in December and lastly members attended the AGM at the Victory Club where our Treasurer, Jean Farrington, was presented with her Certificate of Appreciation.

The Branch AGM was held on Monday 4 April. The Branch now stands at 41 Life and 13 Annual Members, of which up to 9 members may attend our meetings. Our next AGM will be on Monday 2 April 2012.

As I have no photographs of our recent activities I had to delve through my archives and enclose the following.



On our way to the Grand Reunion in Glasgow in 1991



Christmas Dinner 1981

CANTERBURY BRANCH

Canterbury Branch continues to meet on the first Wednesday at the Dominican Priory in Canterbury city centre. Our numbers average 15 per meeting, mostly ex-ATS and in their late eighties or early nineties. We are usually joined by 2 ex-WAAFs and 2 ex-WRENS and not forgetting our friends from Medway Branch who are always most welcome to join us when they are able.

February came and finally the cold weather had loosened its grip on Kent and at our first meeting of 2011 we discussed our programme. Our March meeting was opened by Vice-Chairman Susan Wing and members welcomed the news that the Grand Reunion in 2012 will be held in Bristol. In April we had our fish and chip lunch and three members who had attended the AGM at the Victory Services Club talked about meeting old and new friends and how the new format enabled us to do this.

Our May meeting was a social meeting and the hot topic was the recent Royal Wedding. We were pleased to see our lads and lasses on parade, many of us remembered taking part in various ceremonial occasions and all the preparation and practices we had to endure, bulling our shoes to a mirror shine, making sure our uniforms were spotless before the big day arrived and hoping it wouldn't rain and spoil all our hard work. Happy Days!

This month, June, we have a speaker, Linda Berry, a physiotherapist will be talking about her work as a volunteer with the Medical Mission to the Masai tribes of Kenya. Members have been urged to bring a guest, if possible.

Finally if any ex-WRAC in East Kent would like to come to one of our meetings do please either contact Kate McGregor (Chairman) or myself, Sue Foulks (Secretary) or drop in at the Dominican Priory, St Peter's Lane, Canterbury, on the first Wednesday in the month at 1.00 pm. where you can be sure of a very warm welcome.

CHESTER BRANCH

This year has been a very busy year for the Chester Branch with our outings and meetings but the highlight



From L to R: Megan Jones, Betty Jones, Muriel Green, Joan McLellan (Chairman), Doris Wallington, Kath Garrad, Vera Hamblet

has been the special birthdays for 6 of our members who reached 90 this year, they are Betty Jones, Muriel Green, Kath Gerrad, Vera Hamblet, Doris Wallington, and Megan Jones. To commemorate the occasion we held a joint 90th Birthday Party on the 11th July with guests attending from all over the North West. Each of the ladies was presented with a bouquet and received many cards. Everyone agreed it was a lovely afternoon.



All at the Celebrations

The Branch has had a very busy year with outings to the Glass World and Tatton Park and we are eagerly looking forward to our outings to the Anderton Boat Lift, our annual trip on the Chester Canal, the Arboretum and Eden Camp. This year we have been invited to a BBQ by the Wirral Branch in July, we really do get around. We are all eagerly awaiting the September issue of the *Lioness* to book our places at the Grand re-union next year to meet up with some old friends, so hope to see you all there.

If anyone would like to join us at our meeting at Chester Military Museum on the 2nd Monday of the month please contact our Secretary Pat Sanders on 07733 270567.



Chester and Wirral Branch

CLEVELAND BRANCH

I am the Standard Bearer for Cleveland Branch. On 20 May I attended the RAA weekend at Blackpool. I paraded our Standard and we were inspected by the Master Gunner. General Sir Richard Granville and Major General J Milne both welcomed me to the weekend and praised the WRAC saying they were always very smart and did a very good job. The Master Gunner then said my uniform was very smart and he liked the colour. We then marched into the ballroom and laid our Standards up. Later that day we collected our Standards and went into rehearsal for the sunset ceremony.



The Standard on Parade and Meeting the Master Gunner

At the Sunset Ceremony we stood on parade as the Band played. Then as the Union Jack was lowered we dipped our Standards – it was very moving. After the Sunset Ceremony we went to the RAA reception and then into our Gala dinner. As I was sitting down a Colonel came over to me and said a few people had passed comment about the little lady in green who was very smart. On Sunday morning I entered the Standard Bearers competition – I don't know where I was placed but it can't have been all that bad as the RSM invited me down to the Hyde Park Remembrance Day Parade with our Standard – I gladly accepted.

I had a great weekend and met some of our ladies and ATS Ack Ack and enjoyed talking to them – can't wait until next year.

FIFE & TAYSIDE BRANCH

The Branch is now meeting at 24 George Street, Perth. The good weather is helping to boost up the numbers at the meetings although the members are becoming fewer.

Our AGM was successful with 15 members attending. Financially we are doing well. Some of us held a meeting in Perth to discuss the organisation of the Scottish AGM which is to be held in October. Details will be sent to all members later in the year. Our numbers are 16 annual and 41 life members.

HASTINGS BRANCH

In April Hastings Branch was forced to close down but as our President emphasised we should dwell on 31 years of success, comradeship and pleasurable occasions.

Our photograph shows our President (Monica Ellis), our Founder (Dorothy Discon) and our Vice Chairman (Joan Lovell) at our closing lunch which was held at the Brickwall Hotel in Sedlescombe.



Remembering Good Times

Remaining members are transferring to Bexhill Branch and we wish members of that Branch and all Association Branches every success in the future.

HARROGATE BRANCH

Sadly in December two of our members died – Mary Croft who lived in Harrogate and was unable to attend further meetings owing to ill health, but she was kept up to date with our (goings on) and visited by members of our unit. Plus Shirley Wolstenholme who had moved to Doncaster to be nearer to her family, but was still a member of the Harrogate Branch.

Christmas 2010 sixteen members were around the table for our usual lunch at the George Hotel – doesn't time fly when eating heartily and enjoying the company present.

In January everyone defied the weather, wrapped up warm and enjoyed a casual and amusing afternoon – extra hot drinks to keep us ticking over.

We have learned about crickets being caught and kept in cages as pets in China. We also held noses as we were informed regarding toilet facilities, and the pungent smells. However our young friends returned safe and well from their trek on the Great Wall of China without mishap. The group from Harrogate and Leeds collected a rough total of £8000 towards the Yorkshire Cancer Appeal.

March – how would we manage without fish and chips?? Hope the seas don't run dry and the potatoes are not attacked by blight. A short bus ride, an appetising aroma and a lip smacking feed filled us up for the rest of the day.

We wander down our Towns High Street
Delicious smells our noses meet
A stomach rumble, did you hear
Chip shop must surely be quite near
Hurry hurry pick up your speed
Fish and chips a grand grand feed
Open door, warmth, heat within
Juices running down our chin
Queue is long we have to wait
Patience, patience – hesitate







The Nation's Favourite Pastime



Says it All!!

Unfortunately in April our Speaker for the day sent apologies owing to ill heath. Our time was easily spent on a Shout Out Loud quiz – plus the usual etc. We filled the afternoon with lots of debates and readings. Hope we didn't disturb the meeting in the other room. May has arrived and we are entertained by 3 of the Pupils of our Special Needs School whom we support where we are able.

Quick message for our Chairman – who will be in London for the Armistice Parade – chin up, chest out, stomach in, left right, left right, left right. Don't forget you are on Parade, not chasing across the fields with William – do us proud.

For those not in the know – William is Barbara's greyhound.

HEREFORD BRANCH NEWS

We started the New Year with a bang with our Festive Meal at the Axe and Cleaver which was to its usual very high standard. We didn't have a meeting in February due to the wintry weather.

But March's meeting was a grand affair at The Mayor's Parlour in Hereford.

The Lady Mayor Anna Toon (nee Dupak) is an ex WRAC driver who served from 1973 to 1976. We had a great time, 20 plus members attended and Sue Westlake and Maggie Purkis were our guests. Sue mentioned us in despatches at the AGM in London. Also in March the Branch were invited to Birmingham Branch for one of their afternoon meetings and again later in May to their 10th Birthday Party of which 4 members went and we had a great time. Thank you very much Birmingham.



Hereford Branch at the Mayor's Parlour



From L to R: Sue Wilson, Joyce Nicholls, Mary Nicholls and Sharon Joyce

It is with much sadness I have to mention the passing of Phyllis Bates who served with 460 A/A Regt from 1941 to 1945. She will be sadly missed by many branch members. The Standard was present at her funeral.

In April seven branch members attended the AGM in London, one of our members Rosemary Jones made friends with Madge Cole a Chelsea Pensioner who very kindly sent her some photographs of the things that she gets up to as a Chelsea Pensioner. The members were very interested in her letter and photographs – thank you Madge.

June is going to be a busy month for the Branch. Firstly one of our members Mrs Vera Denning has been invited to a Tea Party to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the Formation of The British Legion. Vera is 90 and one of the county's senior members, she has been invited on behalf of the Worcestershire County Committee to attend the party at Kidderminster Town Hall. More details in the next issue. Secondly on the 25th June we are holding are Veteran's Lunch at the Axe and Cleaver where 25 plus members will attend and no doubt will enjoy themselves. Thirdly on the 26th June, the Standard has been invited to the 10th Anniversary of the Museum to Violette Szabo at Wormelow. She was the lady heroine of the film "Carve Her Name with Pride". (who was played by Virginia McKenna who usually attends).

August 20th sees the Branch hold its annual Summer Draw and Picnic at Queenswood near Leominster. Anyone in the area that day is more than welcome to join us. I have asked all attending to perform a "Sun dance" the night before as last year it was very cold and a little wet, we also had a few soggy paws that day (in fact we thought we had missed 2 months and gone straight into November). Despite this everyone enjoyed themselves. It gives members who can't make our monthly evening meetings a chance to catch up with friends and meet new members.

We are to have our usual "Coffee Morning" at Ross on Wye – the Branch has decided that this will be in memory of Phyllis Bates as she lived at the centre where we hold the Coffee Morning.

Other events to look forward to are Solihull (WRAC Dinner Club) in October, that is always a great weekend. In November Remembrance Sunday and before we know where we are, we will be thinking and getting ready for Christmas and the New Year. Doesn't time fly when you are enjoying yourselves?

LEICESTER AND NOTTS BRANCH

In December 2010 our Christmas Lunch at Devonshire Place was attended by 34 members plus friends and guests which included the Chairman of the County Council, Mr Osbourne and his wife. During coffee we

watched a CD showing photographs from our standard dedication service in October. As usual the meal was excellent as was the service from the staff. December also saw 8 ladies attend a Christmas Lunch in Derbyshire hosted by the Not Forgotten Association; the meal, the entertainment and the company was of a very high standard and enjoyed by all concerned.

In January we had our first meeting of the year and this was a chance for a nibble and a natter giving us time to sort out dates for outings, invites to attend parades and discuss any suggestions for the rest of the year. February saw Dave Pryor from The Royal British Legion give us a talk about the Pipe Band for which he takes bookings in the UK and abroad. He also spoke about a minibus which can be hired for tours. In March our Bring and Buy raised £55.00 and 12 members travelled to Tamworth Branch for a return skittles match. The individual winner was our own Pam Hughes – well done Pam a great effort and thank you to Tamworth for a good day as usual.

At the end of March 40 members, family and friends paid a visit to Beaumanor Hall and Welbeck College. This visit was arranged for us by the Chairman of the County Council as the result of a conversation between him and two of our ladies who had expressed a wish to return to where they had served during the war. Many will remember Beaumanor Hall became a secret listening station where encrypted enemy signals were intercepted and sent to the famous station X at Bletchley Park for decoding. Beaumanor Hall was to be the home of the War Office Y Group for the duration of the war.



The Branch enjoying Beaumanor Hall

After the tour we were provided with an amazing buffet lunch courtesy of the Chairman of the County Council. After lunch we moved next door to Welbeck College for another tour which showed us what is on offer for youngsters considering a career in the Armed Forces. This amazing facility educates students from all backgrounds to achieve their ambition to become an officer in the Armed Forces or the civil service. It was hard to believe that during the war years recruits had to endure unheated Nissan huts and at times cold water for washing when walking around such a modern facility. We all appreciated the time and effort involved by everyone who contributed to making this an unforgettable day.



Joan Thornton and Cynthia Humble chatting to their tour guides at Welbeck College

At the Beetle Drive in April we spent more time explaining rules, searching for dice which seemed to spend more time in the air or on the floor. Peoples' drawings of heads, bodies etc caused a laugh which is what it is all about. The Branch agreed to send a donation to the local SSAFA Branch which was the charity supported by the Chairman of the County Council. This was our way of saying thank you for organising the recent day out. Also in April, 3 members attended the ANZAC Day service in Victoria Park and all managed to make the 0700 start!

The meeting in May was supposed to have been a quiz but attendance was down due to holidays and sickness so we decided to volunteer one or two members to talk abut their military service and despite some initial reluctance proved to be quite successful. One of our members realised that the person she had been sitting next to for the past few months was her former BSM!! Also this month 3 ladies attended Birmingham Branch lunch and another 4 attended the Lord Mayor's annual civic service. Forthcoming events include a trip to Bletchley Park, various parades and our annual visit to the Sailing Club.

Finally a thank you to everyone at HQ for all their hard work on our behalf.

LINCOLN AND DISTRICT BRANCH

The Lincoln branch ladies started their year by enjoying their 4th Anniversary Lunch at a local hotel. The meal was superb so much so that we have already booked the same venue for 2012.







All at the 4th Anniversary Lunch

February was time for the AGM and the election of a new committee. This year we changed our voting system to a more democratic one that enabled every paid up member had a chance to vote either on the day or by proxy. This took a lot of organising but proved successful with a 99% participation

The March Quarterly evening meeting was well attended: these evening meetings are primarily for our younger members who cannot attend daytime gatherings but all members are welcome to join in. The Monthly Branch meeting had members puzzling their way through a photographic quiz of famous faces and places and, to round the month off, ten of our ladies spent a nostalgic afternoon at the Theatre Royal in Lincoln to watch a performance of 'We'll Meet Again' in which they all participated with some energetic flag waving.

With Easter just around the corner members were asked to bring along decorated eggs to our April meeting; what a fantastic selection were produced. We do have some very talented members. We had the pleasure of welcoming two honorary members, Ann Watkiss and Linda Pledge and two guests from Grimsby, Carol Tyler and Monica Barnes.

Last year we asked members and friends to knit Beannie hats for troops in Afghanistan. Word got out and frantic knitting ensued giving Jean Evans our Branch Secretary 3000 woolly hats to get transported; these finally went off in April. We do not do things by half at the Lincoln & District Branch! At our May meeting we were entertained with an enlightening and amusing talk on Herbs by Mavis Wilkinson

May proved to be a sad month for us as our President, June Booth, who was a founder member of our Branch, sadly passed away after a long period of poor health. She was a truly remarkable lady who, despite her continuing poor health, attended Branch events as often as possible and was generous in her support of both the Association and Branch needs. She will be greatly missed by all of us. Fourteen members attended the funeral and formed a guard of honour for her on Friday 27th May.

Half way through the year, how time flies. We are looking forward to our July outing to Ladies Day at Market Rasen Races but more of that in the next edition of the Lioness.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH

We continue to meet at the Adelphi Hotel on the third Wednesday of the month although of late our numbers have been a little depleted due to various reasons, mainly though because our gallant ATS members are now beginning to feel the restrictions of age. We are grateful that some still manage to make it each month and we enjoy their company. We have had a couple of new members from the WRAC and would really welcome many more.

In the past year apart from the monthly get together, we have visited the Anglican Cathedral for the Armed Forces Day (I managed to take part in the march past, which I thoroughly enjoyed at the time but paid the price later. I think that might have been my last go at marching).

In August some of us went to the home of our Area Chairman Carole Montessori Gorman which is situated at the top of a Welsh Mountain, for a garden party. Definitely worth the trip – we had a glorious afternoon including the weather and met up with members from all over the North West.

Janet Vickers and myself took part in the Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph, St Georges Hall in November. It was a bit wet but memorable just the same.

In December we had our Christmas lunch at the Adelphi and a week later 6 of us went to Chester to join in with their Christmas celebrations. We always enjoy our trips to Chester and this was no exception. Last month 5 of us went to the Anglican Cathedral again, this time for the 70th Anniversary of the May Blitz, quite an emotional time as they played sounds of the sirens and of the bombs dropping and exploding, as Liverpool was the most bombed city outside of London – it certainly gave room for thought and thankfulness that we do not have to endure that sort of thing now.

In July we are again off to Chester to celebrate the 90th Birthdays of 4 of their members and in August we have an invitation to join with the 'Not Forgotten Association' for a trip on the River Mersey. We are looking forward to both these occasions.

Sadly we have lost a couple of our members this past year – Margaret Bridge and Margaret McHenry. They are still greatly missed but we soldier on and look forward to the future.

Keep up the good work Denise – both you and Gabi are doing a grand job.

LONDON BRANCH

I am writing on behalf of the London Branch that has now closed. Over the years it has been vibrant – lots of days out, luncheons, memorial services definitely, picnics in Regents Park where our super band played, plenty of speakers, hilarious bring and buys. We were often called upon to do the raffles for AGMs, Victory Club. We met once a month at various venues – Waterloo, Nine Elms etc, finally Davies Street.

On behalf of the Branch I must thank various committees over the years – cannot name them in case I forget someone, but I will thank Charlotte Lawrence, Gladys Stewart and especially Eva Ellison who has been the linchpin for so many years and kept us together as a Branch – thank you Eva for so many years of hard work. I know the members appreciated all you did. Believe we are looking to Greater London Branch to take us in, so be Happy and Enjoy.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH

It seems a long time since Christmas when we had our get together at the Companions Club on 17th December 2010



Lots of Festive Cheer



Joyce and Ann Dancing

Our ladies have had some lovely lunches to attend. First of all we went to the Gosforth Park Hotel in Newcastle where we were wined and dined by the Not Forgotten Association. The food as always was superb and the entertainment was even better. A lovely young talented lady played various instruments and decided to play Tchaikovsky. Not to be outdone two of our ladies got up to dance. I must say The Sugar Plum Fairy will never look the same again. We were crying with laughter.



Molly Summerell and Kath Smith at Gosforth Park Hotel

A couple of days later we were at the Assembly Rooms in Newcastle for a Christmas Luncheon compliments of The Ex-Prisoners of War Association. There again we had an extremely lovely lunch and the company was great.



The Assembled Group







All at Lunch

On 31st March we went out to lunch at a restaurant in Eldon Square and had a lovely meal and pudding and once again with lovely company. We all had a lot of laughs. Hope we do it again.

We have 3 new members this year – Hazel Dawson, Sue Hayward and Olive Kinghorn (whom we pilfered from Cleveland Branch). Thanks Cleveland Branch – we have decided to keep her.

On a darker note we have lost two of our lovely ladies – Martha Halliday and Doris Green. Lovely ladies, we shall miss them.

In August 2010 we were invited to spend a short holiday in Edinburgh by the Not Forgotten Association. This proved very interesting especially the Tattoo. This was our first opportunity to attend.



The Military Tattoo in Full Swing



Enjoying the Evening

We were a mixed company from Scotland, Ireland, Southern England and Newcastle. The dialect from each resulted in a bit of a laugh to start with. Many thanks to Peter McMurray for driving us through the crowded streets and to Betty McMurray for putting us right regarding the work of the Not Forgotten Association.

Thanks to all who made our trip a success.

That is all for now, best wishes to you all.

NORFOLK BRANCH

The emphasis is still on being social rather than bogged down with business. We started the year with a belated Christmas lunch which was attended by Patricia Stevenson – our chance to say thank you for her good work as our Regional Representative. The lunch was well attended and raised extra funds for the Branch and much laughter was heard throughout the pub – I think we're getting a reputation!!

Our 2 members who are also Royal British Legion staff came to the rescue when we couldn't get a speaker and gave a presentation on the sterling work the Legion does for our serving and ex-Servicemen, women and families. The Secretary and Treasurer are about to embark on a 132 mile cycle ride in one day visiting the 10 Legion Branches celebrating 90 years of continuous service as part of the 90th anniversary. Contrary to popular belief, Norfolk is NOT flat (as the Treasurer is finding out to her cost!!). Donations of Savlon much appreciated.....

We are about to take Banham Zoo by storm. I think we'll have to have a head count before we enter and again when we leave in case the keepers think we're part of the menagerie.... Our philosophy in the Norfolk Branch is to keep smiling, to be with good friends and most of all to have fun. It is the same faces that we see every month so if there are any members in Norfolk who are now feeling envious and left our, GET IN TOUCH! We are open to new ideas and the more active members we have, the more fun we can have!

PLYMOUTH BRANCH

Our first Christmas party in December was with the WRENS at Whitsand Bay Hotel on 1st December where we were able to have a quick look at the lovely views over the bay before we hastened into the warmth of the hotel for a chat and then a very good lunch and tea/coffee in the lounge.

Lt Col Sue Westlake and Major Maskens-McIntyre joined us at St Aubyn's Masonic Hall again on 10th December for our Christmas lunch, no lovely views but a warm welcome as usual. 4 WRENS came too and we had a super time.





Christmas once again!

The early part of the year was quiet except that we had 4 deaths reported to us. We were able to attend 3 of the funerals, 2 in Plymouth and 1 in Noss Mayo, the 4th we didn't hear about in time to attend.

Our Chairman, Jane Evans, Treasurer, Mary Davis, Thelma Rendle and I went to the AGM in the Victory Services Club in April and Gill Davidson, now in Swindon but still attached to our Branch, joined us there. I attended the Secretaries Meeting while the others went off 'down town' to Harrods and such like places in the morning, returning at noon for the AGM and we all enjoyed our splendid lunch together for the second year, following the success last year. Thank you to the Committee who arranged it. Major Jane Freebairn was greatly missed but Major Gabi Shanahan did a great job on her solo debut.



On the Buses!



Gill Davidson



Jane, Ruth, Thelma and Mary at the AGM

We were back in the Royal British Legion Club for our Truro reunion on 17th May. Seven of us went by train from Plymouth and joined Major Mack, Pat and Betty Chant, Margaret and David Fortes and Nicky Rochelle from Newquay. Unfortunately the remaining ATS ladies were not able to come for various reasons and the WRAC ladies are still at work and couldn't be with us this year.

Through the past months we have been to Civic functions and various services, unfortunately we have quite a few who are now too poorly to attend the meetings. Our typical months meeting has reduced from 30+ 20 years ago, to 7, if we are lucky and 8 apologies. The members attending are normally 4 ex-ATS, 1 ex-munitions associate member and 2, sometimes, 3 ex-WRAC. In the 90's we had 30 ex-ATS and 2 or 3 ex-WRAC, the attending ratio now is still in favour of ATS but we actually do have a couple more WRAC than ATS in the member's list but so many of our ladies live too far away from Plymouth to be able to come to the meetings.

At the end of June we will be taking part again in the Armed Forces Week which is being held on the Hoe, this year on Saturday as well as on Sunday. We will be taking our stand of ATS/WRAC memorabilia and talk to folk and hope to entice new recruits.

This year, we, the Plymouth Branch, are taking our turn at hosting the South and South West Area Reunion. This will be held at the Boringdon Hall, Colebrook, Near Plymouth on Saturday 2nd July 2011; which by the time you read this will be history and we hope to be resting on our laurels but at present, with just a few weeks before the event, we are a bit nervous and hoping that all will go smoothly. We are looking forward to the WRAC Dinner in Solihull again in October and the following week Jane and I are attending the AGM in Salisbury.

We have welcomed 4 new WRAC members recently – Nicky Rochelle of Newquay who we met last year at the Truro reunion, transferred to us recently; Debra Norris, nee Hales, now living in Barnstable, was transferred to us in February, and Angela Higginson, nee Surtees, has recently moved to Falmouth. We also have heard recently from Pip Shail, who is in the process of being allocated to us. She lives in Totnes and is coming to the Area Reunion, when we will meet her for the first time.

Our Christmas lunch will be at the Masonic Hall in Stoke as usual and we hope to have a good attendance. Hopefully more of our new, more distant members will drive up to join us for a few hours. We also hope the WRENS will join us again this year.

Our Committee will have a meeting in January 2012 and we are looking forward to the AGM and Grand Reunion in Bristol next year. Our meeting venue has changed and we now have our meetings in the Abbey Hall, behind the Minister Church of St Andrew on Royal Parade, 1.30-3.30 pm on the 4th Tuesday of the month. There is no meeting in December.

Please feel free to join us anytime.

SALISBURY BRANCH

We are still enjoying our monthly meetings, so if anyone is near Salisbury on the fourth Thursday of the month, do come and join us.

Our Christmas lunch was very successful. To offset any extra pounds we may have put on, in January we had a most interesting talk by Rowena Paxton "You are What You Eat"!! February was our Bring and Buy sale but in March it was back to the chair exercises!

David Bartholomew came to the April meeting to give an illustrated talk about the work done by Help for Heroes. It is amazing how the general public has responded to this cause and all the funds are being put to very good projects to benefit our Service personnel. Gladys Pope reported on the National AGM held in London and it is always good to met up with so many friends.

In May we indulged in some retail therapy with an enjoyable coach trip to Clarkes Shopping Village, Street. Lots of parcels on the way back.

We would like to congratulate Thirza Sillick on her 90th birthday on 2nd June. She is a very staunch supporter of the Branch.

I had a phone call from a friend to say somewhere on the Internet someone wanted to contact Salisbury Branch. Not being a silver surfer I was unable to follow this up, but if that person reads *Lioness*, perhaps she would like to telephone 01747 860887 please.

SHEFFIELD BRANCH

Once again, halfway through the year and I only hope this weather continues for the rest of the summer. As I write this on 4th June 2011, it's a gloriously hot morning.

Our first meeting of the year, 3rd February, we discussed how enjoyable our Christmas Lunch had been, so the same venue was planned for 1st December 2011. In April (the 1st which I thought rather ominous) our Chairman and Secretary went to London to attend the AGM. They thoroughly enjoyed the day, the super lunch and meeting everyone, but the show they'd chosen to see friday night was a bit of a disappointment.

Also in April we decided to have a change for our Spring Lunch and went to the Catering College in Sheffield.



Spring Lunch 2011

We'd been told the food was excellent but it's rather difficult to get a booking. It was no exaggeration; a 5-course meal served by the very pleasant young staff was marvellous. Pity the photograph doesn't do it justice! We should have had it taken while our plates were prettily decorated and full.

In May we had 2 occasions to attend. On the 11th, it was the USOTC Beating Retreat. We always enjoy this (even last year when the heavens opened and we had cold rain pouring on us from soggy canvas shelters). This year it was the Band of the Parachute Regiment and a pipe band and a fine evening – how marvellous was that? On the 22nd it was the Lord Mayor's Civil Service but many of us were on holiday. Our few representatives enjoyed it, nevertheless.

That's the year so far. Still to come is our day out on 11th July and a trip to the Arboretum on the 2nd. The Pipe Band of Sheffield are dedicating two Standards which we may be attending. Our Northern Area Reunion is in York this year. An opportunity to meet up with old friends, that's 10th September and the very next day we are off to Eden Camp. Sounds exhausting but so enjoyable.

A bit early to wish everyone a Happy Christmas, but we hope you've had as good a year as we have. Anyone out there – a member, but non attendee who would like to attend one of our meetings – you are very welcome – the first Thursday of every month at the Victoria Hall, Chapel Walk, Sheffield.

SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH

Hello to all our friends far and wide,

As I get this report ready to send to HQ (after I have written and rewritten it because it never looks right at first – does anyone else have this problem) we have had a lovely sunny, warm week. What have we done to deserve this lovely weather?

In January as we don't have trips out because of the weather, we decided to go for a lunch at King's Court (where we held the Area Reunion). As expected, the food was again excellent, so much so, we are also going to celebrate our Annual Lunch there in April. Our guest speakers are really entertaining and we managed to have our very own singer Tony Catt with stories of his life as a singer and his exploits when he was in 'pop' groups in the 60's and some of the other stars, that, like me and many of you I'm sure, used to sing along with on the radio.

We are really looking forward to the Area Reunion at Plymouth in July and hope to see you all there. Myself and 10 other members from Southampton attended the Secretaries meeting in the Victory Services Club in London. All our members really enjoyed themselves, had a lovely lunch and had some really interesting conversations with members from other branches.

Many congratulations to Jackie Naysmith on being awarded an MBE. Well done Jackie.

We will be having trips to the market at Boscombe, Annie's Tea-rooms, D Day Museum and South-Sea, Arundel Castle and Swannage and I'm sure our members will give us some other ideas for more trips this year.

We have three special birthdays this year. Firstly Hazel Haycock who will be 90 years young. Hazel hasn't been too well lately but hopefully seeing her name in print will perk her up. Barbara Bennett who is doing sterling work finding out so much about her Aunt Bessie and other Ladies that were in the SOE will be 60 in October and Gail Langton who invites the branch to lunch every year is carrying on the family tradition in the catering side of this as well as running herself ragged with the Beavers etc. Gail also supplies the birthday cakes for our members with special birthdays and she will also be 60. Happy Birthday to everyone.

It is with deep regret to inform you that we have lost two of our members this year. Firstly Dorothy Ingles who couldn't make the meetings as she didn't like going out at night but kept abreast of what went on in the branch. Secondly our very own Jean Kingdon.



Jean Kingdon in the centre wearing sun glasses

Jean was a great member of our branch informing and pointing Ladies who didn't know about our branch in the right direction. A lot of members from different branches knew Jean. She always tried to get to the ATS meetings in London with Dorothy Ingles. Jean celebrated her 90th birthday last November and she told us she had received about 40 cards. Jean will be sadly missed at our meetings leaving a big void behind.

I also lost a very dear friend from when we lived in Sunderland. Vinnie Burgham was a lovely lady who kept her own counsel, she worked behind the scenes with the SOE but would never discuss what she did. I personally will miss her dreadfully.

Our members, apart from the usual aches and pains seem to be managing quite well but they know that if they have a problem, all they have to do is pick up the telephone and hopefully we can sort out their worries. We at the Southampton branch hope that everyone is feeling fit and well and that we'll meet up in the near future.

In closing, could I please enclose this – it is from my 13

year old grandson Dean, who put pen to paper and came up with the following after a school discussion on the Holocaust.

I'M A FREE MAN

Innocent people killed in days, Many lives lost in sorrow.
Aunties, Uncles whole families killed.
Facing death, our Race nearly gone
Religion destroyed us, causing us pain.
Everyone of us mentally scarred,
Enemies forever, we would never reunite.
Mangled and beaten, no dignity for us,
A Uniform, we all look the same
Nazis and Numbers, we don't have Names.
BUT NOW WE'RE FREE, I'M ALBERT KORSINKY
NOT 806014 AND I'M A FREE MAN.



SHROPSHIRE BRANCH

July was a rather busy month for our Branch. We had a very enjoyable trip with the RASC on the Severn Valley Steam Railway. The weather was beautiful and the trains ran on time. No leaves or wrong type of snow on this line!



Outing to Severn Valley Steam Railway with the RASC and RCT Association

We also held our 30th Branch Anniversary Meal at the Grove Hotel in Wellington. This was very well attended and Beryl Lane was also given a branch certificate on retiring after many years as our Branch secretary. Pleased to report at the end of the meal and drinks, all members still standing/sitting. Well I didn't see anyone falling over or sliding off their seat.

In August five of our member joined in the North West Reunion celebrations at the Adelphi in Liverpool. Thanks to Pat Sanders and her members for the kind invitation and super day. September found us attending a social at the REME TA Centre in Dawley Telford. As usual this was very good. We had an excellent buffet and then entertainment in the form of Horse racing. Mine is still running I think!

We also held our AGM this month. Nancy Tipton retired as Chairman and Brenda Adams was voted into her place. We also decided to change the time of our monthly meetings, to encourage attendance by those WRAC members still working. We now alternate each month; one month we hold our meeting during the day time and the next month it is in the evening.

October and two of our members, Hilda Dakin and Nancy Tipton attended "Forces Brew Up" in aid of Forces Heroes.This was held at the TA Centre Dawley Bank, Home of "The Royal Mercian & Lancastrian Yeomanry". It was also the 125th Anniversary of SSAFA. Poor Hilda and Nancy had to force down lots of tea and cakes. Anyone who knows Nancy will understand that this caused her no problem unless they ran out of cake!! A couple of weeks later and we attended the Wales and West Reunion held at The Lord Hill Hotel in Shrewsbury. So good to see so many members from the various branches attending.

November found us on parade for the Remembrance Service at the Garrison Church COD Donnington. Chris Powell laid the WRAC wreath. After the service we were invited to the Sgts Mess for an excellent lunch and then a sing along plus karaoke. Don't think Hilda Dakin could get over those two very handsome Scottish pipers in the mess, one standing on either side of her. Hilda is 5ft and they both must have been well over 6ft. That evening the Branch also had members at the Oakengates "Ceremony of Light". Don't know how they did it as the Sgts mess didn't finish till late afternoon. A week later, and Nancy, Hilda, Beryl and Chris attended the Stafford Branch Christmas Lunch. A good time was had by all, a very good lunch and excellent entertainment in the form of Mrs Christmas singing all the old Christmas songs and carols. Thanks Stafford we had a really good day, although the weather was horrid it didn't spoil it for us.

December found the majority of us running (slipping and skidding really) around trying to buy that elusive present, but we still had time for our Christmas Lunch at the Lord Hill in Shrewsbury. Thanks to all those branch members, plus those from other branches who fought their way through the deep snow to attend. Brenda presented Nancy with a Branch Certificate of

Appreciation on her retirement as Branch Chairman after 13years, plus gave her a Garden Centre Gift Voucher (her favourite place).



Branch Certificate of Thanks being presented to Nancy Tipton for 13 years of service as Chair of the Branch

Although we do not hold a branch meeting in January, it didn't stop several members going to the Royal British Legion dinner. This was held at The Wickets, Wellington, were enormous delicious portions were plated up for us. Nancy as normal helped out those who couldn't eat it all. How does that woman stay so slim!!



90th Birthday Party



Enjoying the cake



February found Irene Wardrobe celebrating her 90th birthday, with a very tasty birthday cake. This was one branch meeting when she wasn't telling us one of her risqué jokes. Most of her time was taken up with cutting her cake and getting her picture taken.

March found us in slight difficulties. Our secretary Denise Fuller for personal reasons is unable to continue with her secretarial duties so Chris Powell has stepped in as Acting Secretary until further notice. April and six of us attended the AGM at the Victory Club London and it was so good to see new and old friends there. Two of the six members, remained at the Victory Club after the AGM for a long weekend and met other various branch members. Thanks to Hereford Branch for selling us a copy of your book "This is the Army 'Miss' Jones". For those of you who don't know what that is, it's a book that records the personal memories and relevant memorabilia from approx 1917 onwards of women from the Hereford Branch. An excellent read and Chris Powell is holding our copy should you wish to read it.

It is May and we have been informed that our member Audrey Merton will be going to The Royal Hospital, Chelsea in August. Audrey has been a member for many years. We all wish you happiness in your new life Audrey.

Since our previous report, not only have we had changes to the Branch Committee but also our venue.

The Branch Committee is:

Chairman – Brenda Adams
Acting Secretary – Chris Powell
Treasurer – Brenda Adams

All members old and new are welcome to come along the first Wednesday of the month to our branch meetings (no meeting held in January) held at The Sir John Bayley Club, Haygate Road, Wellington, Shropshire. We hold alternate afternoon and evening meetings so contact Chris Powell on 01743 241646 or e-mail her on chris.powell3@mypostoffice.co.uk She will advise you when and at what time the next meeting is to be held.

SUFFOLK BRANCH

Unfortunately we had a sad start to the year with the passing of Sue Nicholls. Due to work commitments and latterly her illness, we didn't see Sue very often but when we did she was always cheerful and chatty and will be greatly missed.

This year we haven't had very good turnouts at our meetings due to members being poorly and unfortunately some being in hospital. Molly tripped and broke her pelvis, not just in one place but two places! She was very politely informed to "take more water with it" in future. However she is well on the road to recovery with the assistance of her zimmer frame, getting plenty of practice with it for when she is really old and requires one permanently!

January as usual with us is just general chat about Christmas, New Year and putting the world to rights.

February and the quizzes return, this month was a picture quiz on various subjects, devised by our Chairwoman Sylvia Johnson, the results were pretty impressive for us "oldies".

March was "5 things we couldn't live without". A real mixed bag of items was forthcoming and one lady can't do without her iron – how sad is that!

April was another quiz and this month it was about "UK Place Names". Very pleased to report that we do know our land quite well, although some had to think a bit harder than others. May's theme on "Desert Island Discs" was a real mixture of music from classical to pop to hymns. Also the majority of ladies, for their book, chose poetry. Hopefully we never have to put our choices to the test.

This is all for now folks, and from myself and all members of Suffolk Branch – All the Best for 2012.

TAMWORTH BRANCH

We had an enjoyable time at the end of 2010. In November we had a skittles evening with our friends from the other Associations in Tamworth, the Royal Engineers, Royal Signals and RASC & RCT. We had 3 lively teams and Bill from The Scrappers won the fought over trophy.

On Saturday 11th December, 21 of us descended on The Moat House restaurant, members and husbands, for our Christmas meal – a lovely meal was served to us. Belle had won a beautifully decorated cake at the Wales and West AGM in October and this was cut and enjoyed by everyone and the staff finished it off.



Leicester Branch

January and February we were snowed in and glad to see it all gone. In March we had our friends from Birmingham and Leicester at the Royal British Legion to another Skittles, with a lunch buffet and raffle. Our Area Chairman and Secretary, Maggie Purkis and Irene Hall were with us and we would like to thank them for coming. This time it was Pam from the Foxy Ladies of Leicester who won. We must also thank Tom and Paul for helping us with the scoring and the adjudicating for each of our skittles dates.



Birmingham Branch



Pam from Foxy Ladies of Leicester with Maggie Purkis



Tamworth Ladies with Maggie Purkis and Irene Hall

April was our Branch AGM and the committee stood down and were immediately re-elected. It is nice to know that we are appreciated by the members. This month also

saw another of our skittles evenings with our friends from the other Associations in Tamworth – a great evening was had by all and Gerry from the Saps team won this time.

We have been invited to the Royal Engineers BBQ in July and are looking forward to that. We have also booked another evening for skittles with the REA, RSA and RASC & RCT Associations and will be seeing our friends from Birmingham, Lincoln, Shropshire and Stafford in September.

We are still looking for new members, so if anyone out there knows of ladies in the Tamworth area, we will make them very welcome. Our members would like to wish all the readers of *Lioness* the best of health and happiness next year.

ULSTER BRANCH

The New Year yet again brought some snow and ice, but the members of the Ulster Branch seem to have taken it in their stride. Some of our members live in the country, far removed from transport routes, so it is quite difficult for them to attend our meetings etc, particularly in inclement weather. However, those who are able to attend are deeply interested in our various functions and indeed, seeing the smiling faces of our members makes it all worthwhile.

We had a really good turn-out of members and their guests for our Christmas Lunch in Beechlawn Hotel in Dunmurry on Saturday 11th December. Our hard-working committee members along with our treasurer, held a raffle for some very attractive prizes which always commands a lot of interest. As usual, the meal was of a very high standard and the setting was very festive and welcoming, with the tables so inviting, suitably decorated with crackers, colourful hats and all the other trimmings which one appreciates so much in the lead-up to Christmas.

Quite a number of us went to the pantomime in the Grand Opera House in Belfast on 21st December and the show was very special as it was so close to Christmas. The pantomime was Snow White with Leslie Joseph as the wicked queen, and of course there was lots of fun and laughter all the way through. We were all determined to have a good time, helped along by chocolate liqueurs and the usual miniatures. However, May Milne, someone whom we loved very much was no longer with us, as she had recently passed away and it proved quite an effort not to think about her. But then I said to myself – May probably is here in spirit – enjoying the crack with the rest of us – and somehow thinking along these lines, eased the sadness.

One of our past members, Ruth Walker, also passed away peacefully on 31 March 2011 at the age of 96. Ruth had been a pay sergeant in the ATS at Palace Barracks in Hollywood and had moved over to Exeter in Devon in 2004. We extend our deepest sympathy to her daughter Carol and the rest of the family circle.

We held our Reunion Luncheon in Beechlawn Hotel, Dunmurry on 19 February 2011. Some of our members were suffering the effects of flu following the extremely cold weather and were unable to attend, but we had 14 for lunch which is quite a good turn-out for February. Indeed Ruby Agnew managed to come all the way from Newcastle and Phyllis Liggett from Lurgan. However, I feel that meeting up with dear friends and members following the long winter days gives us an extra boost of energy and the ability to deal with anything which the New Year produces.

We had been very much looking forward to our annual bus trip on 14th May, around the scenic Antrim coast, with carvery lunch in Portrush. On leaving Belfast the weather wasn't very good, with lots of rain and a cool breeze, but this didn't put us off by any means. We had a great time. En route we stopped in a picturesque little seaside village for coffee and by this time the sun had appeared. Then on to the Royal Court Hotel perched high about the sea in Portrush, overlooking the Skerry and Rathlin Islands. The food was delicious with a great choice of main course and dessert and we certainly enjoyed it. After lunch we set off to Coleraine. Most of us were no doubt hoping for time to grab a bargain and our driver Eddie is extremely patient with us when it comes to the shops. On the way home there was great activity in the back seat of the little bus and when I dared to glance around, I discovered that there was a mini bar in full swing. A super end to a lovely day.

I hope all our members have a great summer and health to enjoy all that summer has to offer.



Florence, Beenie, and Sylvia



Stephanie, Sally, Ricky, Mary

WALES AND THE WEST BRANCH

During the Secretaries Meeting at the Wales and the West Area Reunion last October, we discussed the inauguration of a new branch within Wales and the West, one which would be available for those members whose branches are forced to close, but who would prefer to continue to take an active part in Area and Association functions. In the past, when a branch closed, members were transferred to HQ Branch, or another branch within the Area. I am aware that all our branches are geographically very widely spread, and rather than become a member of a branch some considerable distance from their homes, ladies have become members of HQ Branch, often missing the support and comradeship which they had been used to. In January I asked Council for permission to open the new branch as and when it became necessary, a plan which met with approval.

Thursday 24th February 2011 was a very sad day for us in Wales and the West Area. Irene Hall (Area Secretary) and I took the train up to Crewe knowing that by the time we travelled home again, Crewe Branch (one of the oldest in the Association) would probably have been closed. The Branch has been well known in the Area for their popular fund-raising activities; supporting not only their own functions, but also sending regular and generous donations to the Association, the Benevolent Fund and Wales and the West Area. Sadly, the ladies of Crewe Branch had decided that they were no longer able to perform the duties of Chairman, Secretary and/or Treasurer and without Branch Officers they were resigned to the closure of their branch.

After a delicious lunch in a carvery restaurant near the station and many fond reminiscences, Crewe Branch was formally closed and Irene and I returned home to contact all ex-branch members, asking them to decide on the membership of the new Wales and the West Branch, another Branch (possibly Stafford or Tamworth) or HQ Branch. Irene and I are delighted that five ladies who live in and around Crewe have decided to become the founder members of Wales and the West Branch. At the moment, and until we are able to hold branch elections, Irene will perform the duties of the Branch Secretary, and I will act as Branch Chairman and Treasurer.

Wales and the West Branch will meet four times each year; we plan to travel to the National Memorial Arboretum in the summer (the members of all branches within our Area are also welcome to come along) and get together for a meal at Christmas, as well as arranging attendance at the Association AGM in the spring and the Area Reunion in the autumn. Any ladies from the Branches forced to close in the past, who have not already taken out membership of other branches in the Area are very welcome to join us in Wales and the West Branch.

WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND BRANCH

At our last meeting on 15th March, it was pointed out that we had not reported on the Area Re-union held on 20th September 2009 which was hosted by Weymouth and Portland so I have started off this latest article for the Lioness with a potted report on the occasion. This really did go off with a bang. It was held at the Prince Regent Hotel in Weymouth, which we have used before for anniversary luncheons. The food was superb and we were so pleased to have nearly 100 joining us, especially as the Grand Reunion had been held only a few months before. Our President, Peg McElwaine, organised the whole function on her own and the rest of the committee helped out on the day with "meeting and greeting". Major Mack ran the raffle and we seemed to have enough prizes for everybody there. The sum of £245 raised from the raffle was sent to HQ for the *Lioness*. The next reunion was hosted by Southampton in 2010 and we were all looking forward to meeting up again and having a good old chinwag (reported in *Lioness* Issue No. 2 of 2010).

So on to 2010/2011.

Our numbers have remained static and we have 16 Annual Members and 26 Life Members, and we welcomed Eileen White (Ex-QA) as an Associate Member. We had our annual lunch at the Rembrandt Hotel, Weymouth and nearly 20 of us sat down to a Carvery lunch and a good old natter.

The Reverend Tony Stevens gave us a talk on the Street Pastors. This organisation walk the streets of Weymouth offering advice to the homeless and drug users. Not many of us had even seen the pastors and we certainly did not need their services (thank goodness). They do a fabulous job.

Again in October we had a Bring and Buy sale and were able to put a sum of money towards Branch funds. In November, Peter Easton ex-RADC, and husband of Life Member, Gwenda, came along to talk about tower bell ringing. It was fascinating to learn about this. Unfortunately, he did not have enough time to go through everything and has promised to return to fill in the gaps.

In November we had another game of Bingo and a good laugh was had by all, and an amount of money was placed in Branch funds. Then it was the Christmas Social where as usual members brought goodies to eat and wine and soft drinks were paid for from Branch funds. We then broke up for the Christmas and New Year time.

We met up again on 15th February and plans were put in place for a Branch visit to the Area Reunion, this time hosted by Plymouth at Plympton. We are all looking forward to that. Then on the 1st March we had our AGM. The committee were voted back en bloc.

We have had three more speakers, one given by Mr. B. Searle, this time on "Passenger Ships & Ferries – Part 2" and another by Mr. R. Robb, husband of Life Member Joan Robb, on the history and functions of SSAFA and how they work closely with other military charities, and Mrs Pam Seaton came and talked about "Sitting on the Bench", not the garden bench but as a JP in Court. These talks were much appreciated by members and we learned a lot on all three subjects.

We had another game of BINGO and a great laugh was had by all. Peg McElwaine hosted a coffee morning/ bring and buy sale which was enjoyed by all. The proceeds of £100 were passed to HQ for the *Lioness*.

We now cease branch meetings for the summer and look forward to the Veterans Parade on Weymouth Seafront on 19th June, the Area Reunion in Plympton on 2nd July and a summer lunch on 13th July at the Rembrandt Hotel, Weymouth and then we reconvene on 20th September.

WINCHESTER BRANCH

Here we are again not even summer and in the middle of a heat wave, praying for rain yet hoping it stays warm. Are we never happy with the weather.

Winchester Branch has been rolling along in its own quiet way, we even gained a new member Amanda; unfortunately work prevents her for joining us at meetings, at the moment.

In January we held our usual post Xmas meal, new venue for us the newly opened Porterhouse in Winchester. What a lovely evening 11 members managed to make it (bit of a record that), including Cheryl who was joining us for the first time. The meal was lovely, the staff looked after us very well, and I think everyone had a great evening. Alison had a particularly good deal she ordered a 12oz steak and got a 16oz one, it was explained that the chef had run out of the smaller steaks and she would not have to pay extra. So having managed to eat half the rest was carefully wrapped in foil for husband John to eat next day.

March saw us back at the Golden Lion a small turnout of only 7 but everyone seemed to be down with something. Jo Young Scottish Area Chairman was visiting Sue so she joined us, and it was nice to see Janet again. As usual the pub produced a very good meal which everyone enjoyed.



Lynn hunting for Treasure

The May meeting was a bit disappointing only 4 members managed to turn up to a quiz about Winchester. Sue who despite knowing that she would be unable to do the quiz because of a problem with her foot, turned up to see us off and met us at the end. Although it had been raining during the day the evening turned out to be quite nice if a bit chilly. The quiz which involved solving clues walking around Winchester took about an hour. Jane, Lynn and Denise only got a bit lost once, and of course because there were only 3 entrants everyone got a prize.





Still looking...





Hungry and well earned

Also in May the Lioness quiz team took part in the annual R Signals quiz night in Aldershot. This is Jane's report.

YOU CAN BE PROUD OF THE LIONESSES !

On Thursday, 19 May, the usual suspects Sue Westlake, Alison Schofield, Jane Freebairn and Lyn Marsh, made up the Lioness Quiz Team at the Aldershot Branch of the Royal Signals Association Annual Quiz Night. It is an important date in their calendar and nearly 25 teams took part.

The great decision we had to make was which round to play our joker on as this would give us double points for that round. The rounds this year were; Anniversaries, Sport, Entertainment, Odd One Out and True or False. We were badly caught out one year when we decided to play it on the True or False round. Our reckoning was that as least you had a 50:50 chance of getting the answer correct.....in our case the odds were not in our favour and we did badly on that round so vowed never to do that again. Perhaps Odd One Out would be good to choose? After all, you would be given the possible answers and only had to work out the correct one. Trouble is these sorts of rounds can be tricky. Sport was definitely not even considered so it was between Anniversaries and Entertainment.

Final decision was to go with Anniversaries – the very first round. We reckoned that we would still be firing on all cylinders! What a good choice. The Quizmaster told us that all the answers ended in 1 so whatever event he described took place in a year ending in 1. We knew that Yuri Gargarin went into space in 1961, that decimal currency was introduced in 1971 and that Donald Campbell's Bluebird was raised from Coniston in 2001. However, guessing that the Monte Carlo Rally had first been held in 1931 instead of 1911 meant that we only scored 9 out of 10. Our joker doubled that to 18 so we were off to a good start.

Sadly, our performance in Sport is best glossed over and we were grateful we had done so well with the Anniversaries. After breaking for Curry, we carried on and did well in Entertainment. How many of James Bond's films with a one word title can you name? By the end of this round, we were in fourth place and feeling pleased although some of the other teams had not yet played their joker. The Odd one Out was interesting. Which is the odd one out between New York, Moscow, London and Paris? (New York is not a capital city). Cameron, Obama, Berlusconi and Putin? (Obama is a President and the others are Prime Ministers).

Before the last round we realise that we are three points ahead! Can we keep it up? The True and False is never easy. We did not think it true that Byron had played cricket at Lords because we knew he had a club foot. However, apparently he had during a Harrow versus Eton match!!

Yes – we kept our lead and beat all the other teams. Excellent choice of prizes meant we all went home with a couple of bottles of wine.....can't wait for next year.



Lioness Team 1st Prize Annual Charity Quiz Night

AND FINALLY.....
Winchester Branch wish all members of the Association a Happy Christmas and fantastic New Year.

WIRRAL BRANCH

Although we are a small branch we are very active especially when it comes to outings with the Chester Branch. Recently we attended a birthday party given to 6 Ladies of the Chester Branch who have or will, reach 90yrs of age this year. We had a lovely afternoon meeting members from branches from all over the North West.

Again we have been on outings with the Chester Branch, the most recent to Tatton Hall and the World of Glass in St Helens, and are looking forward to other outings. Recently some of our members attended the our local Town Hall for the raising of the flag for Armed Forces Day and the parade of the 75th Engineers who recently returned from Afghanistan, where they were presented with their medals by the Mayoress of Wirral.

This year we have invite the Chester Branch to a BBQ in July at Chetwynd Barracks, where we hold our meetings, let's hope the rain keeps off.

We are looking forward to the Grand Re-union next year in Bristol so see you there.

We hold our meetings on the first Wednesday of the month at Chetwynd Barracks, Prenton if you would like to join us please contact our Secretary Joy Griffiths.

WOLVERHAMPTON BRANCH

Our first meeting this year was on the 23rd March just at the time when we had our first taste of warm weather after so much snow and low temperatures. We were very pleased that most of our active members were able to join us.

In May three members accepted an invitation from Birmingham Branch to join them at their Birthday Party, and enjoyed the meal and hospitality.

Twelve months ago our Secretary and Treasurer gave notice that they felt they could only carry on with their offices for a further year. As no one else is able to take on the work, we have reluctantly decided to close the Branch. At the time of writing this report, we are writing to all Life and Annual members to inform them of our decision, and giving details of how to remain members of the Association.

WORTHING BRANCH

Worthing seems to go from strength to strength. We seem to get almost one new member a month at the moment, though not all come to our meetings. One of our members has started a newsletter 'Greensleeve Gossip', which went out to all our members in December and was printed in *Lioness"* 1/11.





An Interesting Day out

We haven't been very far this year, though we did pay a visit to the new Shoreham Lifeboat.

Some of us attended the AGM and met up with some old friends. We had a lovely time and even caught a London red bus. The meeting was good, food good and company good.



Jean Pointer, "Eddy", Margaret



Greta, Carolyn

However, most of our energies and planning has been for Armed Forces Weekend on 25th/26th June. We again had a stall which was the best-run, best attended, most successful and entertaining in a whole weekend which

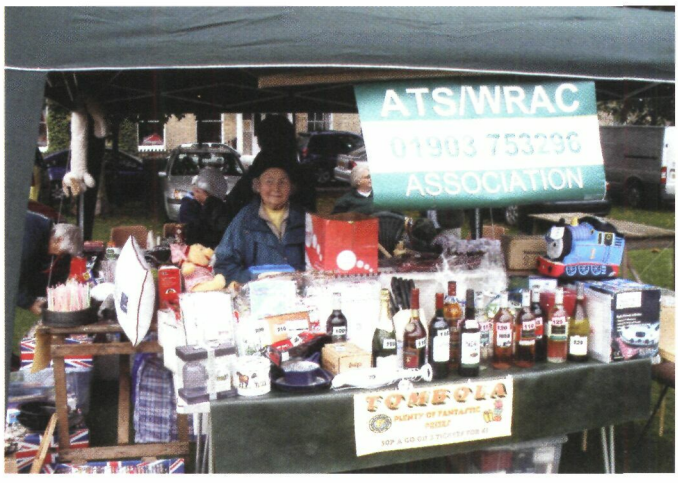


Eddy at Shoreham Fire Station

was also well-run, well-attended, very successful and wholly entertaining. As ever the whole weekend was organised by our own Secretary, Janet Goldsbrough-Jones, so she had little time to join us on the stall. A fantastic weekend all round. Our special guest was Lt General Simon Mayall CB. What a lovely man. He told Janet he was no longer responsible for Afghanistan 'just the Middle East' Just! He's welcome.



Worthing Branch



Armed Forces Day, Tombola



Jenny selling Tombola tickets



Pud Naafi Style!!

Twenty of us went to Buckingham Palace for a Garden Party. The day dawned bright and sunny and we all met at our usual meeting place. Once we were all transformed to looking fantastic as you would expect for a visit to the Palace. The coach arrived on time and we boarded with laughter ringing out. The Palace looked great and we could not believe we were really there and we made the most of every minute. We got some great photos and the tea was lovely complete with strawberries. The Guards then beat retreat and it was time to go home. We never believed when serving with the WRAC/ATS that we would one day sit down for tea at the Palace but WE DID IT WITH PRIDE.



WRAC ASSOCIATION GRAND REUNION
(Incorporating QMAAC and ATS Comrades Association)

FRIDAY 23 – MONDAY 26 MARCH 2012
BRISTOL MARRIOTT HOTEL, 2 LOWER CASTLE STREET, CITY CENTRE

As publicised in the last edition of *Lioness*, the Grand Reunion in 2012 will be held at the 4* Bristol Marriott Hotel, 2 Lower Castle Street, City Centre, the first time a Reunion has been held 'Down South' for a number of years! The Reunion promises to be another very memorable and highly enjoyable get-together, and we very much hope you will be able to attend. The occasion will not only provide a golden opportunity for you to meet up with old friends and acquaintances, but it also gives you the chance to make new ones. Besides, the city of Bristol has so much to offer and it's likely that many of you will be visiting it for the first time, so you'll no doubt want to explore its various attractions.

With a successful tried and tested formula used twice before, we have once again opted for a themed dinner on Friday evening. We can now reveal that the theme is to be "Women in Uniform" and this should give you plenty of scope – and fun! Instead of a formal dinner, there will be a buffet so that everyone will, hopefully, feel more relaxed. Live music has already been organised in the form of a duo called 'Soul Mates', who will provide the entertainment for the evening. The AGM will take place on Saturday afternoon as usual with the formal Gala Dinner in the evening, again with music, including a disco. There will then be a Drumhead Service on Sunday morning, followed by the usual Parade near the Bristol Marriott Hotel, 2 Lower Castle Street, City Centre. The total cost of this package, which includes one buffet supper, one Gala Dinner, wine on the table for both nights, entertainment, room hire and decorations, is **£50.00**. This is a flat rate charge which cannot be reduced, even if you only plan to attend one event. Please note the Grand Reunion **does not** provide the opportunity to fund raise for individual Branches nor are raffle prizes required.

Accommodation. As far as the accommodation arrangements for this Grand Reunion are concerned, we have decided against an all-inclusive package on this occasion, and you will be required to book your own accommodation either at the Bristol Marriott Hotel, 2 Lower Castle Street, City Centre, or an alternative hotel or B&B of your choice. The Marriott is a luxury 4* hotel and offers all the facilities we need under one roof. The cost of the rooms will be: single occupancy, **£95.00** bed and breakfast per night, or double/twin occupancy **£105.00** bed and breakfast per room per night. The Marriott has reserved 100 rooms for us so you will need to book promptly to be assured of a place. To assist you with making your booking, the details of the Hotel are:

Marriott Hotel City Centre
2 Lower Castle Street
Old Market
Bristol BS1 3AD

To book your room reservation by telephone, dial the Freephone number for reservations which is: 0800 221 222 and quote reference A11 to get the agreed rate.

To book on-line, go to the WRAC Association website at http://www.wracassociation.co.uk and click on the Grand Reunion 2012 link, and then the long Marriott Hotel link. This will take you direct to their booking form.

If you decide to write to the Hotel to make your booking, please include the reference A11 given above to ensure you are charged your room at the agreed rate.

For details of hotel accommodation other than the Marriott, log on to the Bristol Tourist Information Centre website at www.visitbristol.co.uk and click on the accommodation link. Alternatively, contact the Bristol Tourist Information Centre by telephone between the hours of 10:00am to 17:00pm Monday to Friday on 0906 711 2191. Please note that calls cost 50 pence per minute, plus network extras. To write to the Bristol Tourist Information Centre, the address is:

Bristol Tourist Information Centre, E Shed, 1 Canons Road,
Bristol BS1 STX

Should you need any assistance with booking your accommodation, it is suggested you either contact your local Branch or ask a friend who is also attending to help you.

Seating Plan. Please let us know by **Monday 5 March 2012** who you wish to sit with if you are unable to complete that section of the application form for the time being. We understand how important it is that you sit with your friends and will do our best to ensure your wishes are met.

We would encourage you to book early if you wish to be seated in the main function room of the Marriott Hotel because there is only space for a maximum of 350 people. Those who apply after this number has been reached will be placed in an adjacent room across the bar.

Cancellation Policy. If you book your accommodation with the Bristol Marriott Hotel, 2 Lower Castle Street, City Centre, you may cancel your room up to 7 days prior to the event free of charge. If you cancel within the 7 days leading up to the event, full charges apply. If you book your accommodation elsewhere, you will need to check with the hotel or B&B concerned for details of their cancellation policy. The cancellation policy for the £50 you send with your form to WRAC Association HQ is different. You will be refunded in full if you have to cancel before 31 January 2012. A 50% refund will be made to those who have to cancel before 28 February 2012. There will be no refund if you have to cancel on 1 March 2012 or later.

Please complete the attached application form if you wish to attend the Grand Reunion. It has notes to help you fill in the necessary details. The form should be returned to: WRAC Association, Gould House, Worthy Down, Winchester SO21 2RG.

Alternatively, you may complete the form on line using the WRAC Association website and by clicking on the Grand Reunion 2012 link.

WRAC ASSOCIATION GRAND REUNION

FRIDAY 23 MARCH – MONDAY 26 MARCH 2012

PLEASE RETURN TO:
WRAC ASSOCIATION, GOULD HOUSE, WORTHY DOWN,
WINCHESTER SO21 2RG – BY 31 DECEMBER 2011

1. Personal Details

Mrs/Miss..... First Name..... Surname.....

Maiden Name/Name whilst serving..... Service Number.....

Address.....

.....

Post code ..... Tel No..... Mobile No.....

Email address .....

Member of.....Branch

Enlisted on..... Discharged .....

Rank on leaving .....

I was employed with e.g. RAOC, RCT, R Signals etc

.....

I served in the following units.....

.....

2. Accommodation. I confirm that I have booked accommodation as follows:

*Delete as applicable

a. *at the Bristol Marriott Hotel, 2 Lower Castle Street, City Centre **OR**

b. *at the .....Hotel/B&B

c. *I have booked a single room **OR**

d. *I have booked a double room and am sharing with .....

3. Seating Plan. There will be tables for 10.

*Delete as applicable

a. *I would like to sit at the same table as.....Branch

OR

b. *I would like to sit with.....

4. Payment to WRAC Association/Grand Draw tickets

a. I enclose £50 for the additional costs of the weekend excluding accommodation.
b. I have purchased ..... Grand Draw tickets and the stubs are enclosed.
c. I am enclosing a cheque for ..... (£50 plus £1 for each Grand Draw ticket you have sold) made payable to WRAC Association

5. Special Requirements. If you have any requests regarding Mobility or Special Diets, please detail these below, and the Marriott Hotel will endeavour to accommodate your needs. However, please be advised that this is not a guarantee.

Signed..... Date .....

NOTES TO HELP YOU COMPLETE THIS FORM:

1. **Personal Details**: Please provide details of your service for the "Reunion Corner". It would be helpful to know your trade or employment group. This will enable us to try and seat you next to women of similar trades if requested. Also, it would be appreciated if you would limit your postings to 3 as we do not have the space to list any more. Please note that the inclusion of your email address and mobile telephone number, if applicable, is for use by the WRAC Association only.

2. **Accommodation**: This section is included because we may need to contact you for whatever reason and this will speed things up if we know where you are staying. Also, it provides an additional means for us to cross check our seating plans to make sure we have included everyone.

3. **Seating Plan**: We will do our best to accommodate your wishes. However, please bear in mind that we will have tables of 10 and that the same seating plan will apply on the Friday and Saturday night. If you do not know who you wish to sit next to, leave this blank for the time being, but there is no need to delay your application. Please let us know by **MONDAY 5 MARCH 2012** at the latest.

4. **Payment**: Only one cheque, made payable to **WRAC Association**, is required to cover the £50 cost of the weekend (excluding accommodation) plus £1 for each of the Grand Reunion Draw tickets you purchase.

5. **Special Requirements**: Please make full use of this section as the Hotel can only help you provided they have the right information.

PLEASE RETURN THE FORM TO:

WRAC ASSOCIATION, GOULD HOUSE, WORTHY DOWN,
WINCHESTER SO21 2RG

OR COMPLETE ONLINE AT
www.wracassociation.co.uk

BY 31 DECEMBER 2011



A really great Day Out

ATS Reminiscences

Editor's Note: The first three articles are by courtesy of Hereford Branch and are taken from their presentation book entitled "This is the Army 'Miss' Jones, A Collection of Service Memories 1911 – 2004". I am very grateful for their permission to extract some of the memories therein for this edition of the Lioness. *Unfortunately I was unable to reproduce the photographs but hopefully our members will find the stories interesting.*

LEAVING THE NEST

W/315348 Pte Heather Furr 1923 – 2003

My home was in Letchworth in Hertfordshire and the part I played during most of the war was in the Fire Service. However, as soon as they re-opened enrolment in 1945 I joined the ATS. By then I was twenty-one and could please myself what I did. I wanted to spread my wings. My mother was horrified as I already had three brothers in the services and my father said, "This is another stupid thing you have done. I cannot get you out of this." He left me wondering what other stupid things I had done. Was it perhaps when I fell off my horse and got concussion?

Guildford was well established as a receiving and training centre for the ATS by then. I settled into it quite well but having to clean the loos came as a bit of a shock! I'd never had to do that before; how we take such things for granted! Like most of the girls, I had never had a vaccination or jab and I was amazed that some of them cried and tried to hide it. Why? It was soon over. Imagine my chagrin when the next day I went down with vaccine fever! I was determined to make a quick recovery or I would not have passed on with the group, I didn't want to be left behind.

From the age of twelve I had travelled all around Britain in a Concert Party entertaining troops as well as anyone else who came along to see us. This made me an easy target to be roped in to sing a solo when we had a concert at the end of our initial training but I cannot remember what song I sang, there were a few in my repertoire.

I then went to Edinburgh for four months training in Signals as an Operator, Keyboard and Line. This was fine especially as my parents had stopped worrying about me by then. Mother used to send me cakes to share with my friends. Whilst in Edinburgh we walked up King Arthur's Seat and I sat there with a soldier. He got a bit 'handy' so I pushed him away. I watched in horror as he rolled away down the slope but fortunately not too far!

At the end of the training we had some choice of where to be stationed and I chose the War Office. This would take us south and my friend was a bit homesick. We were billeted in a flat in Ashley Gardens, Victoria. One girl in another of the rooms used to walk in her sleep and she always managed to find her way into our room. To try to stop her from disturbing our sleep we piled boxes against the door. These were empty and she just pushed her way into our room as usual. The clatter of the boxes made sure we were all woken up!

We worked a three-shift system down in the bowels of the War Office. Being underground was a bit eerie and I will never forget the very first message I had to send. For a start it seemed strange to be typing without the cover over my hands as it had been throughout my training. I was typing very slowly and carefully, fearful of making a mistake. In the middle of the message it was interrupted by the recipient with, "Can't you put someone on who can type?" I straightened my back and quickly replied, "Have a heart, this is my first **real** message and I'm terrified." The reply came, "Sorry, carry on OG (old girl). I think those teleprinters are called telex machines now. We walked to work and there was always a policeman standing near Big Ben who said, "Good-morning girls," or "Good-night girls." He made us feel well supported in the pitch dark.

One of the girls was a Catholic and she attended services at Westminster Cathedral (which was opposite our billet) every Sunday. During one Saturday night shift when things were a bit quiet we asked her about her faith. The next morning as she was leaving the billet for church one of the girls asked her, "what will you confess?" A voice from a bed said, "confess that every time you trip over my bed you say b – – – – – bed!"

There were plenty of funny stories and a lot of humour among the girls. One of them went out with her boy friend wearing her heavy great coat. He was a bit too enthusiastic with his goodnight kiss and pressed the brass button on the epaulette of her coat into her neck. This cut off her blood supply momentarily and she fainted. When she came round he said, "Blimey! I knew I was a good kisser but I didn't know I was that good! I wonder if Betty S is still around and will remember this? My boyfriend was someone I went to school with although I wasn't interested in him until I was older. When he went out to serve in India we exchanged letters and eventually we became engaged by post. This was useful when the soldiers, especially the Americans pestered me. I could simply tell them that I was spoken for.

When peace was finally declared (VJ-Day) we were all given the day off. London was wonderful that day. We all went to the Palace and shouted; "We want the King". In all the excitement I got lost during the evening and could not remember the way back to my billet. Fortunately it was a 'very nice' American soldier who put me on the right road.

With the war at an end I soon had a message from my fiancé that he was on his way home from India. He had been out there for more than three and a half years I was able to get compassionate leave. His sister had discovered an instruction that leave must be granted under these circumstances. I quoted the number of this instruction and the astonished officer in charge of us granted me leave immediately.

I waited at the bus stop near my home to pick up my fiancé; I was sitting in the back of the car. When he arrived he threw his kit bag into the back with me and sat in the front seat next to my father – terribly romantic! I

applied for an extension of leave but had to return. I stood on the train saying my goodbyes through the window feeling very disappointed. The train was just pulling away when I heard a man's voice shouting my name. The train stopped and I got off, then the porter said, 'your leave has been extended' – now that **was** romantic!

After a short time with my mother and going up to York to stay with my fiancé's mother we arranged our wedding for 11th February 1946. We eventually found a flat in George Street, London W1. We had four children including twins. Now we have eleven grandchildren and two great grandchildren who by coincidence were born within an hour of each other but some 100 miles apart.

MY FORTHY MONTHS AWAY

W/253946 Pte Atherton M (Titch)
now Mrs Marjorie Prestidge

I was kept very busy during the war in my job as a railway clerk. Since the railway was an important part of the war machine I thought I was 'doing my bit' in the war effort. So I was very surprised to be notified that I had to go for a medical examination and just two weeks later, in March 1943 I had my 'calling up' papers. I had to report to Hermitage Camp at the Army barracks in Wrexham, North Wales.

I remember vividly my being 'seen off' by Mum and Dad as they waved me cheerio when my train pulled away. It had upset Dad as he was a 1914-18 veteran and as he said, "I thought I went to war to help stop any more wars".

Hermitage Camp, which was situated in the Barrack grounds, was a collection of Nissan huts. To my surprise they were warm and quite comfortable with a black-leaded stove in the centre of each room. We slept in double bunks and I managed to get a lower one, which at only 5 foot and a half an inch tall suited me very well!

What a different life!! Marching, exams, vaccinations, fitting out of uniforms and meals on long tables but I took to it – I had to didn't I? On being interviewed by our lady CO after the exams, she asked me if I would like to be a 'PLOTTER'. Well! All I could think of was my Dad working on his plot at home. Ignorant me, I didn't want to do gardening!! I had requested clerical work and after that bit of confusion was sorted out, clerical work is what I was given on my posting.

I was sent to a Home Office Holding Platoon for a week and from there I was posted down to Movement Control HQ, Bristol Channel Ports and based at Newport, Monmouthshire. My pay was fourteen shillings a week and my 'home' was an old school that had been taken over by HQ. It was very near the dock gates in a not very nice area, which was known as the 'PILL'. On seeing this for the first time I really did become homesick, but once again I knuckled down to the new life. There was one Corporal and four Clerks in the office; the other girls were Cooks, Orderlies, Signals and Sappers (Royal Engineers).

On my first day in my new job I was asked to sign a 'secrets form' that stated that I would give no information of my work etc., etc., to anyone. The work was all about the movement of ships, personnel and equipment. Of course what we didn't realise was that all the work we were doing was leading up to **Operation Overlord**[1] on 6th June 1944. I was very proud to have been involved in that.

Being a dock, Newport wasn't a very safe place to be; I remember they used to send up smoke screens to try to stop the enemy planes from finding their target. My new life was so different but I always looked forward to my 'demob'. My last six months of service were spent with the Pay Corps in Openshaw, Manchester. Then on the 31st July 1946 I travelled to York Barracks to be demobbed.

There is much more that I could say but what I will say is that I was glad to have been 'called up'. I feel I did that 'little bit more' to help Britain at such a terrible time and I met so many new friends in the ATS. My Corporal and four workmates were great girls and I still communicate with one who is left, a 'Yorkshire lass'.

SUN SEA AND SAND

W/342867 Cpl Lewis M I now Mrs Irene Pugh

I joined the ATS from Crickhowell, Powys early in 1947. After passing through Guildford where I did my basic training I was sent to a huge Royal Army Ordnance depot at Kineton in Warwickshire. I remember that there were a great many Polish troops stationed there and I was given the rather monotonous job of defusing 2 inch mortars that were left over from the war.

Fortunately the opportunity soon came for me to train to be a Provost (a Red Cap) at the Military Police Depot at Inkerman Barracks, Woking. Surrey. The training was very interesting and we found ourselves going to magistrate's courts in London to hear the cases. The 'ladies of the night' were always dealt with first; they were usually fined £2 and sent on their way. We also watched a murder trial. As well as going on patrol with experienced NCOs we had a lot of training in how to write our incident reports. I believe the training lasted for four months.

After working in London and Colchester for a while, the icing on the cake came when I was posted to Egypt. This was at about the same time that the ATS was transformed into the WRAC but we didn't notice it. We all had to take the oath of course, but the only thing that seemed to change was the cap badge.

I was kitted out with tropical dress, which included brown sandals and ankle socks. We sailed from Liverpool on the Empress of Australia and we called in at Malta and

[1] 6th June 1944- OVERLORD- D-Day began just after midnight with the descent of two US airborne divisions, followed in the early-morning hours by 4,000 invasion ships, 600 warships, 10,000 planes (only one of which was shot down), and 176,000 Allied troops. The landings took place along a series of beaches in Normandy between Cherbourg and Le Havre- the Americans' code-named Utah and Omaha, the Canadians' Juno, and the British Gold and Sword. By the end of the day 150,000 Allied troops were dug in, with thousands of vehicles and tons of materiel. It was the largest invasion in history.

Gibraltar on the way. It was a very good voyage with only a few people being seasick. We arrived in Port Said and were taken by train to Fayid Suez Canal Zone. Fayid Station was just acres of concrete slabs but what else should we expect in a desert? Lots of very small boys greeted us with large boxes full of everything from purses and jewellery to perfume. They approached us with, 'lovely jewels for lovely ladies – beautiful like Mrs Simpson'. Were we not going to fall for that line?

We hadn't quite finished our journey and were taken to Ladysmith Camp, Fayid. This was a nice camp, the accommodation was good and so was the NAAFI. There was also a good women's club on the banks of the Bitter lakes. We had a 'house boy' to clean our accommodation and fetch and carry for us. His wages were about fifty piastas (50p) a week. My work involved gate duty and going on patrols. What could be better in all that glorious sunshine? This was definitely the life!

I was lucky enough to go on leave to Port Said, Cairo and Cyprus, which added to a wonderful 'abroad' experience. I really enjoyed my life in the Suez Canal Zone. My friend in Fayid was a Corporal who ended her career in the WRAC as a Lt/Col OBE. We still keep in touch; I keep hoping that maybe one day I might find someone else I served with, but I was in the Provo' and I suppose we weren't very popular people.

What a great life – I wish I was eighteen again!

MEMORIES OF WARTIME SERVICE

Jo Newell

Editor's Note: I have taken the liberty of extracting an article for this edition of the Lioness from the comprehensive notes made by Miss Jo Newell of her wartime service.

Whilst delivering milk in Worcester one day I saw a convoy of lorries going through – driven by girls! I thought "Ah that is for me". So off I went to the recruiting office to join up. I was 17 and keen but they said "You are too young, but we will in touch with you when you are 18". Anyway come April and on my birthday I was watching the post but still nothing came. Eventually in May it came and it gave me a week to get ready and go. My father nearly had a fit and so did my mother, but anyway they accepted the fact that I wanted to go and so off I went.

I joined up and volunteered as a river in the Pioneer Corps, Transport Section. I went to Derring Lines in Brecon where I had 6 weeks of sheer misery really. We had a lot of square bashing, blisters on our heels, and we had starched collars which gave you blisters on your neck. It was June and it was really hot and we were taken on route marches and the food awful and we all had our jabs which were ditto and were all very glad to move away from there. From there I went up to Chilwell near Nottingham. We were sent on a course of advanced driving, learning how to drive big lorries and all different sorts of vehicles which were very difficult for us. We drove all round the Nottingham countryside, stopping and having a cup of coffee in the middle of the morning and we took our own packed lunch. We had to take a test which we all passed and then we were posted.



Getting to know the vehicles we were to drive

I was fortunate enough to be posted to Shrewsbury and went into private billets there, but it was not so great really as I was on my own with two old ladies, one of whom appeared to me to be ancient! We were doing convoy duty which involved picking up lorries from factories all over the country and taking them to various depots and we were away for at least two nights on some details. These two dear old ladies knew the Army rules were that I was supposed to be in by 10 o'clock every night and they could not understand when I was not in at 10 o'clock every night when I was on duty. Also they certainly could not understand me having to get up at 5 o'clock and have my breakfast! It was very difficult for them and these two old ladies must have wondered what had hit them. Anyway I did not stay there long; obviously they could not accept it at all. I then went to stay with a family where the husband was in the RAF and there were 5 children and it was such a complete contrast; so free and easy and you could come and go as you pleased.

By the time I had got to Shrewsbury I had been initiated into the do's and don'ts of Army life very quickly but there was more to come. We three were the first new recruits they had had and they were great. There was not one of them that I could say was snooty or snobbish in any way. Very loyal to each other, very loyal and great fun – we laughed most of the time. Anyway we used to go to the Birmingham factories and pick up trucks and then we used to go all the way down to Dagenham and pick up Fords. We had to quickly get used to lots of different set ups because you would be driving something different every day. Back in Harlscote we used to drive some of the big tanks and put them on the trains. We used to drive them up to the railway station, making a right mess of the roads, and on into the goods yards. We also used to take Bren gun carriers and something called a Dragon, which was bigger than a Bren but steered by two levers. You had a week on Depot duty where you did this sort of thing and then you got trucks ready for convoy that were going out the next day. Then you'd be out for about 6 weeks and then have another week in.



Enjoying the comradeship



Down Time!

We saw lots of Britain on those times. We went to all the dock towns of course; Liverpool, Portsmouth, Swansea, Southampton. That was the job really, just back and forwards all over England all the time. There were









Very good memories of times gone by

incidents. I should explain that for the first two years most of the trucks we drove were completely open. There was no protection for the driver, no hood, no anything. There was a little postage stamp windscreen but it did not help much. We had one quite tough trip to Scotland. We had set off quite early in the morning and there were abut 30 of us I think. It was pouring with rain and we had gone about half a mile when my truck boiled. It had completely run out of water. So down on the wet road I had to get and turn the bottom tap off. Later we were sitting having fish and chips and somebody said "look out of the window". I have never before or since seen such big snow flakes, they were like saucers and by the time we got back the snow on my seat was about 6 inches deep! We were supposed to be going to Carlisle that night. Anyway after a lot of getting stuck and digging out and sliding and slithering we eventually got as far as Kendal. Six of us were put up in the Mason's Arms and we were glad just to sit there with a whiskey! The next day was a day of dig out, get stuck, dig out, get stuck, dig out. We left Kendal about eleven in the morning and I personally got there about ten o'clock at night, frozen. However we did get to Glasgow eventually with the majority of the vehicles intact.

We also used to go to the Birmingham factories and pick up trucks and also all the way to Dagenham and pick up Fords. We had to quickly get used to lots of different set ups because you would be driving something different every day. Sometimes the gear boxes were 1,2,3,4,R and sometimes 4,3,2,1,R or even R,1,2,3,4.

At the end of the war, believe it or not, I very nearly volunteered to stay on because, in reality, I loved the life in the Army. Unfortunately my father had a heart attack and so I had to go home to help.

MRS KATHLEEN EVA LAWSON (NÉE SCOTNEY)

In 1941 I joined FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) as a driver and departed from Audley End Railway Station for Camberley Training Centre. Our present Queen did this course a few years later. On arrival at Camberley, we piled into Army trucks for short journey to Training Centre and were dispatched to several large houses where we met our room companions for our training period.

On Day One we were kitted out with uniform, all shapes and sizes. Buttons and shoes polished until you could see your face in them. Lots of early morning drill to wake one up!!! At the start of driving instructions I was quickly told to forget all I'd learned about driving and start again. We spent days driving Army ambulances weighing 3 tons all over the country roads around Camberley and many hours were spent doing maintenance for which we wore overalls, but still managed to get covered in oil. Made many good friends and had lots of laughs.

We then moved on to having all our injections and vaccinations and then our first leave of 48 hours after 3 months. I arrived home feeling dreadful and was just recovering by the time I arrived back at Camberley. We had several evenings out with 2 New Zealand Cadets that I had met at home and kept in touch for some time. We meet up again with these boys in London after they got their commissions, had a great party at Oddinenos and there lies the tale of the Beer Tankard!!!

Lots of washing up duties at Camberley and I remember cutting open my finger and having it stitched up at Sandhurst. At the end of course we gave a Cocktail party for the staff and I was put in charge of this but it was no problem as all the food arrived from Fortnum & Maison – was a great success. (Food arranged by a wealthy volunteer!). We then had a Passing Out Parade at Sandhurst and passed my Driving Test with a score of 90/100. (Well done!)

Great was the day when we got our FANY flashes.

I was posted to Bayswater, London as a Staff Car driver. I remember sleeping in air raid shelters and in the Wine Cellar of this very large house, the food was good and there was a nice lounge and bar. There was no shortage of money for many of the FANY drivers were from wealthy backgrounds. One had two riding horses which she took with her to all her postings. At this time my vaccination turned bad and I spent a few days in sick bay.

While driving in London I spent most of the time driving officers from Hobert House to the War Office. Then the FANY amalgamated with ATS in 1941 and I was posted to Knightsbridge to Ack Ack Group to replace men sent on active service.

I spent some time driving an Ammunition Inspector touring the gun sites of London to inspect the ammunition and was often at Windsor Castle (the dogs were always barking) to inspect guns positioned inside. On promotion to Staff Sergeant I remember touring the Gun Sites with uniform, boots etc for the ATS on site (early 1942). Then a short spell at Hounslow Barracks (quartermaster sergeant admin, etc). This was a mixed AA Unit so had to drill girls and men on morning parade. At this time I was recommended for officer training course.

I reported to Windsor OTC in December 1942 and was the first of my company to arrive, had to take over meeting and dealing with all cadets arriving for our company. It was a very busy day but gave me a good start. I found the officer training course tough going. Routine marches in gas masks etc, never ending lectures, exams and much square bashing.

On Christmas Day 1942, we had the honour of going to the Christmas Service at St Georges Chapel, Windsor Castle and over the Christmas period went to the castle for its staff dance. Another Passing Out Parade and I do my usual and faint! (Chief Commander of ATS, Jean Knox took the parade).

Another memory is getting caught in a bad air raid when returning to unit after lunch with my mother and we took shelter in shop doorway. Arrived safely back to Windsor OTC to find all personnel in the air raid shelters where I received my posting as Subaltern (Sub Lieutenant) Scotney to Uxbridge. (ACK, ACK Group, Uxbridge, Hillington). I thoroughly enjoyed a weeks leave before taking up post at Saffron Walden.
I was really nice to wear tailored uniform and being a

FANY I was allowed to have a red lining in my jacket and overcoat, like the Brigade of Guards. Once I had reported to Uxbridge (Hillington after leave) I was billeted in a charming ATS officers house with lovely garden; most comfortable. I was working with AA Group next door to RAF Group where they were plotting the bombers coming in over London.

On the social side I sorted out the messing at AA Command, Stanmore and we all enjoyed a cocktail party and dinner dance at Command. I remember cocktails outside in lovely gardens with the Regimental Band playing. I was the Messing Officer for the ATS Company and Staff Officers Mess at a lovely house called "The Cedars" where I spent many happy hours – lots of pink gins and croquette!

I spent a lot of off duty with our MO Capt Graham Sleigh, going everywhere on our bikes, there was no petrol for pleasure runs but you could still manage to dine out at most hotels. Spent a few weeks under canvas at Uxbridge but it was summer so no hardship. At night the sky was lit up with search lights, the noise of the bombers going over, bombs coming down – one got little sleep, but one got used to it.

I was sent to Aldershot 1943 (or late 1942) on a Messing Officers course. This I enjoyed very much except for passing out in the butchers store (again!!). Then posted to Aldershot – Messing Officer to Heavy Field Artillery. I was by this time attached to the Army Catering Corps as a Specialist Messing Officer. During this time I had horse drawn ration trucks. The mess night in the Officers' Mess was an evening to remember – all the Mess silver on the tables and passing the port after dinner. Then posted to Edinburgh, to the Signal School as the Messing Officer.

In 1944 I was posted to Retford Barracks in Nottingham 1944 to the 9th Battalion Rifle Brigade where the catering was for 2,000. The Commanding Officer was Lt Col Vic Turner VC, however the unit was very anti ATS but did in time have ATS Officers dining in 9th Bn Mess. At this unit there was very poor quarters, the worst I had been in all my war years, however they did improve. During this time my mother died at Torquay, October 1944.

In 1945 I was promoted to Junior Commander (Captain) and in March 1945 I was married at Torquay to George Fraser Lawson, my fiancé of 6 months at The Crofton House Hotel by the Newton Abbott Registry Officer. Our Best man was Bill Lawson, George's brother and Jock Beattie my step father gave me away. We had our reception at Crofton House. I was recalled from honeymoon for a War Office interview for a post at a Belgium Hospital as Messing Officer but declined the post. During this time I was still at Rifle Brigade, Retford Barracks and George was at Pinefield Camp, Elgin. My husband was not at all pleased about this Belgium posting, so it was cancelled and I returned to the Rifle Brigade until the war ended. I was demobbed at Redford Barracks, Edinburgh in October 1945 (George joined the Army at Redford Barracks in 1936). This was the time of the Doodle Bug raids in London and we often slept under the bed. I departed for Elgin to join George to be an officer's wife.



Wedding Day in March 1945

TRIBUTE TO THE ATS IN 1946

Editor's Note: The following is taken from a publication entitled "Women with the British Army" which was published in May 1956 by The War Office. The tribute was delivered by The Right Honourable J J Lawson MP, The Secretary of State for War.

Before I leave the achievements of the Army in the past, and its present duties to look into the future, I should like to say something of the remarkable work done throughout the War by the ATS, the first of the Women's Services. The ATS certainly struck the imagination of the world, and they have helped to train the forces of France, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Canada and India. At their peak there were 215,000 of them, a number considerably in advance of the whole Army seven years ago. They carried out a range of duties in an exemplary manner. By their willing acceptance of work which, until the War, had been thought beyond their powers, they made a real and indeed invaluable contribution to victory.

It would be invidious to single out any one branch of their activities for special mention. They have worked as members of Anti-Aircraft Batteries, as skilled telephonists and radio operators, as drivers, as clerks or as cooks and orderlies. Their work has been marked by a cheerful acceptance of hardships, difficulties and, on occasion danger, which has won the admiration of all ranks of the Army.

I hope that the AT will remain, in one form or another, a permanent part of His Majesty's Forces, and I know that if they do, they will continue to render the same outstanding service to the country, as they have done in the past.

I have completed this article by including some scanned photos from the publication "Auxiliary Territorial Service" which was produced by Southern Command in April 1941 and was essentially a recruiting booklet for the ATS. The photographs therein details the basic training regime and ends with an intake marching off "Ready for Army service wherever required". I have selected a dozen photographs to give a flavour of the booklet.

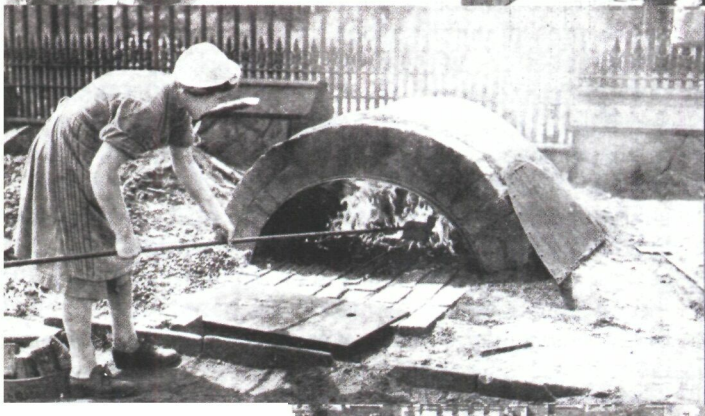








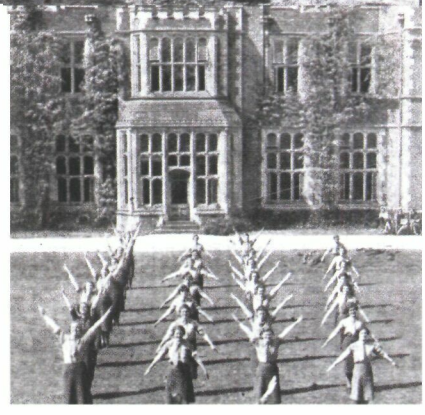






Auxiliary Territorial Service

Keeping Fit



THROUGHOUT the Service physical training is of first importance. Physically fit girls are more alert mentally than others, and great care is taken to see that fitness is ensured.

Careful Drivers



THIS driver is undoubtedly clothed for severe weather, but summer or winter makes no difference to the standard of careful driving of these girls.

No matter what the obstacles or difficulties on the road, the motor transport usually gets there. Convoys of

Montage of various activities on offer once you had joined!

ATS DURING WARTIME

W/128587 Madeleine Croll née Rees



Proud to be in Uniform

So many memories of being in the ATS during wartime. From Honiton Training Camp, where we were taught to march by a male Sergeant "Change step" he shouted, so we did, finding the squad in complete chaos. So we tried again with the same result until it was discovered that in the front of the squad was a Rees and at the back another Rees both obeying and thereby causing the commotion. Then to Strathpeffer, Scotland. ATS Clerks' School to learn shorthand-typing. At the introductory welcome we were told that we would emerge as fully trained clerks doing 50 w.p.m. shorthand. During the stunned hush a hand was raised. "Please M'am I already do 120 w.p.m. shorthand". The officer paused "How many of you are qualified shorthand typists?". Every hand in the hall was raised. This caused complete consternation so we were instructed to wait until further orders were given. The officer returned and announced that she had been in touch with the War Office and that we would go on another course and if passing would become assistants to the top brass, those wearing red tabs. It was a pretty intensive course which took several weeks but I did pass. Then we got our postings – mine was a company office in Aldershot with a male sergeant in charge. I protested and applied for a transfer. My next post was Felsted, Essex where I took shorthand from five officers, not one having a red tab I might say. I then went on a PTI course in Stirling in Scotland.

It was February, the camp had one hour's hot water a day so often it meant washing in cold water. At 6 a.m. the hut doors were thrown open, blackout boards removed from windows. We all slept with our uniforms on, plus greatcoats, even slippers. We were on a light diet, played hockey, so warmed up we went into a hut with a stone floor to do foot exercises. All the girls were frozen and thoroughly miserable so I went out and scrounged some coke to light the cold boilers in the hut. I got caught of course and was put on a charge. My companions were supportive and declared that they would walk out en masse if it was implemented.

Back to Felsted where at Christmas we had a wonderful week. Dinner served by the officers, the soldiers would form a chain and 'capture' the girls and kiss them. We leapfrogged down the centre of the street. New Year's Eve I climbed a pole and slid down into the snow wetting my knickers in the process. There was a play called "Chastity's Crossroads" at a dance when they asked for volunteers for auditioning. I was sitting on a soldier's lap and I was pushed forward, auditioned and got the part only because I believe it was for my underwear. I had green satin camiknickers trimmed with coffee lace which I would wear on special occasions just to make me feel special. When I begged the villain not to violate my honour, I knelt down to display these to the audience. Then naturally there was a wild cheer. The next evening I did an acrobatic dance having been trained as a dancer.

Some time later I volunteered for secret work and it turned out to be at the Civil Affairs Staff Centre in Wimbledon where officers were trained to take over government after the war was over. Still no red tabs. Only specialist ATS were chosen, linguists, the best office staff and we were housed in the old Bourne and Hollingsworth staff accommodation. The first job was to travel on the tube to Wimbledon on a daily basis armed with buckets and materials to scrub out big houses for our accommodation. Many remarks were made by civilians about us being slackers. Houses spick and span we were told to start on the men's quarters. We then dug in our heels and said we would no do it as we were trained specialists and not charladies. And we didn't.

Our permanent arrival was pretty disorganised as no information had been forwarded about the number of personnel, so I had to physically go round the site to count them covering a wide area in order to complete the appropriate form, but unfortunately I must have missed one as one month later I got a right telling off for being so careless.

A Staff Sergeant was court-martialled for allegedly slapping a Private's face while on Pay Parade. This was conducted in London and, as the first witness for the defence, I found standing in the dock quite stressful. However, worse was to come as one day the siren sounded and we saw what we thought was an aeroplane on fire and we were standing in a large bow-fronted window watching it. Afterwards we were told it was a "doodlebug". One day 'wailing willie' went off and we saw a rocket travelling towards our billets so I quickly hopped on my bike and cycled madly in its direction to find it had landed close to one of the houses. Part of the roof was missing, all windows and doors out and the furniture, including the piano, had gone. My main concern was whether any of the house orderlies had been killed but fortunately they had gone into another house for a cuppa. Repairs took weeks and I slept in a marble-topped larder during that time, crunched up in a foetal position, in case we had another incident and I got mangled by the marble shelf.

The Company Commander got married to an Army Officer and the reception was held on site. It was a lovely occasion on a beautiful sunny day. She was a very popular girl and we celebrated in style. We were all very upset when she got posted and an old dragon took her place. That is a story in itself.

I also got married and later discharged under Para 11. Although Army life was not a bed of roses I would not

have missed it for all the world. I met some lovely people, men and women, mostly all gone now but I still get e-mails from an American Officer I met in Felsted.

I will be 90 in July, but in spite of many medical ailments, am considered as being a game tough old bird. I am convinced that the ATS is partly responsible. I play Scrabble twice a week, have just got broadband and enjoy what is left of life with the help of family and friends. Sometimes I wonder how we won the war!!

MEMORIES BY CYNTHIA HUMBLE

A Diamond Wedding brings back the memories of the early years. After the war ended in May 1945, I continued at Forest Moor, in Y Signals and in February 1946 was posted to Beaumanor, still intercepting. My time in the ATS was coming to an end, having joined up at 17½ years straight from school, and the big question was "what was I going to do?"

My Father a regular serving officer came home from the Middle East after being there for 5 years and suggested I try for a commission as I had enjoyed my time in the ATS – so I did. After months of training at OCTU, I become a Second Subaltern, In October 1946, and was posted to Folkestone in a Transit Camp for wives and children embarking to join their husbands in Austria. My sole role was Messing Officer. My next posting was in February 1948 to the HQ of the Royal Engineers at Chatham looking after a contingent of ATS. There I met Lieutenant Sam Humble who was about my age and we became friends.

Just after a year I was posted to Gresford in North Wales, the Drivers and Clerks Training Centre at Horsley Hall. Here I was to be an Instructor on the Clerical Side. My friendship with Sam continued and he rang me twice a week, those days going through an operator. This operator must have been on regular shifts and one night broke into our conversation, to ask "when were we going to be married as it was about time"! We took his advice and on 24th June 1950 we were married having left the ATS/WRAC the week before. My father had just come home from Palestine having served two years there, and was now stationed in Liverpool. On my wedding day his words to me, on entering the Church, were "step off with the left foot"! When we came out of church to my great surprise "my girls" had come over from Gresford to be a Guard of Honour. A memory to treasure.

So sixty years have gone by, and I now belong to this Association, for the last few years, having been told about it by an acquaintance whom I met on holiday. She was younger than me and had started at Gresford in the WRAC after I had left. I have her to thank for these years of meetings once a month, rekindling the unique memories that Service life gave us. Sam comes to the various social outings and enjoys them and I am lucky to have his friendship still.

BATTLEDRESS MEMORY

Iris Nansford

Fifteen years ago after the loss of my dear husband of 52 years, I was very low, but after finding his Battledress that had seen service in Africa, Normandy and Germany, I decided to make a "memory".

The doll had belonged to my youngest daughter, and now stands on my table wearing an ATS uniform made from the Battledress. Her skirt was a piece of my demob skirt in 1945 and her cap badge is my association one.



Small and perfectly Formed!

I was a member of a height and range finder team, 642 HAA and I still have my 21s Key signed by officers and girls in my section – so many memories.

ATS MEMORIES OF 504 BATTERY

Connie Deakin née Sutton

I was so pleased to get my *Lioness* last Wednesday when it came through the letter-box of the little bungalow that I live in with my daughter. I started reading it at once and saw the Editorial by Alison Brown and you wrote that you would welcome letters from ATS. The following day I had an airmail letter from my ATS friend who is staying with her son in Australia. We were both attached to 144 Regt RA 504 Bty and even slept in the same barrack room.

I was LBdr (nee Sutton) Deakin and she was Bdr (nee Pitt) Garnham. She is now nearly 89 and I am 92. She wrote that she is coming home in time for the next London Branch meeting. I am a member of Bournemouth Branch.

She was reminiscing over our Army days. We met and started our Army career at Droitwich Spa Hotel, then on



All at the Reunion at Festival Hall London
From L to R: Grace Longhurst, Connie Deakin, Edna Goble, Betty Mombran, Nina Garnham, Eileen Rance "Kipper", Nancy Dumner

to Blandford Camp where I met Les who was a Bdr on a Searchlight Site and we were married for 50 years. Nina met Bob on 504 Site and was married for 40 odd years. I became friends with Isabel Palmer, who came from near Jarrow. She taught me to sing the "Blaydon Race" when we moved to Scunthorpe, and we were invited to a house of a steel worker and his wife. They had a pig at the bottom of their garden and Isabel and I were offered ham, bacon, sausages, black pudding etc from the previous pig – delicious! The husband took us to see the furnace of the steel works, gosh it was hot!

Then on to Derby and Nottingham on gun sites. We are remembering Major Hutton who dressed as Father Christmas and he and the other officers bought us mugs of tea in the barrack room on Christmas morning, also Capt Mills and Mr Judson who Nina said had a lovely voice and she remembers him singing Jerusalem. I remember the lovely sound of the "Rustle of Spring" being played expertly by an officer floating across the Parade Ground one evening. The officer had pulled the piano from their Mess and he was serenading our ATS officer Miss Russell!
Also remembering Sergeant Major Allen ATS – she was strict but fair. I saw her on "Whats my Line" on the television (and they didn't guess that she had been a Sergeant Major ATS!). Also my great friend Edna (nee Boxall) Goble. We were re-united when we were 70 ish (and that's another story!) and had some lovely coach holidays together and re-unions on her farm in Surrey.

I am enclosing a photograph of some of us from 504 Bty taken some years ago, don't know how long. I am writing their names here and it would be lovely if you could please put it in the next Lioness and perhaps there will be some people still "out there" who remember 504 Battery and the very friendly spirit that everybody had – and the will to win!!

REMEMBERED IMAGES – IN TRANSIT TO GERMANY 1947

Mrs E Mander (nee Clarke) W/338306

August 1947 – Liverpool Street Station and a crowded troop train. The start of a new chapter of my life. It was evening and the train sped on its way bound for Harwich. I remember my first view of the troopship which was to take up to the Hook of Holland, the Empire Parkeston. She was a war veteran and looked it – her battleship grey paint was streaked with rust. A weary ship she looked – my heart sank. We struggled abroad with our kit and made our way down to the troop deck. Our cabin was fitted with 3-tier bunks to accommodate about 60. I made sure I got a trop bunk. The feeling of claustrophobia of the middle and bottom bunks was too awful to contemplate. Large ventilation ducts overhead did nothing to alleviate the hot, stuffy atmosphere. They were also very noisy but worst of all was the smell of engine oil and the throb of the turbines. It did not bode well. After stowing my kit I went up on deck for fresh air and stayed there until we sailed. A soldier was played a popular sentimental song "Now is the hour for me to stay goodbye, soon I'll be sailing far across the sea" his harmonica lingering on the sad notes. I watched the lights of Harwich fade below the horizon and felt tearful at the thought of leaving England. We were ordered below decks and told to stay there until we docked in Holland. The wind was freshening by now.

The ship tossed and wallowed her way through the night. The continual sound of the sea pounding against the sides made all thoughts of sleep impossible. I was too excited to sleep anyway. Some of the girls began to retch and this made me feel queasy so I climbed down from my bank and made my way towards the "heads". The companionway was awash with vomit as stewardesses used squeegee mops to push it down to our deck. The smell was disgusting which made me feel even worse. The toilets were covered in vomit and the floor was slimy with it. Morning came at last and I went up on deck as soon as I was allowed. The wind was blowing hard but the relief of breathing fresh air was wonderful. A steward came along the deck, carrying a breakfast tray. He bade me good morning and asked how I felt. I told him. He lifted the cover from the plate on his tray and said "this is what you need". I saw a runny mess of baked beans with two fat pork sausages in the middle. He laughed when he saw the look on my face and swayed on his way. I wanted to die.

The low, grey outline of the coast of Holland looked uninteresting but by now I was beyond caring, I just wanted to get onto terra firma. We were relieved to finally get ashore but the ground seemed to sway like the movement of the ship. We were taken into a huge dockside building which looked like a Spartan Butlins Holiday Camp. Concrete floor – tables and chairs to accommodate hundreds of troops. Dutch waitresses came round with baskets of bread and we each got one slice but this bread was WHITE! We hadn't seen white bread for years. I kept turning my slice over and simply marvelling at this luxury. At home we had the National Wheatmeal Loaf – better for us in fact but oh, I shall never forget that slice of white bread. It seemed almost self-indulgent to eat it. I think we were given a bowl of soup but the bread is the most vivid memory.

We boarded a troop train at the dockside. Packed in like sardines our kit-bags filled the racks and littered the floor. The next phase of our journey began. We must have travelled north from The Hook. I saw a vast expanse of water with a narrow causeway stretching across it. I thought how vulnerable it looked. Someone said it was the Zuider Zee. We reached Amsterdam but we didn't stop. We passed through Amersfoort, Appeldoorn and Hengelo. At Bentheim we reached the Dutch/German border. Here we were told to disembark and to leave our kit while Customs officials searched the train. We stood on the platform while they went about their task, glad of a chance to stretch our legs and to breathe fresh air. Once more we crowded into the train but this time there was a stir of excitement because, at last, we were in Germany. The scenery didn't look any different from Holland rather flat and boring, mostly farmland. The houses in Holland and Germany had the most shiny windows I had ever seen. Flower-filled window boxes gave the houses a festive air. It made a favourable impression on me. Farms were net and tidy – no muck filled yards as in England. I did not see many cattle and assumed they had either been slaughtered for food or killed in the fighting – probably both.

There was one unexpected and sad aspect of war which shocked us as we proceeded across Holland and Germany, it was the pathetic sight of children, thin and ragged, risking their lives begging from the troop trains. Many were barefoot and all were undernourished. We went into the NAAFI coach and bought up everything on the shelves and threw sweets, food and cigarettes out of the windows onto the track. The children scrabbled for these, fighting each other like young tigers for possession of any scrap they could get their hands on. It was a very dangerous game and I wondered how many had lost their lives playing it. I suppose we encouraged it by throwing food and sweets to them but they had such desperate appeal in their eyes, you could not ignore them.

Eventually we reached Bielefeld – journey's end for the time being. We were to be housed in the former German barracks until we received our postings. By this time we were very tired but little did we know what lay just ahead! Out into the forecourt of the station we went and lined up in ranks. What happened next happened quickly. Some youths began shouting at us, shaking their fists and trying to rouse the passers-by against us. I couldn't understand what they were shouting but one didn't need to know the language to realise that it was not very complimentary. We stood, literally, with our backs to the wall of the station, wondering what was going to happen. After what seemed an age we heard sirens and vehicles roaring into the square. It was our Redcaps to the rescue, guns in their holsters. They quickly dispersed the crown, much to my relief. The troop carriers pulled up behind the MP's jeeps. We needed no second bidding to climb up and over the tailboards, kit slung in anyhow, to be sorted out later. Out of the square we went, with our military escort and along the road to Bielefeld barracks, which was about a mile out of town.

The barracks were impressive – well designed and built. Spacious grounds, softened by landscaping. There was even a fountain in the centre of an ornamental pool. This was a far cry from our country – it made a good impression. After a couple of days rest we were allowed out of barracks, provided we didn't go alone. I was eager to see for myself what life was like in a German town. I accordingly persuaded a colleague to come with me and we set off, feeling very conspicuous in our uniform, trying not to stare at the Germans as they were staring at us. There was not much traffic and what there was, apart from our military vehicles, was made up of bicycles in various stages of dilapidation. There was very little to see in the shops but we were curious to look around. We felt rather self-conscious to tell the truth. A man approached us. He looked like a Gestapo agent, complete with black briefcase. He wore a long dark overcoat and a dark felt hat pulled low over his eyes. He sidled up and greeted us in English then proceeded to open his briefcase. A spiv! I think he was trying to sell us stockings. We backed away not wanting to get involved with a black marketer. We had been warned about this. Even if we had wanted to risk it, was had no currency, but the sort of currency he wanted was cigarettes. Worth their weight in gold at that time. He grew angry when he saw we were not going to play ball and started shouting abuse – then he spat at me! A great gob of German split landed on my shining toecaps. I was mortified. In plain English we told him what we thought of him. I don't suppose he fully understood us which was just as well. We turned about and walked back o barracks with as much dignity as we could muster but I began to wonder just what I had le myself in for.

We did not remain in Bielefeld for long, just a few days while they sorted out our postings. I was sent to Rhine Army HQ at Bad Oeynhausen, which was 35 miles away. The final lap of the journey brought me to No 3 Portastrasse, which was to be my home for the next 2 years. I grew to love it. No 3 was a handsome light stone-coloured building on a corner site. In the days before the war it had been a hotel – it must have been very attractive. It was conveniently situated inasmuch as our mess hall was just around the corner, across the road.

I was given a driving test that first afternoon. The staff car for my test was a Humber Super Snipe – sheer luxury to me. I was taken out to the autobahn and told to take over, driving on the right of course. I was amazed by the autobahn. We had nothing to equal it back home. The car was a dream to drive and I took to the change of sides very easily, even though our vehicles were not adapted, still being right hand drive. I passed and was told to report for duty the following morning at 0900 hours to S & T Directorate (Stores & Transport). My life in Germany had begun.

WOMAN'S NAME TO GO ON MEMORIAL

Editor's Note: I was sent this cutting from a local newspaper – name unknown – and thought it would be interesting for our members as it records the final public naming of a serving member of the QMAAC.

A woman who died serving her country will soon have her name placed on Welshpool's war memorial, thanks to join efforts from the town council and a local war memorial society.

Lizzy Dora Stevens, who died in uniform serving under the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps, is one of 5 female members of the Armed Forces whose names have been rediscovered but not recorded anywhere on war memorials.

The Shropshire War Memorial Association sent information about Lizzy to Welshpool Town Council back in January, and now the County Times can confirm that Lizzy's name is to be included on the town's war memorial and will be paid for by the town council.

Lizzy, who died on 24 April 1918, is buried at a Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in Aldershot and has a Commonwealth War Graves headstone. "Some people think these women weren't involved in the war, but they were and they need to be remembered "said the chairman of the Shropshire War Memorial Association Clive Blakeway, who came across Lizzy's name by chance when researching another case.

So far, no descendants of Lizzy's have come forward.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION REMINDERS

Are you an annual member? If so, your membership runs out at the end of September. If you belong to a geographical Branch, please you're your Secretary or Treasurer your subscription renewal in good time. If you belong to Headquarters Branch then you must send your subscription directly to WRAC Association, AGC Centre, Worthy Down, Winchester SO21 2RG.

Cheques should be made payable to WRAC Association and arrive as soon as possible after 1 October.

It is very important that you renew your membership in good time. If you leave it too late, you will not receive your *Lioness* at the right time and it will cost more in money and time to update your membership records accordingly and to post out your *Lioness*.

PLEASE HELP US TO ENSURE YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS KEPT UP TO DATE

PS Why not become a Life Member and then you will not need to worry about renewing your subscription each year? A bargain at £50. Why not ask your family and friends to club together and buy it for your Christmas or Birthday?

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Reminiscences of the WRAC

Editor's Note: The first articles is by courtesy of Hereford Branch and is taken from their presentation book entitled "This is the Army 'Miss' Jones, A Collection of Service Memories 1911 – 2004". I am very grateful for their permission to extract some of the memories therein for this edition of the Lioness.

A CAREER IN KHAKI

W/0463117 S/Sgt Heather Bradbury, now Miss Heather Bradbury

For me it all started way back in 1978 when I enlisted into the Territorial Army as a Combat driver with a Royal Signals Unit in Manchester. I'd always had a dream of joining the Army; it felt the most natural thing to do as so many of my family had served in both World Wars. I served with the TA for just ten very busy months, during which I managed to fit in two weeks away at annual camp, a week skiing at Aviemore and a two week recruit course, as well as qualifying as a HGV 3 driver and gaining my B3 trade qualification.

The two weeks spent at the WRAC Centre in Guildford during January 1979 on the TA recruits course sealed my fate for the next twenty-four years. As soon as I arrived back home I made the decision that I could no longer settle for being a part time soldier, it would have to be all or nothing. So on the Monday morning after my return home I contacted the recruiting staff in Manchester and the rest as they say, is history. The recruiting process took about 3 months, as well as interviews and a medical in Manchester; I had to attend a two day recruit selection at Guildford that included a final interview and fitness test. Even after I was accepted I still had to wait for a vacancy.

During the recruit course I became friends with another TA recruit from Glasgow and unknown to me she also went home and applied to join the Regular Army. What a lovely surprise it was when, on 1st August 1979, we both arrived at the gates of the WRAC Centre, only to be roommates once again. Seven weeks later we had the unique experience of 'Passing Out' together for the second time; how proud we both were!

Sometimes I can't quite believe what has happened since. Because I was already a qualified Combat Driver I only had to spend a short time at the Army School of Motor Transport (ASMT) at Leaconfield. My first posting was to the Army Air Corps Centre at Middle Wallop, Wiltshire. The next two years were spent learning the ropes, mostly 'on exercise' on Salisbury Plain. I also had the time of my life doing 'adventure training' in Cornwall, 'mountain flying' in Snowdonia and 'canoeing' in Dorset. It was during this time that I was promoted to L/Cpl.

From Salisbury I was posted to Chattenden, near Rochester in Kent where I was to work with the Royal Engineers – what a contrast! I spent most of my time up to my axles in mud, week in week out, exercise after exercise. It was hard work but I enjoyed the challenge and learnt an awful lot. It was while serving here that I discovered if you volunteered for sport you had time off work to compete. I represented my unit in nearly all the racquet sports, hockey and rounders, what a job eh! Getting paid to enjoy myself!

When the Falklands Conflict began, all leave was cancelled. Day after day was spent on convoy duties, ferrying stores from Maidstone to the military ports at Marchwood in Southampton. Although, with its non combatant status the WRAC could not go to war, we participated in all other areas, which made our work feel just as important.

I was ambitious and looked for other ways to further my career. I volunteered for training NCO duties and was accepted, so in 1982 I was duly posted back to the WRAC Centre. What a fantastic opportunity to put back into the system and what a sense of achievement to watch your platoon passing out only seven weeks after arriving as raw Recruits. During this posting I was promoted to Cpl, which came as a complete surprise. When I was summoned to the OC's office I thought it was for a ticking off, so I went with some trepidation only to be handed my tapes. Memories of that posting range from taking part in the Lord Mayor's Parade in London to being a witness at the Old Bailey, but that's another story.

My next posting was in 1984 when I returned to driver duties as a Section Commander with 44 Sqn at Sandhurst. Once again a fantastic job, I was responsible for vehicles ranging from coaches, cars, an ambulance and the squadron road sweeper. The job was varied and the location superb – what more could I ask for? Even here I was determined not to let the grass grow under my feet and volunteered for yet another job outside of my trade.

This time I was accepted for duties as a Sergeant Tester. So in January 1985 I was promoted and posted to Sutton Coldfield, Midlands. My job was to test new applicants who wanted to come into the Army. To assist in suitability and job selection they were given five tests known as the PIDVA tests consisting of problems, instructions, dominoes, verbal and arithmetic. After only 3 months I was sent to fill a vacancy back at the WRAC Centre. I held this post for two years during which time I managed to complete a basic parachuting course. The most memorable occasions were twice representing the WRAC at the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall.

In order to keep on top of my MT (Motor Transport) qualifications and remain competitive within my trade, I attended a senior NCOs MT course at the Army School of Transport at Leaconfield. I was the only female in a class of 40, which meant, as usual, that I felt I had to prove myself and I put 110% into it. Perhaps it was this course that made me keen to get back to MT work. In 1987 I was posted as a Detachment Commander with 25 Sqn Royal Corps of Transport at the Central Ammunition Depot at Kineton in Warwickshire.

This was a small detachment with the specific responsibility of delivering training ammunition all over the country – a small but never the less very busy unit. The main HQ was situated at Bicester where the bulk of the Squadron was located with a further detachment at Donnington, Shropshire. I was the only female senior NCO in the Squadron so once again I had to prove myself. I'm sure that many took one look at my slight build and height and wondered if I was up to the job.

It was during my service at Kineton, Warwickshire in 1989 that I attended seminars relating to the future of the WRAC. We were assured then that our future careers would be safe as it would be many years before the Corps was disbanded and integrated. So little did we know then that the fate of our beloved WRAC was already sealed?

By 1990 I had been a Sergeant for five years and the possibility of promotion was very slim as there were only five posts for the rank of Staff Sergeant in the whole of the WRAC driver trade. When I coupled this with the prospects of the WRAC still existing for some considerable time I felt I was at a crossroads and had to make a decision. I was still ambitious but there seemed little chance of furthering my career. By the time my next posting was due, which was to 68 Sqn Rhinedalen in Germany, I had given the stipulated twelve months notice to leave, at the end of which, I would have completed twelve years service.

I thought this might affect my overseas posting with the Army being what it is. However, I arrived in Germany in September 1990 with less than a year to serve. This coincided with the first Gulf war. We worked extremely hard to turn a staff car squadron into a unit responsible for replenishment and supply. Within weeks personnel were retrained, HGV class 3's were upgraded to class 2's and everyone was kitted out and fully briefed in their new role. It was therefore a big disappointment when my name wasn't called out for active service on the Squadron Parade. I felt saddened that I wasn't going with my unit, and even offered to swap with a married colleague so she could stay behind with her husband.

With nothing left for me to do in Germany I was sent back to the UK and the Military Corrective Training Centre at Colchester, **no**, not as an inmate but for a months guard duties; what a let down! It was shortly after Colchester that I had a major operation followed by three months sick leave. During this time I was taken off unit strength and languished on the Y list (Taken off Strength).

Once fit for duty I ended up back at the WRAC Centre attached to (WONCO) the Warrant Officer and NCO Training Wing. Drilling platoons on the square once again brought back fond memories, but the icing on the cake was meeting HM The Queen Mother on the 4th June 1991. The photograph taken in the mess of the WOs' and Sgts' with Her Majesty, takes pride of place at home. During my last few months of service at Guildford it was confirmed that the WRAC was to be disbanded and integrated into the mainstream Army.

Having left the WRAC I was running a busy driving school in Guildford but I was like a fish out of water and couldn't let go of the Army, perhaps this was because I remained in Guildford. I joined the Territorial Army once more, it was the local Infantry Regiment (Queens Division) and I became their MT Sgt; drill nights and weekend exercises kept me on my toes.

Despite being told in 1989 that it wouldn't happen for years, the date was fixed for the disbandment of the Women's Royal Army Corps. The 6th April 1992 was a truly sad day for so many people. Many different ceremonies, parades and farewell dinner functions took place all over the world in the weeks leading up to the final church service and parade in Guildford.

On the 25th March 1992, in the presence of HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother our Commandant in Chief and HRH The Duchess of Kent our Controller Commandant, a very moving service of Thanksgiving and farewell took place at Guildford Cathedral. Royalty, top brass, local dignitaries, members serving both past and present along with representatives from all corners of the world assembled, and those who couldn't be present sent messages.

After this service the largest all female parade ever gathered in the UK was staged and with typical precision the parade paid their respects to HM The Queen Mother. Included were over four hundred retired WRAC Association Members, all stepping out with pride. The day was not over until the WRAC Staff Band had completed the Beating Retreat. The pouring rain did little to dampen spirits as the skies were filled with fireworks. For so many, this was a day that will never be forgotten.

However, progress is what life is all about so it was 'out with the old and in with the new'. The Adjutant General's Corps (AGC) was born. All serving members of the WRAC were re badged either into the Corps of their respective trade or into the AG Corps. Headquarters of the newly formed Corps are at Worthy Down in Hampshire.

Now that women are more fully integrated into the Regular Army, promotion and career prospects are in competition with their male counterparts. Trades that were previously closed have now opened with the exception of the Infantry and Royal Armoured Corps. Never before have so many opportunities been available to women and although many were saddened at the loss of the WRAC we cannot help but be optimistic for the future.

My story doesn't end here, during my eleven months as a civilian I maintained my military connections, and although I was still a part time soldier it wasn't enough. So when I was offered a job in recruiting duties I decided to re enlist in June 1992. It did mean re-locating from Guildford to Gloucester but it also meant a second career.

So what has happened over the past twelve years? Lots of opportunities to visit training units and outside organisations. Being privileged to attend the Ceremony of the Keys at the Tower of London; a Royal Salute by the Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery; standing on the

forecourt of Buckingham Palace watching The Queen leave for the State opening of Parliament and a visit to the House of Commons.

In 1993 I volunteered for steward duties at Wimbledon. I love tennis and although I knew this was something I could volunteer for, I'd never been able to fit it in until now. The first year I was put to work dealing with the fans on a public stairway with a chap from the RAF and a young lady from the Royal Navy. What an experience! The buzz of the place left me hooked and I have volunteered to use two weeks of my annual leave to work at the Tennis Championships every year since – eleven years in total!

However I didn't work on that stairway again because I was recommended for Royal Box duties. Well I could write a book entirely about my last ten years working there. Having served my apprenticeship on the main door as a shift leader meeting and greeting Royalty, VIP's, stars of stage and screen, sports personalities as well as everyday folk. Last year I graduated to the 2 IC's job – a busy two weeks being jointly responsible for forty-eight Tri-service stewards and three members of the London Fire Brigade. My IC was Warrant officer Phil Spacey RAF, with whom I'd had the pleasure to work with for ten years. Phil was a work-a-holic and a meticulous organiser who always left me feeling exhausted.

More important than any of this has been when the recruits return to the office with photographs and stories of their training and service. Their success stories fill me with pride and a feeling that I've been able to make a difference.

When I joined the Regular Army in 1979 my father thought it would be a case of getting the Army out of my system and that I would be home after completing my three years colour service. Well after twenty-three years and two hundred and eighty-six days of service for Queen and country, the time has now arrived for me to hand my kit in.

As others have mentioned in previous stories, good friends and comrades have given me a sense of belonging and pride. My service has taken me through so many adventures and if I had the chance to do it all over again the answer would be **yes**!

UNIFORMS UNCOVERED

Major General (Retired) P G Williams CMG OBE

On Page 47 in *Lioness* 1/11 there is a rather grainy picture of members of the WRAC, who were part of the Army Uniform Display, demonstrating the new uniforms which were introduced in the early 1960s. Thanks to former Sgt Margo Collins (née Insall) WRAC, I have four good quality photos that were taken on the same occasion. The date was, she assures me, 28th March 1961 and the location was Wellington Barracks and Buckingham Palace.

My wife, Anne WRAC/RAEC 1979-1983, and I met up again with Margo in Perth, Western Australia in early March and we are hoping to conjure up a short piece for the *Lioness* on the gathering of the British Ex-Services Association at which she and several other ATS and WRAC (led by Capt Ann Page, WRAC/RMP 1967-1973) were present.



14 Capbadges on Parade



From L to R: Sgt Chaffey MM QRSR, Gdsm H Angus SG, Cpl Byrnes WRAC, Cpl M R Insall WRAC, Rfn Stevens GJ, Pte D Whiting PRC



Cpl M R Insall WRAC, Sgt Chaffey MM QRSR and U/I Chelsea Pensioner



Cpl MR Insall WRAC, Cpl Byrnes WRAC, Sgt Pickering QARANC, Pte D M Roberts QARANC

MEMORIES OF CYPRUS

W/406756 Maureen Cassidy née Devaney
76 Utuhina Road, Springfield, Rotorua 3015,
New Zealand



HRH The Princess Royal, Controller Commandant of the WRAC, 1962

This photo was taken in 1962 when HRH The Princess Royal, Controller Commandant of the WRAC was on a nine day tour of Cyprus. Major Fisher is on the left, myself in the middle and then HRH The Princess Royal.

I was a Postal Clerk in the Admin Office of the 27 Indep Coy based in Episkopi. On the day of HRH's visit to our base, I thought that I would have plenty of time to pick up the mail before her scheduled arrival. So I went to the Post Office and was greeted with an urgent message from Sgt Major to report back at the double. I ran like the wind and was to be greeted by the welcoming committee standing to attention at the Royal Car turned into the entrance of Admin Block 1. Sgt Major gave me a dirty look as I took my place at the back of the welcoming committee. I thought I am in deep trouble.

After HRH had inspected our quarters she visited the Admin Office and I was introduced to HRH, she was very kind and quite charming. At the end of her visit they held a huge banquet in HRHhonour and a few of the WRAC girls were paid the sum of 5 pounds to help in the kitchen and wait on tables. What a magnificent sight to see such glittering uniforms and beautifully dressed tables. Such a great occasion and I have never forgotten it.

I have very fond memories of my time in the WRAC especially of the friends and people I met. I would love to know how they are and for them to get in touch with me or let me know how I can get in touch with them. I have included my postal address if they would like to write to me.

THANK YOU WRAC

W/425889 Chris Corker née Appleby

Last year I saw that the 2012 London Olympics were looking for volunteers to help in many ways to make the Games a success and without any expectations decided to apply. The application form was quite straightforward until it came to the section regarding employment. Only a short paragraph was allowed and I decided to put in my time serving in the WRAC. Imagine my surprise when I received a phone call in January to attend an interview at London Excel in March. I was also told that I had been selected for the Anti Doping Team. With great trepidation I set off for London Excel and my reporting time of 3pm where I must admit I met a diverse group of other volunteers. Some worked for the NHS and were specialists in phlebotomy and others like myself had no idea why we had been chosen for this team.

After registering and being photographed (wish I had had time to sort out my hair!) we met with the charming man in charge of the Anti Doping Team. He informed us that those who had no medical skills were chosen because they had either been in the Police Force, teachers or Armed Forces and would act as chaperones. This would mean escorting competitors and athletes from the area their event to the drug testing station. At last the penny dropped, that is why I am here! Following on from a filmed thank you from Lord Coe, I spent 30 minutes in a one to one interview where I had to sell myself by answering various questions and explaining aspects of life in the WRAC.

Whether or not I will be successful I will not know until either later this year or even at the beginning of next, but I am thrilled that from over 250,000 applicants I got as far as an interview even if I was one of 100,000. Who knows, they need approximately 70,000 volunteers so I may make the grade. All I know is that without my service in the WRAC I doubt whether I would have got this far so thank you to the Women's Royal Army Corps.

LIFE AS AN EXPERIMENTAL ASSISTANT GUNNER (EAG)

Anne Robinson (nee Lawson) W/427062

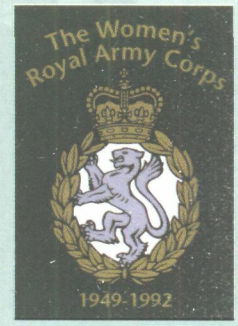
I first tried to join the WRAC through an Officer Selection course. I was very unsuccessful not being able to work out how to cross a 6-foot gap with two 2-foot

planks and I wouldn't say boo to a goose in those days. Not officer material! I did go to Woolwich later in my service to be an NCO on a stewardesses course and to see what work a Junior Officer would be doing but decided that an administrative role was not for me. I joined the WRAC in July 1965 as an Experimental Assistant Gunner (EAG) based in Shoeburyness, Essex after basic training at Guildford. As my parents were in Scotland my uncle came to the passing out parade and took me to Windsor for lunch in my No 1 uniform. EAGs worked on Foulness Island assisting the Army on their weapon testing areas on the island and out on the Maplin Sands. Winters could be cold and our work was usually dependent on the tides so sometimes we were driven early in the mornings in 3-ton lorries out early to the sea wall and our huts with heaters. We had Radio Caroline out in the estuary and if any Iron Curtain country ships were going up the Thames all firing had to cease. The year before I joined the sea had frozen and also the EAGs had stopped being posted to Woomera in Australia. I seem to remember boiling eggs in our kettles in the rooms to take with us and mulligatawny soup, though how we heated that up I can't remember. We had a WRAC office on the island and we used to go to the canteen for toast and dripping. We used very heavy manual calculators in our work. Our uniform was navy trousers, navy beret, navy pea jacket and white shirt. We went to Larkhill at one point for firing on the ranges there, staying in the old spider huts and everyone thought we were WRENS.

I remember the mods and rockers coming into Southend and going to the Penny Farthing Club with my husband to be. We were lucky at Shoeburyness as the barracks had their own beach.

HISTORY OF THE WRAC

This booklet was written just as the WRAC was disbanded in 1992 and it was revised in 2009. It has 37 pages and contains all the essential history of the Corps and useful information about uniform, employments, postings and training units. It also gives all the details about the Royal connections the Corps had.



Copies are available from the WRAC Association, Gould House, Worthy Down, Winchester SO21 2RG and cost just £2.50 incl p&p. Cheques should be made payable to WRAC Association.

We lived in blocks facing the parade ground with out 4 people to a room. Any one remember the heavy buffers we used to polish up the floors? My husband and I went back a few years ago to the barracks and they have now been turned into housing with a lot of the original buildings left as I believe they are Grade 2 listed. The WRAC blocks had been turned into flats and the parade ground was still there though the back gate where I used to meet my now husband has gone. I met my husband in the NCOs Mess when he and a fellow sergeant had gone in for a drink and we had our reception in the Cockleshell Club on camp. Still together after 43 years. Anybody reading the *Lioness* who is on my wedding photograph?



Where Are You Now?

THE START – THE LAND ARMY IN SUSSEX

Roy Hobbs
5 Stable Cottages, Ossemsley, Christchurch, BH23 7EE

I saw a film "The Land Girls, Love and War Back to the Land" where some Land Army girls were interviewed. They lived in Sussex and met frequently in a local café in Sussex to reminisce. Two of the ladies were Ann Bradley and Betty Hollingdale. I would love to contact any of the girls concerned. I have spent 6 weeks trying to find a link but no luck. I hope some of your members can help me.

INCIDENT IN BELGIUM IN 1945

Barbara Bennett
7 Beech Grove, Owslebury, Winchester, Hants, SO21 1LS
E mail: Barbara.b1@btinternet.com

Ladies, please can you put your thinking caps on for me? The situation takes place in Belgium near to the towns of Leuven and Mechelen. It was the 12th January 1945. Apparently, a number of ATS girls were returning from a night out, travelling in several lorries, when one of the lorries was hit by a train on a level crossing. The lorry burst into flames and unfortunately five girls were killed. However a number were saved by the bravery of the other girls who waded in and pulled them to safety, many of them getting badly burnt as well.

Three of the ATS girls who died were, I think; Marie Rose from Birmingham, who I'm told was a beautiful girl with a lovely singing voice, Molly Norris from Peterborough, and Vicki Smith. The other names have been forgotten. They were buried properly near Heverlee. They may have been repatriated much later, after the war, but as far as I know, they stayed in Belgium. The girls who showed such bravery at the scene of the crash received citations and one, I'm told, received an MBE, it may be that my aunt was one of them. So ladies, any information that you can give me would be most welcome. Thank you.

ANY ONE FROM 500 BATTERY

Win Taylor née Howard
E mail: wyn-taylor@hotmail.co.uk

I write to try to find if any of the girls are still about from 500 Bty. I think we were the second one to be formed. We trained at Blandford, then Towyn North Wales. My name was Win Howard now Taylor. Most of the girls came from the Black Country area. I really enjoy the *Lioness* and I am always looking for ATS girls. So here's hoping – thank you.

JOAN PATRICIA BEARDMORE

79 Brampton Close, Corringham, Essex, SS17 7HR

Does any one remember Joan Patricia Beardmore, who served in YO Coy RASC (MT) from 1st September 1950 until the 18th July 1951. If so I would be glad to hear from you. She had a close friend who I only remember as Talbot. I would be very grateful if any information could be passed to the above address or to the WRAC Association.



Joan Patricia Beardmore 1950/51

W/445183 CAROL MORRIS NÉE EDWARDS

E mail: carolmorris@fsmail.net

I would like to put something in the next edition of the *Lioness*. My name is Carol Morris and I served in the WRAC from April 1973 to June 1979. I have attached some pictures. I was posted to Hounslow after my driver training and went on detachment Millbank Hospital. From there I went to Larkhill and Bicester and finished my service at Melton Mowbray.

If anyone does remember me it would be lovely to hear from you on the e mail above.



5 Pl Guildford – April to June 1973



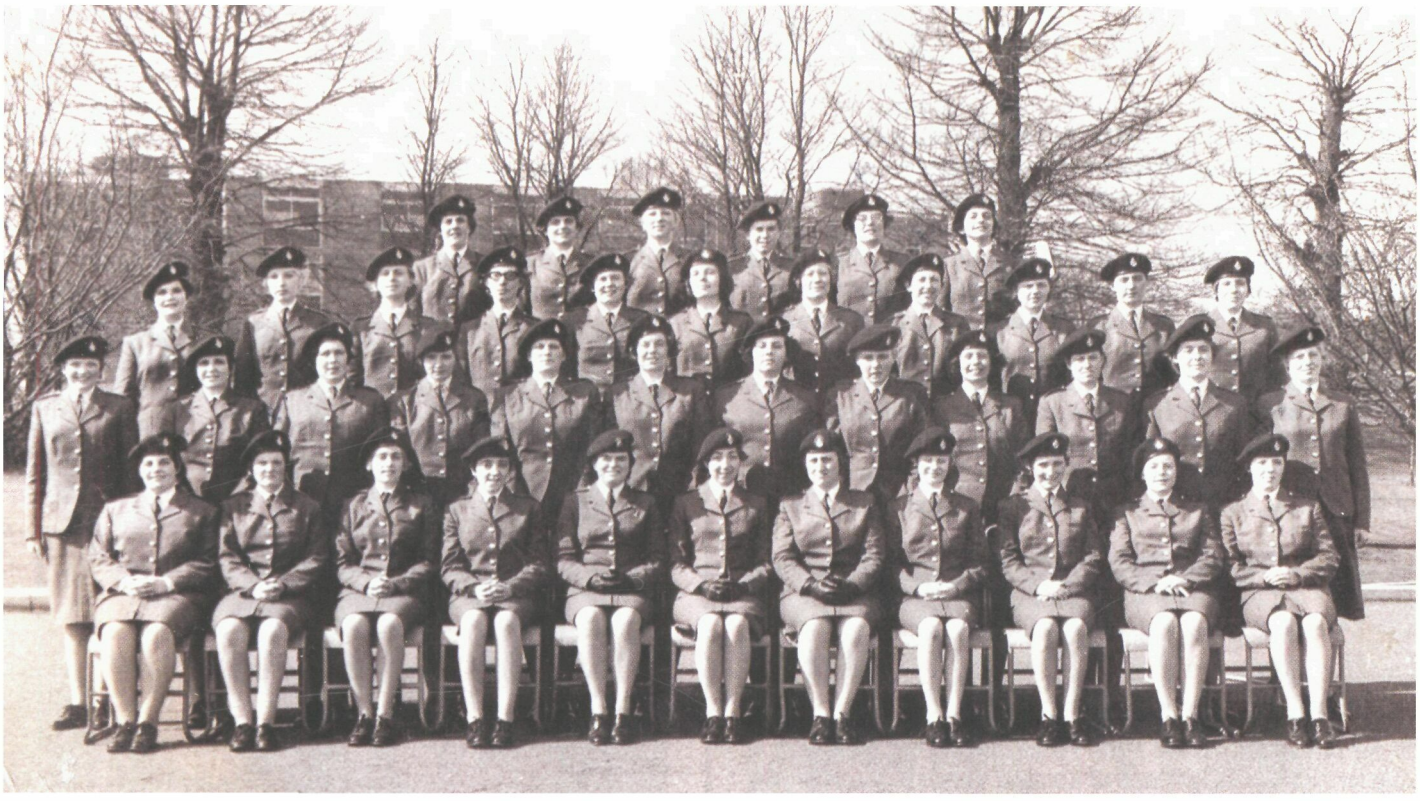
Driver Training Aldershot – June to August 1973

W/428357 LORRAINE (RONNIE) HOOD
NÉE SCHOFIELD
E mail: Lorraine.Hood@talktalk.net

Does anyone remember me? I was at Guildford in 1966 and then went to Yeovil and on to Hounslow as a Staff Car driver. Does anyone recognise the photographs? It would be lovely to hear from anybody who does on the above e-mail.



Guildford 1966



Date unknown

ELIZABETH (BETH) LOW

Nicola Watson
E mail: George.watson1@mypostoffice.co.uk

I am looking for any information on a relative of mine called Elizabeth (Beth) Low. She sadly died in 1984 and unfortunately we cannot find a photograph of her whist se was in the Army. I am trying to find out where she did serve and if anyone does remember her. I would be very grateful for any information – thank you.

VERA BIGNELL

Does anyone recognise Vera Bignell from this photograph? She was the daughter of Alfred and Mabel Bignell. Any information should be passed to the WRAC



Rome, February 1946

ARMY WOMEN'S NETBALL ASSOCIATION 1991 - 1992

Does anyone know any of the whereabouts of the members of the Army Womens' Netball Squad from 1991 – 1992? Thanks to Val Trout for the photograph.



Rear Row: Cpl Lofthouse KL, Cpl Lewis-Williams A, Sgt King J, LCpl Lithgo M, LCpl Skipsey A, Sgt Underhay M, LCpl Sutton D
Front Row: Cpl Rigby T, Sgt O'Hagan J, LCpl Beattie E, Col V Trout, Miss Roz Griffiths, Cpl Rayment K, LCpl Rowe D, WO2 Flowers M

News from Overseas Members

WESTERN AUSTRALIA GATHERING

Ann Williams (nee Rankine)
fraddsmeadow@hotmail.com

On Sunday 6th March my husband and I were the guests at a wonderful get-together of the British Ex-Services Association (BESA) of Western Australia, which was hosted by its Honorary Secretary, Ann Page, at her beautiful home in the Perth Hills. About 50 members of the Association and their spouses enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch and memorable comradeship on a typically sunny day. Among the attendees were 4 former members of the WRAC, one of whom had also served in the ATS.



Pat Thyer (centre) and our host, Ann Page, after the Patron of the WA BESA, Major General Peter Williams, had presented Pat with a decanter to mark her 30 years as Welfare Officer

The most senior (in terms of enlistment date) was Patricia Thyer (née Garrard) who was in the ATS in the period 1948-49 and then in the WRAC until 1952. She was attached to the East Lancashire Regiment in Carlisle before moving on to be the Sergeant Mobile Recruiting in HQ Southern Command based in Aldershot, and ending up as an Instructor at the Drivers and Clerks Training Centre in Hindhead. Since moving to Australia she has been a stalwart member of the WA BESA and recently completed 30 years as the Welfare Officer. Pat now lives at 18 Enid Road, Kalamunda, WA 6076 and can be contacted on pthyer@bigpond.com

The next most senior attendee was Barbara Harper-Nelson (née Rigby) who received a WRAC Short Service Commission in 1954 after training at the WRAC College Frimley. As a staff officer she served in HQ Scottish Command, as well as in Hong Kong and Malaya, and her final posting was in HQ London District in 1956. Barbara now lives at 4 Silverdale Road, Lesmurdie, WA 6076.

From 1958 Margo Collins (née Insall) served as a Clerk/Personal Assistant in the War Office before becoming a Sergeant, the PA to the Chief of the Defence Staff, Earl Mountbatten of Burma, in 1962. She went on to serve in the same capacity for the Chief of BRIXMIS in Berlin, where she met and married her late husband, Dave, who was an Interpreter with 247 Provost Company. She was one of the earliest members of the WRAC who were allowed to carry on serving after getting married. Margo now lives at 3A Ballina Place, Waikiki, WA 6169 and can be contacted on colinsall@bigpond.com.au



Margo Collins and the author

Our host, Ann Page (née Doherty), held a Regular Commission in the WRAC from 1966 until 1973. After spending time with the Royal Artillery in Larkhill and Woolwich, she went on to serve in HQ BAOR in Rheindahlen, at the Mill Hill Postal Depot and finally in HQ London District as the Captain OC WRAC Provost, mostly employed on ceremonial duties. As an Australian by birth, she later returned home with her British husband. Ann lives at 344 Lesmurdie Road, Lesmurdie, WA 6076 and can be contacted on ann.page@bigpond.com.au

Not present on the day, but a key member of the British veteran community in Western Australia, was Kerry Meacher, who served from 1997 until 2003 as a Military Policewoman in the Adjutant General's Corps in Bosnia, Cyprus and Catterick. She has been a driving force in the local RMP Association's efforts to support the extraordinary fund-raising exploits of her former colleague, Major Phil Packer. He was severely injured in action in Iraq in 2009 and is aiming to raise £1,000,000 for 'Help for Heroes'. Kerry can be contacted on kerrymeacher@hotmail.com

Attendees at the lunch completed a wonderful get-together by contributing generously to 'Help for Heroes'.

A NOTE FROM CANADA

Barbara Fosdick (née Mason) W/74662
e-mail: barbarafosdick@shaw.ca

It is now more than 60 years since I came to Canada, yet every copy of the *Lioness* that arrives transports me back to 'the old days'.

I volunteered for the ATS in 1941 at the age of 17 and was 'released' in 1946 after serving most of that time in Anti-Aircraft Command on gun sites throughout the UK in 3 Batteries: 473, 451 and 670.

At the war's end the British economy was in a sad state and there was little money to spare for the returning forces. With part of my 42 pounds severance pay, I invested in a rather hairy Harris Tweed suit and when I emigrated to Canada in 1947, it travelled with me and saw me through many a frigid Canadian winter.

I met my husband, a Canadian war veteran, in Ontario. We were married for 32 years and had 2 fine children. We moved to Victoria from Edmonton in 1969 and I have been a widow for more than 20 years.

After I retired from my job at the University Library here in Victoria, I heard that there were some ATS in the Ex-Service Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion and decided to join. On my first day I met a woman who remembered me from 451 Battery! Her name was Mary Bell.

Later, as a Life member and 5 year President of the all women's branch, I became fully involved in Legion functions. Although our executive tried to keep the members entertained, I was often envious of the wonderful outings that your Branches enjoyed and wondered about groups such as the Not Forgotten Association who seemed to be so generous.

Because I served on Anti-Aircraft Batteries, I found that many people here could not believe that British women were allowed near the guns and I was able to tell them that on the night of December 8, 1941, I was a spotter on the team that was given credit for assisting in the downing of a hostile aircraft in the South Shields area, and that we were the first women in history to do so.

Over the years I have been invited to speak at schools and museums around Remembrance and have told my story to thousands of young people. Their interest has been very gratifying.

On the strength of my story I have been invited to many functions, and with the Vice Admiral of the Pacific Fleet dropped the first hockey puck to open the hockey season here in Victoria.



Holding High

My greatest pride was in being asked to represent the Canadian Legion as the woman veteran to carry the Torch in the Relay of the 2010 Olympic Games. I was Number 5 in a team of over 1000 who travelled across Canada and was lucky enough to have a route that included Victoria City Hall and Spirit Square where thousands of people gathered to cheer as I carried the flame.

These days I am still a very active 87 year old and attend Royal Canadian Legion conventions and march in all of the military parades. Canadians do like their parades – and our numbers decrease so rapidly now, I am determined to make every day count.

Unfortunately due to frailty and age, we have had to surrender our Charter as an Ex-Service Women's Branch, but some of us do try to meet for a gossipy luncheon once a month.

How grateful I am that I was given the opportunity to serve in the ATS. Although I have been a Canadian for 65 years, most of my family still live in the UK and it is still very much MY COUNTRY.

DONATIONS

Did you know that you can send a donation to the Association at any time? We are often asked if this is possible and the answer is, "Yes, of course it is." Many branches send us donations in memory of members who have sadly passed away but it is possible to make a donation at any time for whatever reason. You can specify whether you want your donation to go to the main Association account – please make cheques payable to WRAC Association – or, if you want it to go to the ATS & WRAC Benevolent Fund then make your cheque payable to ATS & WRAC Benevolent Fund. It is important that you do make out your cheque to the right account.

Whatever you decide to do, PLEASE make sure that we have a Gift Aid form from you. If you pay tax, the funds can reclaim the tax and it adds to the donation you have made without it costing you any more.

A Gift Aid form is available from Headquarters, WRAC Association at Gould House, Worthy Down, Winchester SO21 2RG.

If you have never sent us a donation, perhaps you would be kind enough to think about it now and send it in with the Gift Aid form.

Even if you are not thinking of making a donation now, why not fill in the form anyway and send it back. We will file it and have it to hand if you should be kind enough to make any donations in the future. You will not have to look out the form and we can reclaim the tax!

WRAC Officers' Dining Club

WRAC OFFICERS' LUNCH 21 MAY 2011

Nicky Murdoch

On a glorious day in May, 45 former officers of the ATS and WRAC sat down to lunch in the Winchester Room of the Officers Mess in Worthy Down and enjoyed excellent food, company, wine and a very humorous lunch time. Once again Julian the Master Chef at Worthy Down produced a stunning array of food and all of those attending chatted and laughed throughout the day with old friends. It was brilliant to see a wide range of attendees but I must particularly mention Sarah Povey who had come to her first lunch all the way from Chichester, not knowing anyone else who was there. I have mentioned in previous editions how great these occasions can be when you attend with your friends but Sarah's venture was brave indeed. I am really glad to say that she thoroughly enjoyed herself and says that she will be coming again and perhaps encouraging a few friends to come along too.



Sue Westlake and Monica Jones



Brigadier Nicky Moffat

It was also lovely to see the "Cat on a Twig", which is how the Silver Lioness on the bough of a tree, which used to be on display at dinner nights at Guildford, was affectionately known by some of the young officers of the day (no names, no pack drill but they know who they are!) on display in front of Brigadier Shirley Nield and Brigadier Nicky Moffat. However as PMC of the day, I felt it was important to point out to the assembled friends that standards had obviously slipped where maintenance was concerned. I therefore asked Brigadier Nicky, who had been designated by me as Silver Member for the day, to ensure she cleaned it and made sure all of the usual appendages were in place! It was a very relaxed affair and I think one that was enjoyed by all who attended. It would be lovely to see some more faces there next time and I am actively looking for alternative venues for this lunch for the future so if anyone has any ideas please pass suggestions to me on nicky.murdoch@btinternet.com



General View Before Lunch



From L to R: Penny Spinks, Dame Mary Richardson, Jill Catt



Waiting for Grace in the Winchester Room

WRAC OFFICERS' DINNER 26 NOVEMBER VICTORY SERVICES CLUB

The next WRAC Officers' Dining Club Dinner will be held at the Victory Services Club on Saturday 26th November 2011. The calling letter for the event will be sent out in September. I have had a number of enquiries from former WRAC officers who have expressed an interest in attending which is excellent. In fact I believe many of the entire course, WSC 891 will be attending en masse! It is really fantastic that we are seeing a rise in the number of officers who served in the WRAC joining the Association and the Dining Club so please continue to drum up all of your friends, join the Association and come to what is always an enjoyable and relaxing evening.

Reunions

FRIENDS
Glynn Cardy

Our weekends and periodic evening meals began soon after Sam Simon's farewell when, after meeting for the first time in a long time, we vowed to make more of an effort in Sam's memory.
The Grand Reunion was scheduled in Blackpool the following year, and I understand that the attendance was its biggest ever, as a huge effort had been made to contact as many friends and acquaintances as possible. Everybody knows how good that weekend was and was a great platform for our pending ventures.

I located Three Gates Farm on the outskirts of Manchester, which slept 6 and suited our needs at that time. Down (McLean) lived locally and Donna (Wilson) had made alternative arrangements nearby. We had a ball!!

John and Marjorie who own the Farm House thoroughly enjoyed our company in 2009 and suggested that if we wanted to return we should all stay at the Farm. The overflow could pitch tents in their lovely courtyard garden. The following year 14 of us met there. A day gazebo and an evening Mess Tent/HQ were erected. All of the sleeping quarters were placed strategically around them, and the party began.

Nerys had insisted that she get one of the bedrooms, which was duly agreed. "I don't do b****** camping" she stated over the phone in a strong Welsh accent.

Breakfasts were a breeze for John, for we all dined together. The majority of us were still wearing our pyjamas. Donna, Jan (Ford) and I catered for a fantastic BBQ on the Friday, which lasted into the small hours. John and Marjorie were invited and enthusiastically joined in. Live musical entertainment was provided, courtesy of Donna, Julie (White) and Claire (civvy). Comediennes and impressionists always seem to be there in abundance.

The excursion this year was in May, earlier than usual, so it was suggested that in case of poor weather, we should enjoy a Regimental Dinner on the Saturday. Word must have got around about the camping as June (Skelton) aka Hawkeye and Liz (Aggett) aka Lizzie Nail Polish and Ann (Davison) also insisted on bedrooms. Nerys had already reserved hers. It appeared that I would be camping AGAIN11

We were given, as always, complete use of the Farm House, including the owners' private kitchen. Thank you Jan and Dawn for the help with the prep. Thanks Donna for the Crème Brule, and the effort you made in getting it there. Thanks also to Sharon Smith aka "Pansy Potter". We hadn't seen her for 34 years and on her arrival for lunch was handed a knife, and asked to prepare the fresh fruit kebabs. What's 34 years between friends?
Sincere thanks also to Donna's Mum for the appropriate coloured dinner service and to Nerys and her sister for the delicious lasagnes. Despite the fact that one of them was cremated – almost burned down John and Marjorie's bungalow – nearly suffocated Poppy the Jack Russell – yet still tasted good.

The dress was to be casual with one or 2 additional smart items. Nerys and June wore tiaras, which they believed befitted their status. Jan (Ford) went one further and added a rather gaudy matching necklace and wand to hers. The photos say it all. We had the obligatory sherry and port toasts to the Corps and absent friends, whilst the Corps March played in the background.

All have thanked me endlessly for the effort made each year, but it is always well worth it. I really would like to thank all of them for being there and **ENJOYING** it. It must have been particularly good this year!! Nerys and June were marching around the table by the end of the evening. Saluting to the left and right requires some practice. Nerys once said to me, and I quote: "If you ever see me marching around a dinner table – shoot me!!". I haven't yet. (Shot her that is!!).

We laughed so much during the weekend, our faces and rib cages ached and most of us were hoarse for a week.

We have now been advised of and located a wonderful self catering converted Mill in North Yorkshire and are intending to meet again next year.

Helen and Julie, you were missed this year.







Montage of fun

THE TANGLINER'S ABOARD THE "NIGHT TRAIN FOR INVERNESS"

Carol Traynor

As well as attending the WRAC Dinner Club weekend in October each year, the Tangliner's enjoy having breaks away. In the last few years we have been to lovely places together such as Edinburgh, York, Wivenhoe and Spain and this April some of us decided on Inverness for a spring break.

So on 1st April we caught trains from our home towns up and down the country and met at York station for the night train to Inverness. Oh yes we were doing a rerun of the classic drama 1960 film "Night Train for Inverness"! and if our previous trips were anything to go by – as in the film – this holiday could well be full of suspense, drama, mystery and intrigue.

It was a great train ride through fantastic scenery up the North East coast and up through the Highlands with some snow still on the mountains, arriving in Inverness at 8 pm. It was a long journey but well worth it when we arrived at our rental house and saw how lovely it was, situated on a hill overlooking Inverness. It was very homely and well equipped and had a sun lounge, log fires, and an aga stove and lovely garden.





We packed a lot into the week and went out everyday. One day we had a wonderful ride on the Kyle of Lochalsh railway. It took 2 and a half hours each way going from Inverness across to the west coast of Scotland, all the time going through amazing mountain highland scenery, past lochs and farms, stopping at quaint country villages and seeing lots of wildlife. Then on reaching our destination was the lovely costal village of Kyle, which had fantastic views of the Island of Skye just across the water. In Kyle there was a café and gift shop so a nice couple of hours were spent until it was time for the return journey. Aboard the train again we settled down to watch the stunning highland scenery, and as we pulled out of Kyle we saw lovely sandy coves with clear turquoise water and small islands dotted about in the sparkling sea and the sudden bursts of rain would cast fabulous rainbows across the mountains and lochs. It made a lovely unfolding scene as the train gently made its way winding through the mountain valleys back to Inverness.

Another day we went to Loch Ness, but if Nessie was out there in the choppy water we didn't see a thing, because it was much too windy for us to spot him!

A couple of days we spent in Inverness browsing round the shops, we found a well known book shop called Leakey's which is full of character. It was a book lovers delight, a lovely old church converted into a book shop, full of character, floor to ceiling packed with rare old and new books, a massive log burning stove in the middle of the shop, nice café, and comfy couches to sit on and read (so comfortable a couple of us were caught by the others having 40 winks!).

It was so nice to share a house together for this spring break. Some of us had not been well prior to going to Inverness, in particular Patricia (Flogger) Gates had been ill in hospital, but happily was better just in time for our holiday. We had a very enjoyable week with the usual camaraderie, support and sense of humour, which we have somehow happily retained from all those many years ago when we were in the WRAC.











The Tangliner's Go North

WALES & THE WEST AREA REUNION 2011

The above mentioned Area Reunion will be held at the Lord Hill Hotel on Saturday 22nd October 2011 at 1100 hours, Shrewsbury.

For further details please contact the Secretary, Irene Hall on 01743 271155.

THE SOUTH AND SOUTH WEST AREA REUNION

Ruth Jennings, Secretary (01752 363118)

As any Secretary will tell you, planning and organizing an area reunion is no picnic.

Way back in October 2008, at the South and South West Area Branch Officer's Meeting it was agreed that Plymouth would take its turn at being host for 2011. The date seemed a long way away and nothing to worry about; little did I and the ladies of the committee know how innocent we were!

In 209, with plenty of time to play with we began to plan. During that summer I had twice attended functions where The Right Honourable Ann Widdecombe was giving a talk and I thought it would be fantastic if she came to our reunion. We had booked the venue well in advance and Miss Widdecmobe agreed to be with us so it was going to be plain sailing until the great day, 2nd July 2011.

In May 2010 we had a call from our regular meeting place, the Royal Fleet Club, which was also our venue for the reunion, to say that the Club had been sold, it would no longer be a hotel or a meeting place for us. Our first priority was to get a new meeting venue; the second was to find a suitable place with reasonable accommodation for 2011. With help from the manager we were accepted by Boringdon Hall on more or less the same deal as the Fleet Club and towards the end of the year I sent out the invitations to all branches of the South and South West.

In addition, Miss Widdecombe's PA told me that if we would sell some of Ann's books, which I had to order from the publishers, her profit would be given to us, for the good of the Association. We decided to donate it to the *Lioness*. Out Treasurer, Mary Davis, Thelma Rendle and I decided to book ourselves into the Hall for two nights to be a small reception committee and our Area Chairman, Major Maskens-McIntyre also came for the weekend plus ladies from other branches who fancied a weekend away. Our new Chairman, Jane Evans also joined us on the Friday evening to familiarize herself with the set up. She was back early on Saturday morning ready for our first guests around 11am. People from Southampton, Winchester, Salisbury, Bournemouth and Weymouth and Portland, plus Plymouth members came from Barnstable, Newquay, Landrake and Totnes and around the city. 74 members made it with apologies from a few absentees; we were really sorry they could not make it due to illnessetc, they had missed a treat.

Miss Widdecombe arrived at 12 noon, she lives locally so was able to drive to the Hall with little trouble. Ann set herself up at a table in the dining hall, happily posing for the ladies as they came to have their books autographed which they had purchased either by pre-ordering or buying form the extra books that the publishers advised me to order. Following that she went around the tables talking to many of our guests before we settled down for the Area Chairman, Major Maskens-McIntyre to perform the introductions. This was followed by Grace before eating and then we all selected our lunches from a lovely buffet, which was well presented and plentiful. After the Loyal Toast, Ann regaled us with funny tales from her life in politics and then opened up a question time. This caused more fun and prompted other questions. This was followed by a raffle which raised a magnificent sum of



The South and South West Ladies en masse

£300 for the *Lioness* with tea, coffee, soft drinks and beautiful cakes which were made for us by Janie Coaker's daughter. Unfortunately neither of who were able to be there because of illnesses. All too soon the coaches and cars were waiting at the door to take our visitors home, the rest of us went to our rooms to recuperate before emerging again for dinner and chatting with different members form the Branches. On Sunday morning after breakfast, we reluctantly left Boringdon and headed for home.



A Truly Great Reunion

Letters to the Editor

ATS POSTERS

Winifred Frances Hughes née Goodbody, W/8087 ATS
74 Beech Way, Clarke Estate, Basingstoke, Hants
RG23 8LP

Dear Editor,

I am interested in the ATS Poster, Blonde Bombshell. I am not sure which one it is but I enclose this one (*Your friends are needed now – urge them to join the ATS)* which you are welcome to keep. One of my sons works for the MOD helping bereaved families and injured soldiers. This poster was found when they were clearing out offices. He has also given me a huge one measuring 30" x 20". If you have not got it I can let you have some now.

ARMED FORCES DAY

Eileen Welton née Wright
13 Trenholme Avenue, Wood Side, Bradford
BD6 2NJ

Dear Editor,

I sent a photo of our Armed Forces Day hoping it would be in the *Lioness* received today but it was not. Myself and Mrs Elsie Lambert, we have both served 4 years. We had a lovely day as usual and we are looking forward to June again.



Lovely Day had by all, Eileen Welton née Wright, Elsie Lambert

7 PLUS 1

Barbara Danter
30 Blake Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham
NG2 5JL

Editor's Note: I have slightly amended this letter in that I wish to use some of the material in Lioness 1/12 under ATS Reminiscences. I hope the author will not mind.

Dear Editor,

It was great to see in print in the *Lioness*, the letter to All Ranks of the ATS commending us on our contribution to the war effort. It filled us with pride. Personally I loved every moment of my time in the services. We often pop in to see the local Recruiting Officer, namely Major Rhodes, to see if they are taking in any over 80s! His reply is always "oh, if only you had come in yesterday". Moving on, last September we spent several days in Holland, where we were treated with great respect and had a very enjoyable time there. It was however, a visit to Arnhem that impressed us most, where all the school children paraded onto what I would call the Field of Homage to those who died. Each child stood in front of a grave holding flowers, and at the end of the Service the Padre told them to make a mental note of the name on the gravestone because that would be the grave that they would be tending and keeping in good order for the whole year. Quite something to see I can tell you. The graves are looked after really well and sometimes the children leave tea lights or a favourite toy on each plot.

Sometimes life gives us a second chance and I have learned that when I have a pain, I don't have to be one. I have also learned that I still have a lot to learn, and that old is when someone compliments you on your alligator shoes and you are actually barefoot!! Old is when you are cautioned to go slow by your doctor and not by the police. And lastly, old is when your age and your waist measurements are change places. Hope everyone out there has a good summer and here's to the next edition of the *Lioness*.

THE FUTURE

Iris Howe née Chamberlain 389460 LCpl Provost
133 Corn Close, South Normanton, Alfreton,
Derbyshire, DE55 2JE

Dear Editor,

I was pleased to see todays Army girls being included in our *Lioness*. We must keep in touch with todays future as well as our past. It was nice to see so many young people at the Dinner Club and other functions; they are the future of the *Lioness*. Without them we will end up like old soldiers and just fade away.

HMS GANGES ASSOCIATION

Martha Bruce née Watson (Mattie)
47 Cawdor Crescent, Kirkcaldy, Fife, KY2 6LH

Dear Editor,

I was surprised to find my memories in the *Lioness*. I wrote them years ago when asked. I am a member of the HMS Ganges Association. There are not so many of us around now. But I am pleased to say that the couple who met at HMS Cosby K559 and also our Ack Ack Bty 559, will have been married for 66 years on 26th March this year. We still keep in touch.

MARGOT COOPER
Merville Pidgeon née LCpl Collinson
52 Castlemain Avenue, Bournemouth, BH6 5EL

Dear Editor,

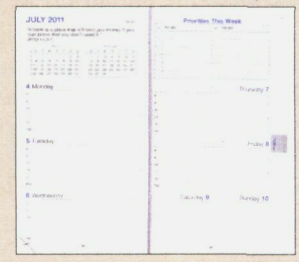
You may have seen the obituary for the late Miss Marshall, who organised the ATS at Potsdam, but in case, like me, you may have missed it I am sending a copy to you (published in *Lioness* 1/11). Miss Marshall interviewed my friend and myself when we arrived in Potsdam and sent us to Mr Churchill's house to help with light duties. We had been previously told that secretaries would not be wanted but we could go if we were prepared to do light duties. As it was such a big historic occasion we accepted. However, having made Mr Churchill's bed, we were then told to return in the evening as there was a big banquet that evening and there would be a lot of washing up to do!! My friend and I did not think this was a light duty so reported to Miss Marshall who made no fuss at all. She simply transferred us to Lord Portal's house where we simply had to make the morning coffee and afternoon tea…we often wondered who did the washing up!!

ASSOCIATION DIARY



Association diaries have, until now, only been available through Branches. This year, they are available to the whole membership. The diaries measure 6 inches by 3.5 inches and cost £3.50 including p&p.

Diaries are available from the WRAC Association, Gould House, Worthy Down, Winchester SO21 2RG.



Cheques should be made payable to WRAC Association.

Poems

THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Submitted by Miss Jill C S Hunt who received it from Daisy Bastow WRAC

The British Medical Association has weighed in on the new Prime Minister's health care proposals:
The **Allergists** voted to scratch it, but the **Dermatologists** advised not to make any sudden moves.
The **Gastroenterologists** had a sort of gut feeling about it, but the **Neurologists** thought the administration had a lot of nerve.
The **Obstetricians** felt they were all labouring under a misconception.
The **Ophthalmologists** considered the idea short sighted.
The **Pathologists** yelled "over my dead body" while the **Paediatrician** said "oh grow up".
The **Psychiatrists** thought the whole idea was madness, while the **Radiologists** could see right through it.
The **Surgeons** were fed up with the cuts and decided to wash their hands of the whole thing.
The **ENT Specialists** didn't swallow it, and just wouldn't hear of it.
The **Pharmacologists** thought it was a bitter pill to swallow, and the **Plastic Surgeon** said, "this puts a whole new face on the matter".
The **Podiatrists** thought it was a step forward.
The **Anaesthetists** thought the whole idea was a gas, but the **Cardiologists** didn't have the heart to say no.

WOMEN OF THE QUEEN
Sandy Acathan W/396790

Smartly they marched on parade
The women who served the Queen
Loyal and dedicated to the cause
Were the ranks of khaki and lovat green.
Smartly marching shoes-a-shining
Not a badge or button out of place
Highly trained and many skills
With pride showing on every face.
Smartly they marched with heads held high
To the music of the military band
The Lass of Richmond Hill rang out
And the sight was really grand.
Smartly marching they took the salute
Eyes right and in perfect line
The uniformed women who served the Queen
And one pair of eyes were mine.

COPY DEADLINE

Articles for inclusion in the next edition of the *Lioness* must be received by

15 DECEMBER 2011

AN ODE ON BEING OLD
Anon

There is nothing the matter with me
I am as healthy as healthy can be
I have arthritis in both knees
And when I talk I talk with a wheeze
My pulse is weak, my blood is thin –
But I am awfully well for the state I am in.
Arch supports I wear on my feet –
Or I would not be able to walk down the street
Sleep is denied me night after night
But every morning I find I am alright
My memory is failing – my heart in a spin
But I am awfully well for the state I am in.
The moral is this, as my tale unfolds
That for you and me who are growing old
It is better to say "I'm fine" with a grin
Than to let folk know the state you are in.
Old age is golden, I've heard it said
But sometimes I wonder when I get to bed.
My ears in a drawer, my teeth in a cup
My eyes on the table for when I wake up.
When sleep overtakes me I say to myself
Is there anything else I can put on the shelf.
When I was young my slippers were red
I could kick my heels right over my head
As I grew older my slippers were blue
And still I could dance the whole night through.
Now that I am old my slippers are black
I walk to the shops and then puff my way back.
I get up in the morning – dust up my wits –
Then pick up the paper to read the "obits"
If my name is still missing, I know I'm not dead
So I have a good breakfast and go back to bed.

WE SOLDIER ON IN HARROGATE
Mrs Pam Shearstone, W/382522

Not one or two but quite a few
Sixteen stalwarts at each meeting
Partake in gossip. Laughs and greeting
By bus, by taxi, even walk
To sit and listen, share and talk.....
The venue varies month by month
Drink mugs of tea and biscuits crunch...

A day to get dressed up for
Hair do's, handbags, glasses
Must not forget bus passes!!!

THE LAND GIRLS
Roy Hobbs

In days of war when food was scarce
And men were called to arms
A cry went out for volunteers
To do the work on farms.
So the WLA was born
A very motley crowd
Learning as they went along
They really did us proud.

They came from every walk of life
And gave up good careers
From debutantes to servant girls
They overcame their fears.
Some handled big shire horses
Some drove a big machine
Or sometimes dealt with animals
They'd never even seen.

They worked long hours in the summer heat
To mow and make the hay
And threshed the corn in harvest time
Through twelve hours every day.
Their efforts helped us all get through
The six long years of war
And saved us all from starvation
So who could ask for more.

Now let us drink to all the girls
Wherever they may be
The girls who sacrificed so much
For folk like you and me.

Obituaries – their final salute

GILLIAN (GILL) SALE WRAC
18 January 2011

Editor's Note: I have received 3 tributes to Gill Sale and made the decision that they should all be published. Gill was formerly the Chair of the Aldershot Branch and Secretary of the Band Branch. At the time of her death Gill was a member of Winchester Branch.



Proud to be the Drum Major

GILLIAN SALE – DRUM MAJOR AND FRIEND

I first met Gill in the 60s when she was amongst other things a percussionist in the Band and I was in the Pay Office. We became friends as her partner on the Xylaphone, which incidentally was a fantastic act if you were fortunate enough to attend a Band Concert, was my table tennis partner Kath Corrigan.

I moved away from Guildford but returned later when Gill was Drum Major and I was SM, so obviously we spent a lot of time together. Socially I went to her cottage on the Hogs Back for many meals and drinks and would you believe it, there was a cat called Tara – a somewhat devious name for an RSM. Our work involved many hours on the square at Guildford and ceremonial duties in London, the Lord Mayor's Show and the Festival of Remembrance amongst others. On one occasion after the Festival we all piled onto our respective coaches on a dash back so we could see the recording on the television. I was just getting settled with a drink in front of the TV when I received a hone call from the MRS to say that Gill had stepped off the coach only to fall down a manhole and injure her leg. I rushed up there to find Gill in bed cussing Matron who would not let her go home. Anyway apart from some nasty bruises she was let loose the next day.

My time at Guildford came to an end and off I went to Germany. In the middle of helping to arrange a Band Tour of BAOR, I had a disagreement with an assault course and ended up in hospital. I couldn't have been too unpopular at Guildford as a contingent from the Band came to the day room to play for me. I was wheeled along in my bed to hear them and one of the lads who had just come back from Theatre thought he had gone to Heaven.

Gill and I kept in touch through the Association, Gill at Aldershot as Branch Secretary and myself as Area Secretary. I suggested that Gill should apply to work part time on the Pensions Appeal Tribunal, a very rewarding job which I had done since 1984. Gill served with compassion and dedication in this role and made many friends. She retired after her first brush with cancer and was sorely missed. Her final illness was a great shock to us all. Gill addressed it with great courage and determination and intended to pack as much into the remainder of her life as she could. Sadly the end came all too soon. She leaves behind not only her family but many friends. Gill was a kind considerate person, a loyal friend, a life lost so early when she had much more to give.

Joan Ford née Beresford



More recent times

A TRIBUTE TO GILL SALE

Upon leaving the Army in 1980 Gill decided to settle in the Aldershot area and took up a position as Assistant to the General Secretary of the Post Office Fellowship of Remembrance (POFR) where she remained until 1997. She then took up a new position in the MOD at HQ 4th Division, working firstly in the Discipline Branch and finally as Office Manager in the Sickness Management Team (SAM), dealing with soldiers on sick leave.

It was in April 2008, whilst working at HQ 4th Division that Gill was diagnosed with breast cancer. After intensive surgery and a year of debilitating treatment she made what she thought to be, at the time, a good recovery and

required no further treatment apart from reconstructive surgery. Gill celebrated her 60th birthday on 27th June 2010. Tests showed that her cancer markers were clear and she was approaching the final operation to complete her breast reconstruction, due in the following November. She retired at the end of August that year and in September moved to a bungalow in Seaford, East Sussex. Three weeks after the move Gill suffered what she thought to be a mild stroke which she supposed to have been caused by the stress of retirement and of moving house. Sadly it proved to be in fact the return of the cancer and she was only given a few months to live. Those last few months were spent cramming a three years programme of work on the bungalow into three months!

It is difficult to do justice to Gill's sadly shortened life – many of us remember her immaculate and inspiring appearance during the numerous ceremonial events which she led during her Service as Band Sergeant Major and members of the Band and former Aldershot branches in particular, plus the wider membership of the WRAC Association, have reason to be grateful to Gill for the dedication and hard work which she put in on their behalf. The love and respect which she inspired in her recent colleagues at HQ 4th Division was emphasised by the number of them who took a days leave to be part of the congregation of over a hundred who, together with representatives of the Association and her Winchester Branch, gathered to bid her a final farewell at her funeral in Eastbourne. Gill will be most deeply missed by her many friends and family to whom we offer our sincere sympathies.

Gill dealt with her terminal illness with exemplary courage and dignity. It was her dearest wish that she should remain and die at home; a desire made possible by the love and devotion of Brenda Killick, who nursed her throughout the last four months of her life, attending to her every need, leaving her side only to fulfil the duties of her care. In this she was aided by the unstinting help of the local district nurses and nearby hospice staff and an amazing former Royal Air Force doctor (Gill did not hold his service details against him!). May she rest in peace.

Alison Schofield

A MEMORY OF GILL SALE

Spring would see the Band on the drill square spending numerous hours practicing the new season's marching display which was choreographed by Gill in her role as Drum Major. The marching displays were performed at various public events throughout the year, always at the height of summer when the temperatures were soaring, and always after the horses who would leave little presents in the arena for us to negotiate. It is not surprising therefore that with all 45 bandswomen melting in the heat, dressed in their thick woollen No. 1 uniforms, that there were times when things did not go quite as rehearsed. One particular challenge was the Bomb Burst. This drill required each line of musicians to split off in all directions, then interweaving and finally returning to where they started (if only!). But there was Gill, tall, upright, immaculate, mace firmly in hand, our very own human Sat Nav, who would witness the horror on your face as you realised you had taken a wrong turn. With a quick decisive flick of her eyes and a quickly whispered "left turn" you were guided safely home, our audience oblivious.

Karen Ballard

W/210356 GWENDOLINE MARY SANDERSON ATS

7 June 2011



Wartime Service



More recent times

It is with regret that I have to inform the WRAC Association that my mother, Mrs Gwendoline Mary Sanderson died on 7th June 2011. I would be grateful if you would publish the enclosed photographs showing my mother in her ATS uniform and another photograph in more recent times.

Frances Sanderson

EDNA MARGARET McHENRY NÉE HAWLER ATS – 2010

Margaret served in 530 Mixed Heavy Ack Ack Battery as Operational Staff at Chingford Essex in 1944 and 1945. Originally from Derbyshire she met her husband Ron, who was in the Scots Guards while serving with the ATS.

They married and moved to Liverpool. She joined the WRAC Association in the early 1950s and attended meeting held at the Royal British Legion Club in Rodney Street. Ron was Secretary to the Scots Guards Association so she also became very involved with them. Margaret served for many years as Vice President to the CESRA (The Merseyside Council of Ex Service and Regimental Associations). Although in the latter years, due to increased mobility problems, she could not attend as many Branch meetings as she would have liked, she is sadly missed by her ATS and WRAC Comrades at the Liverpool Branch.

Pat Brown



Edna Margaret McHenry 1944/45

MAJOR COLIN DENING CARR MC
27 March 2011

Colin Carr was an Instructor at the WRAC College in the 1970s and early 1980s. Many WRAC Officers, WOs and NCOs went through the College during his time there. He instructed on the Cadet and WONCO Wing and taught map reading, Field Exercises, Military Tactics amongst others. Colin was loved by all who knew him and were taught by him. He was awarded an MC for his outstanding bravery in Korea in 1952 where he was severely wounded whilst clearing out a minefield. He was a true father figure and one of the best. Many of the Association members will remember him fondly.

Sue Westlake

MAUREEN ELIZABETH GOODENOUGH
NÉE POLAND WRAC/QARANC
2 March 2011

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that my wife Maureen Elizabeth Goodenough passed away on 2nd March 2011 at Arrowe Park Hospital, Wirral. She served with 493 (M) HAA Regiment in 1949, followed by 102 Tpt Col RASC TA in 1956 and QARANC 208 General Hospital (V) in 1964. She was discharged on 5th November 1970 after the birth of our son Paul.



Folkestone, 1962

W/106398 SGT JOAN WAY JONES
NÉE SHEPHERD WRAC
15 April 2011



Sgt Joan Shepherd, May 1954

Joan Way Jones (née Shepherd) was born at Philly Hall Farm, Easby, in the North Riding of Yorkshire on the 23rd January 1925. The youngest of twelve children of a

tenant farmer whose family had tilled the soil of Lord Guisborough and his predecessor's estate for over 350 years and whose ancestry is traceable almost as far back as the 16th Century and the farm back to the Domesday Book.

At the beginning of the 1939 – 1945 war, Joan was evacuated to Pickering in the North Riding where at the age of nearly 17 she decided that she was not happy with her lot so she would do her bit for her country and join the Army. She was sworn in at Fulford Barrack York on the 21st October 1941. After basic training at Fulford, basic A A training at Oswestry and target practices at Ty Croes, Joan found herself manning the Predictors and range finders of a Royal Artillery mixed Anti-Aircraft Gun Battery on Clapham Common; soon to be transferred to a variety of sites along the Kent and Sussex coast. The was over, Joan served for a total of 17 years on locations such as the War Office, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast and Bielefeld. In 1956 Joan was posted to Episkopi, Cyprus for the Suez Operation where she met her husband to be, Charles, a War Office official on the staff of the Deputy Directorate of Works in GHQ. They were married in Episkopi cantonment on the 17th March 1959 in a consecrated Nissen hut used by all denominations and honeymooned in Beirut and Jerusalem. A tour in Nicosia followed with Charles at the Chief Engineer's Branch and Joan on the staff of General Harding before returning to Episkopi. Glynis Ann was born (in somewhat of a hurry!) in the MRS of the Devonshire & Dorset Regiment at Polemedhia on the 3rd of November 1960. Returning to the UK, Charles was posted to the Directorate of Fortifications & Works, Chessington Surrey and Bronwen Ruth was born at home in Carshalton Beeches on the 22nd October 1063.

Subsequently posted to rural Catterick, Joan soon became engrossed in village life, helping to run the Sunday School and Girl Guides and Brownie packs. When word got around in the village that Mrs Jones was taking Glynis and Bronwen for a walk in the fields it was like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, so many tagged along. She made the countryside come to life. Charles, in the meantime was posted unaccompanied to Nepal following which they found themselves in Cardiff where, in the local village of Dinas Powis, Joan continued with her activities adding The Royal British Legion, The Women's Institute and helping at the local Post Office. Then a further unaccompanied tour of Nepal. The final four years before retirement were spent in Bielefeld, Germany, where Joan's handicraft skills were in great demand at the Army Wives' Club. Then in 1989, on retirement to Bakewell, Derbyshire, Joan enjoyed membership of The Friday Group, the Womens' Section of The Royal British Legion and The Hospital of Bakewell Supporters Club. During her 14 years as Honorary Secretary of HOBS, Joan organised a formidable 170 dinner evenings and lunches, 69 coach outings and 27 coffee mornings as well as having a considerable input into many quizzes. She retired through ill health at the AGM on Wednesday 16th March 2011 and sadly died less than 5 weeks later on Friday 15th April 2011.

Joan led a rich and full life, happy in the services of her country and her fellow beings and despite diabetics and neuropathy and cancer for the past 3 years, borne stoically and without ever a complaint, she remained a happy and truly altruistic person to the end. A devoted wife, a loving mother and grandmother and a friend to all. An unexcelled example of service before self. A true "Lioness". May she rest in peace.

Charles W Jones

W/394921 MARGARET ROSE BESWICK WRAC

27 April 2011



Woolwich in the 1950s



WRAC Dinner 12th October 2002 with friends

Margaret Beswick served in the WRAC from 1956 – 1960 and passed away aged 72 years. Margaret was first posted to Shoeburyness as an experimental gunner stationed with the Royal Artillery. She then reallocated and went to Yeovil to train as a driver. She then served at Hounslow as a driver. Her final posting was to BAOR with 68 Squadron. After her discharge she worked for a number of years as an Area Manager for Greggs Bakers. She finished her working career as a Manager of a care in the community organisation. She was a strong and organised individual, a supreme negotiator and would fight for her clients, who were mainly elderly people. She fully understood their needs. Unfortunately Margaret

developed renal failure in 1989. She coped with this in a stoic and positive way and never complained about having to travel 3 times per week to her treatment on dialysis. She told many stories about her time in the WRAC. She continued her friendships with many of her friends and attended the reunions and always had great fun.

Margaret will be sadly missed for her sense of humour, her bravery with her health problems and her down to earth quality. She was a kind and loyal friend and will be remembered by all who knew her.

Anne McCormack

MARGARET HEWITT OBE ATS/WRAC
27 December 2010

Margaret Hewitt was born in Sheffield on the 13th August 1913 and raised in India where her father was serving in the Army. On her return to UK she lived in Staffordshire and worked as a secretary for the Spode pottery company. She met Fred Hewitt and the couple, who were both members of the TA married in 1939. They were apart for most of the Second World War and while her husband was abroad, Margaret served in the ATS/WRAC rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. After the war they settled in Formby which at that time was part of Lancashire. She was closely involved with the National Association of Flower Arranging Societies (NAFAS) becoming the National Chair between 1971 and 1973. She maintained her links with the WRAC (TA) and founded the peacetime Lancashire Battalion for which she was awarded the OBE. The Hewitts moved to Perthshire, Scotland in 1973 where Margaret continued her work with NAFAS and was elected to the Council for the National Trust for Scotland serving 5 years until 1992. The couple, who had no children, were keen walkers and well known for their good fun and excellent company. Fred pre-deceased Margaret in 2007. Margaret died on 27th December 2010 at the age of 97 and will be remembered for her strength of character, physical presence to make things happen and innate ability to enthuse others and turn a potential project into a reality.

With thanks to the Scotsman Newspaper and Alison Shaw, the writer of the original Obituary which appeared in the Scotsman newspaper on Saturday 15th January 2011.

Jo Young

W/158488 JUNE AVERILL BOOTH ATS
14 May 2011

June Averill both died on 14th May 2011 aged 86 years. The funeral Service was held on Friday 27th May at Boston Crematorium, Lincolnshire. The Service was attended by 14 members of the Lincoln and District Branch of the WRAC Association who formed a Guard of Honour together with their standard. June was a founder member of the Branch together with Chris Corker and Gwyneth Stratten. She had been the Chair until her health started to deteriorate in 2010 and was delighted to be asked to be the first Branch President.

Jean Evans



Proud member of the WRAC Association

BERYL SIMS WRAC
December 2010



Officer Cadet Beryl Sims

Beryl Sims was commissioned from No. 11 WRAC Officer Cadet Course, Liphook, in 1955 and served at Bicester, Yeovil and Guildford. She was passionately fond of choral, classical and church music, which together with the WRAC Association, many forms of civic service and Jack Russell terriers, formed the major interests in her life. Her 3 sons were all choral scholars at Hereford Cathedral (a connection which she maintained as a steward at the annual Three Choirs Festival until shortly before her death). Amongst other musical activities was her participation in Concerts at Charterhouse and at local musical festivals, but her longest and most devoted service was in the auxiliary choir at Guildford Cathedral where she was also choral musical librarian and a cathedral guide. It was her that she kept an eagle eye on the Association window, rarely missing an opportunity to seek out new members from any visitors that paused before it. Every year on the anniversary of the 1974 IRA bomb attack on Guildford she placed beneath our window a chaplet of poppies and a memorial card recording the names of Privates Caroline Slater and Ann Hamilton who were killed on that day.

Beryl served for many years on the committee of the Aldershot Branch of the Association, bringing otherwise housebound members to branch meetings and taking

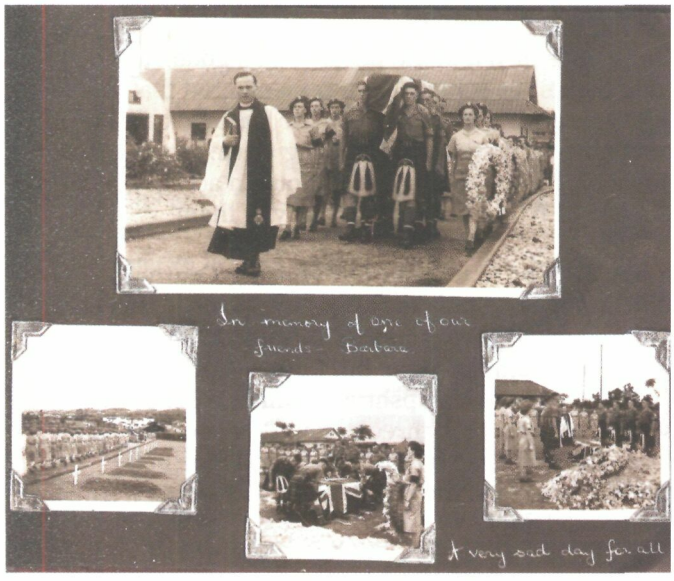
care to keep in touch with them when they were no longer able to leave their homes. In her home borough of Cranleigh she was an elected member of the council and in addition to other portfolios served as mayor for several terms. Her outstanding devotion to public duty was recognised by the award of the Maundy Money when HM The Queen distributed it at Guildford Cathedral – an occasion upon which. Quite unabashed, she took it upon herself to draw Her Majesty's attention to our window! Photographs of the occasion are on page 62 of *Lioness* 2/2006.

Beryl's last appearance at an Association function was at the reception to launch the WRAC in Guildford memorial exhibition in April 2010. She had by then been undergoing chemotherapy for the previous 4 years but donned her "Maundy Outfit" adjusted her wig and stood conversing and answering questions for hours. Never during her long course on interest did she allow anything to prevent her from carrying out any of the tasks to which she had committed herself.

Alison Schofield

BARBARA ATKINSON WRAC
May 1950

Editor's Note: In Lioness 1/11 page 46 within the article entitled Singapore Conundrum, there is a request for more information about two young women who had WRAC headstones in the war cemetery in Kranji. One of these, Barbara Atkinson was known to one of our members and I thought she deserved her few lines in Their Final Salute.



Funeral of Pte Barbara Atkinson

I knew Barbara very well and her death – by a haemorrhage – was a great shock. With regards to the funeral, we were told transport would be laid on for anyone who wanted to go and there was not one girl on camp who did not and I must say it was one of the smartest turnouts I ever did see in all my time in the Army. At the cemetery we all slow marched and the only men present were those carrying the coffin and firing the Salute. Have you ever seen a whole bunch of girls standing to attention trying not to cry? Not a pretty sight. Barbara was a lovely girl who had the voice of Judy Garland when she sang. We certainly missed her after she had gone.

Joyce Lambourne and Sue Bateman

JEAN KINGDON (NÉE BLACK) ATS
24 March 2011



Jean Black, date unknown

Sometime in 1938, Jean "signed up" in the Leigh Road Drill Hall (no the Leigh Ball Room) in Eastleigh, Hampshire. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service attached to the Hampshire Regiment, later the Royal Hampshire Regiment. She was very proud of her Army Number W1554, which means she was among the first two thousand to "join up".

Her unit became the 42nd Coy ATS. They used to travel to Winchester once a week for training, either in the lower barracks or in Newburgh House. Two or three weeks before war was declared, they were "called up" and they reported to Winchester Barracks. Those who could travel easily, or lived in Winchester, slept at home and worked in the barracks during the day. They did not have to work on Sundays.

On 3rd September 1939, Jean took a trip to the New Forest, with a neighbour to check on his bees. He had taken them to the Forest for the heather honey. On the way home they saw so many Don Rs (dispatch riders) and military vehicles of all kinds on the roads, that they were sure something big had happened and of course,

when they arrived home, the declaration of war was confirmed.

It was back to the barracks on Monday. Jean was a clerk in Q store. National Servicemen and Territorials were being called up and she processed the issue of clothing and equipment. She could not think why each soldier was issued with 2 and a half yards of flannelette. It turned out to be "pull through" for cleaning rifles, also called "four by two", a length of flannel four inches wide, with a red thread across it every two inches. That red stripe had been introduced in the past to stop the material being used for other purposes.

A few days after the outbreak of war, they were told to report to the barracks before eight o'clock in the morning, complete with kit bags etc. They were to be posted to an unknown destination. The unit of thirty or forty women, in new shoes and uniforms, fell in behind the regiment. They marched proudly out of Winchester, behind the County Regiment. Jean said that it seemed as if the whole of Winchester had turned out to wave goodbye. It was very moving. They marched from the barracks to the railway station, where they boarded trains to where? Guess where it was. They went to Lymington for Yarmouth and the Isle of Wight! The trains on the island were very short and some of the girls had to sit around for ages, waiting for trains to take them from Yarmouth to Newport. Thank goodness it was a fine day.

Jean has memories of all troops all sitting around and singing songs like "Little Sir Echo" and "Isle of Capri" etc. They eventually arrived at Albany Barracks (now Albany Prison) late in the evening, about eight o'clock. They were given a meal at the cookhouse which had been prepared at midday and kept hot!

After the meal the ATS had to fall in, with kit bags, and they were marched to various houses, all within reasonable walking distance of the barracks where they were billeted, but only to sleep. They had to be in barracks for breakfast and stayed all day to work. In the early days, rules were very strict: they were not supposed to go out with a male on their own, but it was permissible to make up a foursome. They were supposed to be in by 9.30 p.m. each evening and the landladies were told to report the girls if they were late in. These rules proved difficult to enforce. After sometime, the ATS were moved into large houses situated outside Newport near Carisbrook Castle and they were bussed into barracks for breakfast etc.

Jean had good memories of Albany: the barracks took in "the Jersey boys", when the Channel Islands were evacuated. The Royal Militia of the Island of Jersey was the 11th Battalion The Hampshire Regiment. Jean remembered a dance in the gym with the regimental flag and that of RMIJ on show and guarded, with corks on the tips of bayonets.

A lot of Dunkirk boys were accommodated in Parkhurst at the time of the evacuation. In the Q store they worked long hours. The troops were so overcrowded that the beds were arranged alternatively, heads and feet to the wall. There was a space between the beds but less than regulations said.

There were talent contests and a certain Cpl. Arthur English was very funny. After the war he gave up his job as a painter and decorator and took a job as a comedian at the Windmill Theatre in London. He became very famous in music hall and on the radio.

Albany was an Infantry Training Centre, a course lasted three months. There was an intake of 288 each month and each month 288 were posted out. One intake was all short men, less than 5ft 2ins. It was dangerous when they were drilling with fixed bayonets. (They had Lee Enfield rifles in those days). Jean remembers one of these men walking under her arm as she held a door open, she was 5ft 2ins.

Another intake could not read and write properly. Some were quite intelligent, but had not been to school for some reason. They were trained to control traffic and similar duties.

At one time, when there was some kind of flag on, the troops were confined to barracks, but allowed to the cinema in armed parties, marched to and from the barracks. If Jean wanted to go to "the flicks" with a boyfriend she had to meet him in the foyer. Imagine sitting in the picture house, he with his rifle, tin hat and gas mask, and you with a tin hat and gas mask. (Remember, the service respirator was bigger than civilian model). There was not a lot of room for holding hands. They were allowed out to go to some dances in the drill hall but again Jean would have to meet her partner inside and hope he was not on duty, guarding the rifles in the cloakroom.

During this time, the Battle of Britain was taking place. On the Isle of Wight the people had a good view of the "dog flights" over head. Jean remembered that one Jerry pilot scored a "double one" on the prison clock. She also remembered a very good looking German was taken prisoner. He spoke English without an accent and knew the Isle of Wight better than many of them.

It was decided to transfer the Training Centre to Colchester, so almost everyone was posted. Jean stayed with the depot party and was attached to another ATS Coy. For accommodation, but for messing and duty she was still with the Hampshire Regimen. There was a sergeant, a corporal, three of four men and one ATS Jean. They all lived on the first floor of one of the married quarters, the office, mess and stores were on the ground floor.

Later Jean was promoted and posted as NCO IC Detachment at Fort Bembridge above Sandown, IOW, HQ Coast Defence Artillery. She was not happy at swapping her breast pocket badge from The Hampshire Rose, to a bomb! There were Army, Navy and Air Force all stationed there. The Navy were in the early stages of Asdic and the RAF with radar. They also had a Secret Service pigeon loft, looked after by a Cpl in the Signals. The Navy, being the Senior Service, took command, the piece of lawn outside the Naval Office and the orderly room was called the Quarter Deck and no one was allowed to walk on it.

The fort was entered over a drawbridge, guarded by the

Navy. The RAF "Brylcream Boys all slept in civvy digs and were bussed in daily. The Navy and Army boys lived in rooms built into the hill and the walls of the fort. The twelve girls were in a hut on the barrack square. If there was an air raid they had to get up and go to the MI room. Five of the twelve girls were called Jean, so they were known by nick names e.g. Robbie. To some people Jean is still "Blacky".

The Army and Navy shared a cookhouse; each had a stove and did their own cooking. The Navy side of the kitchen was referred to as the gallery and the Army side as the cookhouse. Each Service had its own mess hall. They used to go out and collect nettles to use as a green vegetable and winkles from the shore to try to liven up the food.

The NAAFI in the fort was run by an ATS Lance Corporal. The sudden influx of a hundred men from the Dorset Regiment meant that she needed help, no one else on site, so Jean had to step in. She knew nothing about beer and had to learn on the spot, to pour black and tans and other mixtures she had never heard of. The beer ran out and they rolled a couple of barrels over from the Sergeants' Mess and tapped them straight away. That was another skill Jean picked up, which would become useful later on. Next morning Jean was ill. Apparently it was a hangover caused by the fumes. From then on, Jean always hated the smell of beer.

Orders came through that all Army staff had to train either as Bren Gunners, or to fire mortars (known as blacker bombards). The CO said that any of the girls could take the Bren Gun course and five of them did, with great enthusiasm, all determined to do well. All qualified. This is entered in Jean's AB 64 which she still has (face having that on your CV these days).

Some months later Jean was called to the CO's office where he explained that if the Germans landed and saw this qualification on her records, she could be shot. Jean could not believe he was serious, but he was. She decided she would rather be shot than meet a "fate worse than death" so the entry stayed.

For some reason, around early 1942 the "powers that be" decided that the fort was too dangerous a station for women. They replaced the twelve ATS girls with eighteen men. The other eleven girls asked for a posting nearer home but Jean said anywhere would do. Her brother was at sea and her mother was a full time civil defence worker, so being nearer home was not so important. What happened? She was posted to Winchester and the others were sent all over the place. Jean was sent to another Q store, this time in an all female company. The ATS Commanding Officer had been one of Jean's early officers in Newport.

The story about Jean that I find so wonderful and brave, is the story of her marriage to a handsome Czech soldier called John, after a whirlwind wartime romance. When Jean became pregnant she learned that she had ceased to be a British citizen and the Czech Army paid for her to have her baby in a British hospital. Their baby was born in May 1945.

John came back from the war in late 1945 and took Jean and their baby back to Moravia in Czechoslovakia. Married life was good, but all too soon the Communist control became very tense. John told Jean that she must return to England and he would join her as soon as he could. For three years Jean waited, but John was unable to leave Communist Czechoslovakia. They eventually divorced. It is amazing that Jean reached England safely with her baby, after travelling unaccompanied through war damaged Europe. She had written to her brother and prayed that he had received the letter. She had asked him to meet her in Paris and to her great relief he was standing on the railway station in Paris. She had never been so pleased to see him. It was a very emotional reunion. He asked how she had coped with her very young baby, all on her own on such a long train journey. "We all helped each other on the train" she told him. "In those day we all helped, you just got stuck in" she said.

Later, after twenty one years had passed, Jean married Evan, a wonderfully kind man, who unknown to Jean, made plans for her and her daughter and himself to visit Moravia and meet John and his new family. Of course, for Jean's daughter it was a first meeting with her father. It had certainly taken a long time, but as Jean said "All's well that ends well". Jean still wrote and kept in touch with her Czech family.

One thing of which Jean is very proud, happened long after she left the Services. As a member of the WRAC Association, representing the Southampton Branch, she was presented to the Queen. Sometime after names were submitted, they were surprised to receive a letter saying that if the selected person had to fall out, it was not permitted to send a substitute as HM did her homework. Jean thought that was a polite way of saying that they had all been vetted. Not at all, Jean was presented as a member of Southampton Branch and a JP from Eastleigh. The Queen immediately spoke about Eastleigh. There were ten in Jean's group and several other groups and Jean were deeply impressed that the Queen had taken so much trouble. It was a very proud moment.

Jean, we of the Southampton Branch of the WRAC, salute you. God bless you.

Barbara Bennett

JOYCE MARGARET HAWKINS
NÉE GRIEVE ATS/WRAC
25 June 2011

Joyce Hawkins née Grieves joined the ATS and was subsequently transferred to the WRAC on its formation in 1949. She was commissioned into the WRAC and served for 12 years before leaving in 1961. She was one of the very few officers in those days who managed to remain in the WRAC for a short time following her marriage. Joyce was a member of the Aldershot Branch of The WRAC Association for many years and following its closure she transferred her allegiances to the WRAC Officers' Dining Club which she supported until ill health prevented her from attending functions. Joyce died in Plymouth on 25th June 2011 where she had been nursed by her sister Jean, a former Colonel in the QARANC,

during her final few months. Five members of Plymouth Branch attended Joyce's funeral and paraded the standard.

In Loving Memory

of

Joyce Margaret Hawkins

5th December 1929 – 25th June 2011



Weston Mill Crematorium, Plymouth
on
Thursday 7th July 2011
at 2.00 pm

Joyce Hawkins née Grieves



It is the spirit which is the breath of life, the spirit that binds us to life so that for all eternity we are linked in unbroken fashion.

Nothing on earth or in the spheres beyond can sever the divine tie that makes us all members of one vast spiritual family.
Silver Birch

In more recent times

Editor's Note: As a final entry I have been sent the Obituaries from the Daily Telegraph of Janet Brown and Thelma Gibson. The former served with the ATS joining A Stars in Battledress entertainment ensemble which gave shows for troops in Europe and Thelma Gibson served with the ATS during the Second World War.

It has not been possible to reproduce the newspaper articles here. If anyone does have any memories to share of either Janet Brown or Thelma Gibson please do send them in for the next edition of Lioness.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP



To the General Secretary
The WRAC Association
AGC Centre, Worthy Down,
Winchester, Hampshire
SO21 2RG

I wish to join the WRAC Association as a Life Member and enclose £50 cheque

OR

I enclose £5 cheque for Annual Membership, which is in payment of the first annual subscription up to the 31 October

Date: ..... Signature: .....

All cheques must be in **sterling** and made payable to "**The WRAC Association**"
Subscriptions include *Lioness*
Overseas members are asked to contribute an extra £3.50 a year to cover postage of *Lioness*

Please complete this form in **BLOCK LETTERS**

ATS/WRAC/TAVR Army Number: ..... Last Rank Held: .....
(Present Rank if still serving)

Miss/Mrs/Ms: ..... Surname: .....

Given Names: ..... Decorations: .....

Surname when serving: ..... Date of Birth: .....

Address for Correspondence: .....

.....

.....

Post Code: ..... E-mail: ..... Telephone No: .....

Units during service: .....

Date of Enrolment:..... Date of Release: .....

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT THE VICTORY SERVICES CLUB
SATURDAY 2 APRIL 2011

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS
The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all those attending. She continued by introducing her support team:

Lieutenant Colonel Jo Young	Chairman of the Executive Committee
Colonel Audrey Smith	Chairman of the Grants Committee
Colonel Alison Brown	Editor of Lioness
Major Leona Barr-Jones	Honorary Treasurer
Major Gabi Shanahan	Regimental Secretary

and thanked Mrs Denise Thompson, the Association Headquarters Chief Clerk, in absentia. The Chairman explained the General Secretary had been renamed the Regimental Secretary to reflect the expansion of the role to include both General Secretary and Benevolent Case Fund Secretary responsibilities on the retirement of Major Jane Freebairn.

The Chairman thanked the ladies from London and Greater London Branches who had provided all the "front of house" support and Ms Jan Ford for running the memorabilia stall. She then paid tribute to all the Branch Secretaries and said how much their hard work and support was appreciated not just by Association HQ but by each one of their members. Every Secretary was part of a significant team which included their Chairman and Treasurer and together they underpinned the Branch network.

The Chairman outlined her programme of visits to individual Branches and Area Reunions and emphasised how important this contact was.

25 April 2010	Tamworth Branch Standard Dedication Service
5 May 2010	Birmingham Branch Luncheon
16 July 2010	Dedication of new AGC Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum
August 2010	Leicester and Nottingham Branch
August 2010	North West Area reunion
11 November 2010	Field of Remembrance
14 November 2010	Cenotaph with 70 other members of the Association
30 November 2010	Worthing Branch Christmas lunch
10 December 2010	Plymouth Branch Christmas lunch
13 December 2010	Royal Hospital Chelsea Christmas Gifts and lunch with Regimental Secretary
15 December 2010	Chester Branch Christmas lunch
29 March 2011	Hereford Branch

The Chairman concluded her opening remarks by reading a message from the Patron of the Association thanking all members for their loyal greetings and support.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies had been received from many individuals, several Branch Secretaries and the following members of Council: Brigadier Dame Joanna Kelleher, Brigadier Anne Field, Lieutenant Colonel The Lady Martha Bruce, Colonel E J Bowles, Lieutenant Colonel M G Fahy, Lieutenant Colonel N A Murdoch, Lieutenant Colonel A Owen, Lieutenant Colonel M W Soames and Major R Griffiths.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES
The Minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated in *Lioness* 2010/2. No comments had been received. It was proposed that the Chairman sign them as a true record.

Proposed: Hereford Seconded: Fife & Tayside
Unanimously agreed

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES
There was no business arising that would not be covered by other Agenda items.

5. REPORT OF THE COUNCIL
The Chairman said that Council had met twice since the last AGM: firstly in July 2010 at Worthy Down and secondly in London at the Victory Services Club in January 2011. The main items of interest had been:

Changes in membership of Council.

a. **Newly elected members.** Mrs Chris Corker had been elected to Council and Major R Griffiths had been re-elected on her return from Nepal.

b. **Area Chairman.** Mrs P Stevenson had resigned as Area Chairman of Eastern Area after many years loyal service to Council and the Association and had been replaced by Mrs W Hooton.

c. **Financial Adviser.** Mr Shaun Parsons had retired after over 26 years service and had been replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Angela Owen, a former WRAC and AGC (SPS) officer who had specialized in management accountancy.

d. **Branches.** Wilmslow, Hastings and Eastbourne branches had closed. A new branch was opening in Londonderry, started by 24 former WRAC servicewomen.

e. **Appointment of Auditors.** Baker Tilly UK Audit LLP had been re-appointed as Auditors.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT
The Honorary Treasurer presented the Financial Report and started by thanking the previous General Secretary, Major Jane Freebairn, for managing the accounts to the end of the financial year and preparing them for audit. The Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ending 31 October 2010 had been published in *Lioness* 2011/1 and on pages 12 and 13 respectively of the Annual Report 2010.

The Association Funds had showed a net incoming resource of £8,871 compared to a net incoming resource of £44,730 in the year ending 31 October 2009. Income from annual subscriptions, donations to the Association and legacies had been up on the year ending 31 October 2009, investment income had been down by 30%, and income from branch donations and *Lioness* had been down by 21%. Also, in the year ending 31 October 2009 the Association had benefited from a net income of £17,082 generated as a result of the Grand Reunion in Blackpool and no such income in the year ending 31 October 2010.

The Association Funds had unrealised gains on investments of £18,496 compared to unrealised gains of £41,172 in the financial year ending on 31 October 2009. The carried forward fund balance had been £545,303 – an increase of £27, 277 on the £518,026 carried forward the previous year.

The Restricted Funds, that is the Benevolent Funds, showed a net outgoing resource of £13,701 compared to £30,420 the previous year, largely attributable to a reduction in the amount awarded in one-off financial grants by the Benevolent Fund Grants Committee.

The Benevolent Fund's unrealized gains on investments had been £264,401, compared to £551,218 the previous year. Although a substantial reduction on the year ending 31 October 2009 it was, nonetheless, still an increase in value of the fund. The net result had been that the carried forward balance for the Benevolent Fund had been £545,303 – an increase of £27, 277 on the £518,026 carried forward the previous year.

As at 31 October 2010 the total funds had been worth £5,476,973, compared to £5,197,633 at 31 October 2009. There had been an expectation that income would decrease in 2010 because of the reduction in bank interest rates and the effect of the BP oil spill, yet overall the investments had performed well in the market; in fact the overall value of the WRAC Association had increased by £279,340. The Honorary Treasurer thanked Mr Shaun Parsons, the Association's investments advisor for over 26 years, for his sound judgement and advice. The Honorary Treasurer concluded that the Funds were as sound as could be expected in the current financial climate and should be sufficient to meet commitments in the financial year November 2010 – October 2011. She recommended that the financial statements be accepted and that the audited accounts be ratified.

Proposed: Stafford Seconded: Wirral
Unanimously agreed

7. REPORT OF THE EDITOR OF THE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

The Editor started her report by thanking Major Jane Freebairn for her work as editor on *Lioness* 2010/2, and Mrs Denise Thompson, Ms Jan Ford and Mrs Noreen Unsworth for their scanning, clerical and typing support. In preparation for *Lioness* 2011/1 she had written to all Regimental Secretaries and Journals asking for articles from serving females soldiers and the majority had been happy to share, particularly the AGC (SPS). The majority of articles received were from ATS members, with a slow trickle being from WRAC members. Most articles were accompanied by photographs but, whilst every effort had been made to publish as many photographs as possible, some were of too low a resolution for inclusion.

Lioness had continued to run at a loss: production values, and therefore costs, were relatively high but the Editor was reluctant to sacrifice quality for savings. In future *Lioness* would be published on the WRAC Association website in electronic format. There were no plans to scrap the hard-copy version but it should be possible, in due course, to reduce the print run if members opted for the electronic version, leading to savings in production costs.

The Editor concluded by reminding the AGM that the copy deadline for *Lioness* 2011/2 was mid-June 2011 and that all articles, particularly from WRAC members, ideas and suggestions would be most welcome.

8. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

a. **Executive Committee.**

Grand Reunion 2012. The Bristol Marriott City Centre Hotel had been selected as the venue for the Grand Reunion 2012 and a booking for a guaranteed minimum attendance of 350 people has been made for 23 March 2012 – 25 March 2012. Attendees would book their accommodation directly with the hotel rather than via HQ WRAC Association, thus relieving the administrative burden on the Regimental Secretary and Chief Clerk. Details of how to book accommodation, the application form and more information on the event would appear in *Lioness* 2011/02.

Council in January 2011 had agreed a very generous grant towards the Grand Reunion ensuring that the cost of the weekend for attendees would be £50, excluding accommodation, and include a buffet supper on the Friday night, a Gala Dinner on the Saturday night, wine on the table for both nights, entertainment, decorations and room hire. The Executive Committee would convene at the Bristol Marriott City Centre Hotel in July 2011 immediately prior to Council, to meet the Marriott event co-coordinator and 'recce the ground'.

Rules. The Executive Committee had been tasked with a complete rewrite of the Rules of the Association and a working group had been convened to take this forward. The rules working group had met in November 2010 and March 2011 and had found the recently revised and agreed rules for the RAEC and ETS Association useful guidance. As the scale of the task had become apparent the working group decided to concentrate on rules 6, 7 and 9 as these were key to the working of the Association. The remainder of the rules would be completed in time for the AGM 2012.

Hard copy versions of the reworked rules 6, 7 and 9 had been provided for every attendee of the AGM, had been seen and agreed by the members of the Executive Committee and seen by Council Members.

The Chairman proposed that the reworked rules 6, 7 and 9 be agreed.

Proposed: Bexhill Seconded: Plymouth
Agreed unanimously

b. **Benevolent Fund Grants Committee.** The Chairman of the Grants Committee gave a summary of the work of the Benevolent Fund in the financial year 2009/2010. The Benevolent Fund considered cases for one or more of 3 categories of grants: one-off grants, annuities and nursing home fee top-ups. The total

number of cases considered in the year 2009/2010 was 483, compared to 538 in 2008/2009.

Cases were considered at either minor grants committee meetings or major grants committee meetings: minor grant committee meetings were held weekly and awarded grants up to £500. Any request for £500 – £1,500, or for an ex-servicewoman with less than 12 month's service, usually had to wait until the next major grants committee meeting, held monthly.

As at 31 October 2010 18 ladies were in receipt of annuities from the Princess Royal's Memorial Fund (PRMF). The annuity remained £14 per week with a Christmas bonus of £60 giving a total of £788 per annum. The first instalment was paid on 1 December, the second on 1 June and the eligibility of each annuitant was reviewed annually.

As at 31 October 2010 there were 23 recipients of PRMF nursing home fee top-ups with contributions ranging from £6 per week to the maximum of £25 per week.

Inevitably a number of annuitants and recipients of nursing home fee top-ups were lost during year through natural wastage or because they cease to be eligible as a result of an improvement in their circumstances through better access to benefits or a move into, or out of, residential care. In these circumstances refunds of annuities were not received but a pro rata refund of any nursing home fee top-up was received.

As at 31 October 2010 there were 32 ATS and WRAC recipients of an ABF The Soldiers' Charity annuity on our books. The ABF The Soldiers' Charity annuity for the year 2009/2010 remained £780 per annum, that is £8 per annum less than the PRMF annuity for the same period. ABF The Soldiers' Charity also made nursing home fee top-up contributions, ranging from £4 per week to its maximum of £30 per week, to 9 of our 23 beneficiaries.

The Benevolent Fund's budget for the financial year 2009/2010 had been £150,000. The total expenditure in 2009/2010 had been £125,600, that is £24,400 under budget and £20,000 less than during 2008/2009. The PRMF budget for the financial year 2009/2010 had been £35,000. As at 31 October 2010 the commitment had been a little over £36,000.

The Chairman of the Grants Committee thanked SSAFA, the Royal British Legion, and the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League for the sterling efforts of all their caseworkers who provided the vital link between applicants and our fund and acknowledged our debt to all the benevolent funds that supported us, not only the Army's regimental funds but also the Royal Navy Benevolent Trust and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. She concluded by describing 2 cases:

Mrs A, aged 89, ex-ATS and widowed. She suffered from emphysema and was very frail, weighing just 5 stones. In 2010 she had to move into a nursing home as her daughter, with whom she had been living, was no longer able to provide the care she needed. Mrs A's care was partly funded by her local council and partly by her pension but she was left with a shortfall of over £70 per week that her family struggled to meet. We were able to provide £25 per week towards the shortfall, and both ABF The Soldiers' Charity and her late husband's regimental association also assisted. Her daughter wrote, *'I would like to thank your organization for your kind donation. It has enabled my mother to get a room in an excellent care home. She is very happy there and the staff are very attentive, taking care of her every need. Without your financial support she, and we, could not have found the necessary financial means to pay for care adequate to her needs.'*

and

Mrs W, aged 71, ex-WRAC and married, had lived with her husband in their own property for over 40 years. Mr W has had several heart attacks and Mrs W, in poor health herself, was his main carer. Their home was over 350 years old and in a very poor state of repair. Their most pressing need was for a new central heating system and we were able to award £750 towards the installation costs of the system. Mrs W wrote, *'I should like to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind donation. This donation, along with others, has enabled my husband and myself to have much needed central heating this coming winter. As my husband is very ill I hope you can understand how heartfelt these thanks are.'*

The Chairman of Council thanked Col Smith for all her support and commitment as the Chairman of the Grants Committee.

9. RESOLUTIONS

a. **Motions of Urgency**. There were no motions of urgency.

b. **Council Resolutions**. There were no Council resolutions.

c. **Branch Proposals**. There were no Branch proposals.

d. **Election of Honorary Treasurer**. The appointment of Major Leona Barr-Jones was ratified after approval of the audited accounts.

Proposed: Salisbury
Seconded: Leicester & Nottinghamshire
Unanimously agreed

10. CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

The Chairman presented a Certificate of Appreciation to the following members in recognition of devoted service and significant contributions to their branch and the Association:

Miss Susan Marcroft BEM	Dumfries
Mrs Catherine Russell	Glasgow
Mrs Susan Sinclair	Glasgow
Mrs Jean Farrington	Cambridge
Mrs Maureen Deeley	Birmingham – WRAC
Association Standard bearer	2nd nomination

Miss Marcroft, and Mrs Russell and Sinclair received their certificates at the Scottish Area Reunion in Oct 10.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a. **National Memorial Arboretum (NMA)**. The latest correspondence from the NMA outlined the landscape master-plan designed to develop the arboretum over the next 30 years. Achieving their goal would see the NMA become worthy of comparison with Arlington in Washington DC, Canberra and other heritage and memorial sites world-wide. The work would involve changes to existing plots and memorial sites but a guiding principle would be that no memorial would be lost during the process. A representative from the

WRAC Association would attend a stake-holder landscape briefing and further discussions on 17 May 2011.

b. **Memorial Chapel in St Mary's Church, Guildford**. The Chairman had spoken with the Reverend Bob Cotton and there would be a second meeting at the church in the near future when their programme of refurbishment is completed,

c. **Army Physical Training Corps (APTC) Museum project**. The APTC Museum had been opened by Colonel Vere Fisher on Saturday 18 September 2010 as part of the APTC 150th celebrations. The WRAC Physical Training Instructors had held a reunion supper on Friday 17 September 2010 and excelled themselves in the netball match against the serving APTC servicewomen. Though the Association had pledged £1,000 to the APTC Museum project, in the end the Association had only been asked for £482.30.

d. **WRAC Association Website**. The Chairman reported that the new WRAC Association website had generated more new members in its first 2 months than in the previous 3 years.

12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next AGM would be held during the Grand Reunion at the Bristol Marriott City Centre Hotel on Saturday 24 March 2012.

Signed as a true record.

Chairman:



Lt Col Sue Westlake opening the AGM
From L to R: Col Audrey Smith, Maj Gabi Shanahan, Lt Col Jo Young, Major Leona Barr-Jones, Col Ali Brown



The Vice President presenting the Certificate of Appreciation to Mrs Jean Farrington of Cambridge Branch



The Vice President presenting the Certificate of Appreciation to Association Standard Bearer, Mrs Maureen Deeley



At Lunch, from L to R: Val Goff, Eileen Carter, Marie Hemmings, Pat Sanders, Joy Griffiths



The members enjoy an excellent lunch

BAXTER Mrs Mary Reid, née Mackenzie, of Tayport, Fife on 18 Mar 2011, ATS

BESWICK Miss Margaret Rose, of Stockport, on 27 Apr 2011, ATS

BIBBY Mrs Ellen, née Woolett, of Sheffield, on 9th Jan 2011, WRAC

BILLINGHAM Mrs Jean Ward, of Surrey, on 8th Jan 2011, ATS

BLACK Rosemary Alexandra, on 6th Jan 2011, WRAC

BOOTH Mrs June, née Beckett, of Lincoln on 14th Jan 2011, ATS

BROOKE Miss Eileen, of Wirral, on 19th Feb 2011, ATS

BUNTING Mrs Beryl, née Irby, of Wiltshire, on 28th Feb 2011, ATS

CASBURN Mrs Elizabeth (Bessie), née Thomson, of Lossiemouth, on 19th Jan 2011, ATS

CLEGG Mrs Mary, née Williamson, of Bournemouth, on 20th Mar 2011, ATS

COCK Mrs Eleanor, of Wolverhampton, in Feb 2010, ATS

COURTNEY-DUNN Mrs Marie Elsa, née Vickery, of Paignton, ATS

CROFTON Lady Mary, née Friend, of London, on 27th Jul 2011, ATS

CROY Mrs Hazel, of Stirling, on 9th Jun 2011, WRAC

CUDDON Mrs Marjorie, née Lowe, of Wembley, on 3rd Mar 2011, ATS

CURRET Mrs Monica, née Paul, of Shoreham by Sea, in Feb 2011, ATS

CURTIS Mrs Ena Bessie, née Burge, of Plymouth, on 13 Jan 2011, ATS

DAVIS Mrs Jane, née Robinson, of Andover, ATS

DEIGHTON Mrs Margaret Anne, née Harding, of Haxby, on 19th Jan 2011, ATS/WRAC

DOYLE Mrs Betty J, née Henley, of Liverpool, on 13th Jun 2011, ATS

DUNEC Miss Pauline, of Portsmouth, on 13 Nov 2011, WRAC

FIELD Brig Anne, née Hodgson, of London, on 25th Jun 2011, ATS/WRAC

GARDNER Miss Beryl, of Southampton, WRAC

GARLAND Mrs Edna, of Co Durham, in Mar 2011, ATS

GASCOYNE Mrs Helen, of Colchester, on 15th Mar 2011, ATS

GOODENOUGH Mrs Maureen Elizabeth, née Poland, of Wirral, on 2nd Mar 2011, ATS/WRAC

GRANT-SMART Mrs Margery, née Allen, of Rochester, 24th Jan 2011, ATS

GUY Mrs Marguerite, née Hughes, of Solihull, in Jun 2011, ATS

HARRIS Mrs Evelyn, née Hitchen, of Preston, on 18th Mar 2011, ATS

HART Mrs Jill Chrissie, née Breens, of Reading, on 29th Feb 2011, WRAC

HAWKINS Mrs Joyce, née Grieve, of Hook, on 25 Jun 2011, WRAC

HORSLEY Mrs Violet, née Gibbs, of Sutton Coldfield, on 27th Jan 2011, ATS

JENKINS Miss Edna, of Norwich, ATS

JONES Mrs Ivy Lilian, née Turner/Watts, of St Leonards on Sea, ATS

KAY Miss Margaret Elizabeth, of Auchtermuchty, ATS

KINGDON Mrs Yvonne Jean, née Black, of Eastleigh, on 24th Mar 2011, ATS

LAWRENCE Miss Charlotte I, of Colchester, on 14 Jan 2011, ATS

LIEVESLEY Mrs Frances Betty, née Youlton, of Southampton, on 21 Mar 2011, ATS

MANNING Mrs Edna (Judy), née Atkins, of Colchester, ATS

MCHENRY Mrs Edna, of Liverpool, ATS

PARKER Mrs Nellie, née Mills, of Watford, Herts, on 29 Jan 2011, ATS

PATTISON Mrs Frances, née McGregor, of Liverpool, on 14 Jun 2011, ATS

PERRY Mrs Dorothy May, née Wheatley, of Cambridge, in Feb 2011, ATS

PERRY Mrs Edna, née Chapman, of Christchurch, on 20 Feb 2011, ATS

PIKE Miss Nora J, of Plymouth, on 23rd Jan 2011, ATS/WRAC

PUGH Mrs Margaret Irene, née Lewis, of Brecon, ATS/WRAC

QUICK Mrs Vera Frances, née Farley, of Rye, on 28th Dec 2010, ATS

REEVE Mrs Barbara, née Myers, of Colchester, on 27th Apr 2011, ATS

RODWELL Mrs Maureen, née Hughes, of Balby, Doncaster, on 11th Jun 2011, ATS

ROOKE Miss Jean, of Bognor Regis, on 16th Dec 2010, WRAC

SANDERSON Mrs Gwendoline Mary, née Davison, of Bury St Edmunds, on 7th Jun 2011, ATS

SCOTT Mrs Sybil, née Edmunds, of Salisbury, on 2nd Jul 2011, ATS

SLEEMAN Miss Winnie, of Plymouth, on 2nd Feb 2011, ATS

SMITH Mrs Joyce, née Springle, of Solihull, ATS

SNELL Mrs Doreen B, née Lorenzi, of Barton on Sea, on 27th May 2011, ATS

WALKER Mrs Ruth Annette, of Exeter, on 31st Mar 2011, ATS

WEST Mrs Frances May, née Brown, of Nuneaton, ATS

WILKINSON Mrs Mary Eleanor, née Finch, of Stoke on Trent, on 8th Oct 2010, ATS

WILLIAMS Dorothy Jennet, on 8th Jul 2011, ATS

WILLIS Mrs Kathleen Mary, née Chapman, of Southsea, on 15th Jan 2011, ATS

WILSON Mrs Mary, née Cury, of Billingham, on 7th Feb 2011

WILSON Mrs Daphne E L, of Christchurch, on 4th Apr 2011, ATS

WOODHOUSE MBE Mrs Joyce, née Furmidge, of London, on 8th Jan 2011, ATS

