

LIONESS

SUPPORTING FEMALE VETERANS



IN THIS EDITION

WE WILL REMEMBER HER –
AROUND THE COUNTRY

SUMMER EVENT

AREA AND BRANCH NEWS

IN MY DAY MEMORIES

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION

(Incorporating the QMAAC & ATS Comrades Association)

Registered Charity No. 206184, founded in 1919



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EDITORIAL

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Front cover:
We Will Remember Her, Nigg
Inset image © J M BRICOE

Back cover:
Summer Event, Worthy Down,
2023



Once again the first half of the year has been another busy one – what with the AGM, We Will Remember Her events around the country and the main Act of Remembrance at Great Yarmouth, Summer Event at Worthy Down, all your own Area and Branch/group events, along with wonderful In My Day recollections and, sadly, the sharing of Obituaries for past ATS and WRAC who have passed, including Life Vice President The Lady Martha Bruce OBE.

Within this mailing of Lioness you will find a copy of the new look Annual Report (for year-ending September 2022). It clearly and succinctly shows what your Association did in the past year. Also enclosed is a Membership Survey form. The last survey of you, our members, was carried out nine years ago and much has changed since then, locally and nationally. This survey will enable us to ensure that our records are up to date, along with helping us tailor what we do and how we do it to what you, our members, would like. We have provided a pre-addressed envelope for you; alternatively you can go to wraca.org.uk/survey. We look forward to hearing from you.

A few of you have been enquiring about the Lioness Working Group we now have. Volunteers for this group to assist myself, the editor, were sought via emails to branches at the end of 2021, and the small group has met a few times, since January 2022, and ahead of the last edition. The Group is made up of Barbara Johnson (Trustee and chair of the group), myself (Editor), Dawn Hawker (North West Area Co-ordinator), Sue Westlake (Life VP) ke (Life VP) Babs Anderson and Julianne Lloyd (members), and Vicki West from Tiger Ink (our designer and production partner). The Terms of Reference for the Group are: "Improving the readers experience by providing an engaging, accessible magazine that appeals to our



membership of all ages." The Group members also assist with proof-reading the magazine, which is quite a mammoth task – so huge thanks to all for their assistance.

We do also have two other Working Groups with specific remits – Events and our Website. Both these Working Groups are chaired by a Trustee, and include appropriate Area Co-ordinators and staff members. All the Working Groups give reports to both the Board of Trustees and Membership Council.

2024 is fast approaching and with it the AGM, at the Victory Services Club in London again. October 2024 also sees the 50th anniversary of the Guildford Pub Bombing, when two WRAC servicewomen were killed (along with two soldiers from the Scots Guards and one civilian), and the 60th anniversary of the opening of Queen Elizabeth Barracks. Planning to appropriately remember and acknowledge both these events is in its early stages and details will be shared in due course. In the meantime, if you have any personal memories connected to one or both of these events please do share them with the Association and your fellow members through this magazine.

This edition is a little later than usual so we could include as many summer events as possible, and certainly the Worthy Down Summer Event. We hope you enjoy it.

Penny Muxworthy

Message from the Vice President



The last six months has seen a slight disappointment in that we were obliged to move our AGM online due to rail strikes. Frustrating for everyone but I am encouraged by the number of people who attended 'live' and even more

so by the 1,000+ who have viewed the stream on Facebook. I very much hope that we will meet up in person next year. On a positive note, the 'We Will Remember Her' campaign, the service at Great Yarmouth and at 26 satellite locations around the country was an enormous success; engaging members nationwide, attracting incredible media coverage, and most importantly remembering those 26 ladies of the ATS who fell on that fateful day in May 1943, 80 years ago. We held our summer event in Worthy Down, and there are more detailed reports on all our activities in this edition.

I am delighted to say that we have two new Trustees who have joined the Board. You may recall we used this magazine to invite members who were interested in becoming Trustees to get in touch. It worked! Shelley Whitehead approached us and having been through our recruitment process was unanimously elected to the Board by our Trustees. Shelley is a former Reserve WRAC NCO, Reserve Infantry NCO, and Cadet officer with an extensive CV in sport coaching and management. We have also unanimously elected Dawn Munday

to the Board, known to many of you in the Scottish Area. Dawn was an NCO when she left the WRAC and has since pursued a career in finance. Having been the Finance Director of the National Trust Scotland, she has a marvellous blend of finance and 3rd sector experience. I am delighted to welcome both Dawn and Shelley to the Board of Trustees.

The other key change on the Board of Trustees is that Isabel McCord has stood down from chairmanship of the Benevolent Fund, after five years in role. I am extremely grateful for everything Isabel has done over the years, in particular in my time as VP. She has adjusted our criteria and approach to be more responsive during the cost-of-living crisis, and I am proud that, under Isabel's stewardship, we have continued to help those in need. Monica Jones has assumed the chair of the Fund and will continue the good work. Isabel will remain a Trustee for a further year, so it is not yet goodbye.

The most significant development in our contribution to promoting the needs of female veterans has been the resourcing of the Female Veterans Transformation Programme. The programme will build the needs of female veterans into the design and delivery of veteran services to transform support for women who served in the Armed Forces. Our bid for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust was successful and we have now secured £300k to fund two posts over three years. A bid for a further £60k from NHS England to take the 2nd post from part time to full time has been submitted and we await the outcome. Under Ali Brown, Chair of the Cobseo Female

Veterans Cluster and Association Life VP, the governance for the project is being developed and I, along with our Treasurer Tim Savage, and our CEO, Paula Rogers, sit on the Steering Group. The finance, administrative support and line management responsibilities for these posts will sit with the WRAC Association. The Cluster is responsible for the direction, prioritisation and assurance of outputs. The project lead, Liza Jarvis, joins us full time in September and a project officer will also be recruited.

As I write, the Lord Etherton independent review into the impact the historic ban on LGBT military personnel had on veterans has just been published. I know it is difficult reading for many, and 65% of all respondents to the call for evidence were female. I am so grateful to all those members who took part.

We continue to engage with the Army, the Office for Veterans Affairs, and the military charity sector to further the interests of female veterans, to try and make things better for all of you. At the same time our primary focus is on ensuring we support you, our members, as we move forward during a difficult period of financial pressures. If you, or someone you know, is struggling, then please get in touch. And finally, my thanks to the Trustees, the Life VPs, the Membership Council – including all the Area Co-ordinators - the staff, and all those who have volunteered at events or in fundraising. Without you all, the Association would not be able to deliver events, support and camaraderie to all our members.

Fiona Gardner

As is our custom we sent loyal birthday greetings to our President, HRH The Duchess of Kent.



***The Vice President, Board of Trustees,
Membership Council
and all members of
The Women's Royal Army Corps Association
(incorporating the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary
Corps and Auxiliary Territorial Service Comrades'
Association)***

***send loyal greetings to their President,
Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent,
on the occasion of her birthday
on 22 February 2023***

And duly received the following email reply:

***Thank you very much for
your birthday message
for the Duchess. She was
delighted that you thought of
her on this very special day.***

***With best wishes
Jane McCaughey, Personal
Assistant to HRH The
Duchess of Kent***

Chairman of the Membership Council Foreword



It is wonderful to hear what all the members have been busy doing, and all your Area Coordinators updated the Membership Council in July; but it is even better to see

in your own words and photos what the various branches and groups have been doing. I hope you enjoy reading the *Lioness* and seeing all the exploits (and getting ideas for your own group events!).

It was very disappointing not to be able to get together in London for the AGM and we all missed the afternoon tea. We have learnt though that we must always have the meeting streamed onto Facebook – we had over 1,200 views of the film of the meeting! We have never had that number attend the AGM, but

next year we will hold our AGM at the Victory Services Club, with afternoon tea and hopefully there will not be a rail strike or covid to stop us.

The We Will Remember Her campaign brought together the membership across the country, and it was fantastic to see so many of you embrace the commemorations for the fallen 26 members of the ATS in Great Yarmouth on 11th May 1943. Many thanks to Desiree Mansfield, Janette Deans, Paula Rogers and Penny Muxworthy for all their work on the campaign. You will see a large section of the *Lioness* dedicated to the event.

There have been smaller events that have brought members together – the dedication of the centenary plaque in Guildford Cathedral in January was very poignant and it was wonderful to see so many, especially those members who do not normally attend the larger Association events.

The Summer Event at Worthy Down was a blast from the past for many, although the rebuild of the barracks meant it was a very different place. The standard of the accommodation and gym facilities showed how much the Army is moving forward. Nearly 100 of us spent a very happy afternoon catching up and exploring the heritage trail. Many thanks to everyone.

I have visited two branch events – Birmingham's Coronation party and a lunch with Southampton Branch. Both events had members from various other Branches, and it was great to meet up with so many members. I look forward to meeting more members at their/your branch events.

Rowena Naile MBE

Features Correction:

Some of you may have seen the Daily Mail Online which included a photograph of Private Kathleen Gaunt, circled, marching with fellow ATS recruits.

Unfortunately, the Daily Mail circled the wrong person. Kathleen was actually the one nearest the camera, front row. And immediately behind the 'real' Kathleen is her cousin, Joan Bottom, who joined up on the same day. Thank you to Caroline McEwan-Smith who pointed this out. We passed this message onto the Daily Mail who corrected it online.

SUPPORTING FEMALE VETERANS Association Vision Statement

To provide camaraderie, benevolence and mutual support to former members of the ATS and WRAC and exert influence within the military charity sector to broaden support for female veterans.

In addition, we welcome to the Association Servicewomen, both serving and retired, of any capbadge.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2023:

WRAC Dinner Club:
14 October

Remembrance:
09 November -
Field of Remembrance,
London
12 November -
Guildford Borough
Cenotaph, London

Officers Dining Club:
21 October

See page 85 for 2024 dates

Comings and Goings

COMING:

Dawn Munday



Dawn Munday has joined the Board of Trustees, as VP Fiona has mentioned in her foreword. So, Lioness took the opportunity to catch up with, and learn more about, her:

Where are you from, and where did you grow up? I now live in Edinburgh, having grown up in Bannockburn, Stirling.

What is your military pedigree? I joined the WRAC as a driver in 1988. Postings were mainly in the UK to Royal Engineer units; one year attached to infantry in Londonderry. I left in 1994.

Had you not joined the Army, what might you have been?

I always wanted to work with animals so perhaps a vet nurse back then. After leaving the Army I entered Further Education and my career for the past 20+ years has been in accountancy.

Why did you join the Army? I suppose like many people the appeal was an active career, sports and a new adventure.

What would you pick out as being the highlights of your career? Highlights in my Army career were the friends made and opportunities to take part in competitive sports, being coached in a variety of sports.

Tell us about something from your career you would rather forget? There were some learning experiences which are memorable, and which have perhaps shaped part of my character today. It is great to see the work to recognise and address inequality and inappropriate behaviours in today's army.

What do you bring to the role of a Trustee? I bring a breadth of professional expertise which I feel will be of value to the team. Being a mum of 3 grown up children and a single mum for most of that time, I'm resilient and calm and have empathy for others.

What is your favourite Association event (local, area, national) of the year, and why? Just getting out and spending time with other members, at branches or social events is really great. I see the tremendous value this connection has for everyone as being key to showing support and friendship to each other.

What do you see as your short- and long-term priorities? Short term, building my knowledge. I have been the treasurer for the Scotland and NI Area for a number of years, and I'm looking forward to seeing how I can make a valuable contribution to the wider WRAC Association.

Would you describe yourself as 'gentle in manner, resolute in deed'? What would be your own motto if you had one? Definitely resolute in deed but not always gentle in manner. I

suppose "let's do this" is probably a better reflection of my approach.

What would be your ideal day off? My ideal day off is a walk in nature, forest, beach, hills with my two dogs; a carefree and relaxing day. On the other hand, wearing a rugby top with a drink in hand cheering on my local rugby team or Scotland comes a very close second.

Do you still work or volunteer? If so, what do you do? I work full time as an Associate Director of Finance in a global company which is focused on research and development, and the testing and certification of a range of products and materials.

Company's coming – what are you cooking? Probably something in a big pot so there's plenty for everyone! A good curry always goes down well.

.... And which 3 famous people are you inviting over? Bruce Parry, Serena Williams and Billy Connolly.

What are your top 5 singles? Ooft, old school question! I have an eclectic taste in music, mainly blues and rock, and enjoy live music especially. Taste runs from London Grammer to Led Zeppelin.

Which household gadget can you not live without? Kettle! I am a complete tea jenny, probably 10 cups a day!!

What would people be most surprised to learn about you? Today, most people are surprised to learn I spent over 6 years in the army.

As Fiona mentioned in her foreword, Shelley Whitehead has also joined the Board of Trustees. Lioness hopes to catch up with her for the next edition.

Liza Jarvis



We welcome Liza as the Project Lead for the new Female Veterans Transformation Project – which is part of the Cobseo Female Veterans Cluster group work and is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust. For logistical reasons Liza will be hybrid-working from the Association HQ office and home, but travelling around the country.

Currently Liza is Senior Programme Manager, Personalised Care, NHS England (NHSE). She has worked within the field of personalised care for most of her career, having moved from social care provision in Devon to the NHSE national personalised care team as a programme lead 4 years ago. At the beginning of 2020 Liza moved to the Southwest Personalised Care team as the regional lead for social prescribing, supporting the implementation of an 'all-age' model in every system.

Liza comes from a Military family, both naval and army, and lives in Plymouth with her husband, two children and 3 dogs! In 2019 Liza was asked to look at developing options for personalised care for veterans across the Southwest; this led to a significant piece of co-design and collaboration with veterans and those organisations that work with them. The result of this work was the development of the Armed Forces Social Prescribing Demonstrator – a national ‘test and learn’ programme based on the NHS’s Comprehensive Model of Personalised Care to support veterans and their families develop support based on ‘what matters to them’. The demonstrator is now running in 5 areas and is working in partnership with Northumbria University. Liza is passionate about personalised care and its ability to put people in control of their care with the right support, allowing everyday solutions to achieve amazing outcomes.

Liza joins the Project full time from September.

GOING:

Helen Jephcote - Scotland & Northern Ireland Area Co-ordinator

I joined the Association at the 2016 Scottish AGM, taking over the Chair of Scotland and Northern Ireland Area in 2019. I had previously held no office in any branch, so it was a surprise to be asked, but I was very glad to accept.

It has been insightful and enjoyable to work within the Membership Council, and being part of the Benevolent Fund Major Grants Committee has allowed me to understand the difficulties that some of my fellow veterans face. Having the opportunity to make a real difference to their lives has been a privilege. One of my more enjoyable tasks was sending Christmas cards with individualised messages to ladies resident in Glasgow and Edinburgh Erskine establishments.

I was especially proud to host the Service of Thanksgiving for Queen Elizabeth II in Stirling. To have a prestigious national Association service in Scotland was a huge honour. I have laid the wreath at the Service of Remembrance in Perth every year since I joined - a proud moment to represent the Area. A project I worked on where artifacts from The Lady Martha Bruce and Lady Viola Stirling were to be displayed at Gargunnoch House was abandoned, however one of Lady Martha’s prized possessions was a march called “The W.R.A.C of the 51st (H) Division” which I arranged to be played on the pipes and recorded for the Association.



With mixed feelings I attended my last Membership Council meeting, and was delighted to be presented with a bottle stopper which may not be required if the bottle is shared with a friend or two, so will remain on the shelf until required! I would like to thank Treasurer Dawn Munday, Secretary Janette Deans and all the branches for their support. Janette takes over as Chair and I’m delighted to leave the area in such capable hands. I look forward to seeing my fellow Fife and Tayside branch members, as well as those I have met from across Scotland, Northern Ireland, and around the country at future events. May I wish you all the best and may the Association grow forever stronger.



Julia has been with the Association since October 2015. In that time, she's worked with three different treasurers – Isabel McCord, Barbara Davies and Tim Savage. Julia has been a stalwart on the finance side, working closely with the Benevolent Fund, and external partners including Brewin Dolphin, Rothmans and our bankers, ensuring that the Association finances are kept in good shape.

Julia has also represented our Association over the years at a number of prestigious events including the presentation of the silver statuette to the Royal Hospital Chelsea, and at the We Will Remember Her Service of Remembrance for Corporal Enid Line at the Bank of England. Tim Savage said "On behalf of the trustees, thank you Julia for all you have done for us over the years - we wish you all the very best for the future."



Julia writes:

I've enjoyed nearly eight years with the WRAC Association - the longest I've ever been in the same job, since the Army took me from posting to posting. Opportunities have arisen for me to take work closer to home, Salisbury way. The thing I've loved the most is meeting all of you and hearing your stories of service life; some of which I could relate to and some of which was 'before my time'. I thoroughly enjoyed attending your events and found it a privilege to act as Buddy Buddy Co-ordinator. I wish you all well in your endeavours.

Julia Doig

Fundraising for the Association - a BIG Thank You

Thank you very much to everyone who is able to donate and/or fundraise for the Association. Your funds really make a difference to the operation of the charity. It's amazing how much time you give to raising funds for the Association and often surprising just how you do it. There's a fair share of raffles, market stalls and sponsored events. And we've just benefited from the sale of a bike!

When Association member Sue Knight had a chance to pass on a bike to a friend, she wasn't shy in asking if her friend minded donating to the Association instead of paying her. This was indeed smart thinking not only did we gain directly from the deal as a donation but we also claimed the gift aid - an extra 25% from the taxman, thank you very much.

The photograph shows Sue, with her friend Lucinda on the left, eager to get going on the bike. Thank you both Sue and Lucinda for your donation.

Sue says ***"I keep the WRAC Association firmly at the forefront of my mind when it comes to fundraising and look back at my time served with pride."***



Features

We Remembered Them *The 26 ATS Servicewomen killed 80 years ago honoured as part of our We Will Remember Her campaign*

At 1400 hours on Sunday 14th May all across the UK, members of the WRAC Association stopped to commemorate those who died as a result of a bombing raid on the 11th of May 1943. Killed as they returned to their quarters in Great Yarmouth following morning PT, these young women are commemorated annually at the spot where the tragedy occurred. This year, on the 80th anniversary, the WRAC Association was committed to holding individual ceremonies for each of those who died in the locations where they had been buried or remembered on memorials.

Lyn Hatch continues the work of ensuring the 26 are not forgotten, involving meticulous planning of the focal event in Great Yarmouth. Organisation of the Scottish events was undertaken by Janette Deans whose research uncovered many new facts and several relatives who attended the services. Deserie Mansfield organised the many English services, juggling events across 20 different locations in England from her home in Cardiff! The whole operation was no mean feat and involved Association area coordinators, branch chairs and secretaries, and individual members pulling together to pull off this wonderful service. Liaising with churches and cemeteries, local dignitaries, the RBL and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; and working alongside local historical societies,

children's groups, and musicians our members produced an event never seen before within the WRAC Association: 26 simultaneous acts of Remembrance marking one tragic event – the single largest loss of female life in the history of the British Army.

We are hugely grateful to Deserie, Janette and Lyn, and to all those who played a part. Some of our members discovered that one of the ATS was buried minutes from their home, whilst others travelled hundreds of miles to pay their respects. One of our members was able to attend thanks to a Membership Support Grant from our Benevolent Fund. Some services were attended by the families of those who were killed, and some by complete strangers who wished to give thanks for their sacrifice. Newspapers, local radio and even BBC TV news covered the events as the stories of these women captured the hearts of the nation.

Association members who attended have kindly sent their photos and thoughts from the day's events to share. Take a trip with them around the country starting at the most northerly service on the Isle of Lewis and working southwards to the principal service at the place where they fell in Great Yarmouth.

Helen Froud led the service in Stornoway

The commemoration of **LCpl Anna Macleod** was held at Stornoway War Memorial on the Isle of Lewis. I led the service, assisted by Janice Maciver who did all the local organising and laid the poppy wreath. I am also very grateful to Janette Deans who put everyone in touch and uncovered links to local historians, and my husband Mark who took the photos.

We had representatives from the local Army Cadet Force who laid a floral tribute in WRAC colours, and we were delighted to have three of Anna Macleod's direct relatives who attended, one of whom was her niece Anna Macleod Tucker, who was named after her aunt.

"Anna was my mother, Janet Macleod's, sister. I grew up knowing all about her and her service in the war. Anna hadn't long been in the ATS when she was killed and she was about to get a commission. I am very proud of her, but it is such a waste. My mother and I went to a memorial service in Great Yarmouth 20 years ago, commemorating 60 years since the women were killed – it seems to have taken a long time for them to be properly honoured."



Moria Thom sent this report from Nigg

Priate Elizabeth Taylor Mackay, A.T.S. is named on the War Memorial at Chapelhill Cemetery, Nigg, Ross-shire. The memorial service at the war memorial was led by the Lord-Lieutenant, Joanie Whiteford, and her cadet, Sgt Kai Greig, and in attendance were SNCO with 6 Army Cadets, 4 WRAC veterans, 5 nieces of Elizabeth, the local MP and many from the surrounding communities.

The WRAC Association flag flying in the breeze. A piper played beautifully during the service. Wreaths were laid by the Lord-

Lieutenant, Joanie Whiteford, as the King's representative and Sandra Lemmon, WRAC Association, Aberdeen branch. Elizabeth's nieces expressed their gratitude to the WRAC Association for co-ordinating memorial services to all 26 A.T.S. ladies, and talked of a photograph on their granny's mantelpiece of a lady in uniform, Aunt Bess, who was much loved and never forgotten. After the service we congregated for a picnic in the small airfield near Chapelhill Cemetery for a chance to learn more about Elizabeth. At intervals, 5 small aircraft flew over - a fitting tribute to the end of the remembrance service.



Jane McAulay's memorial plaque, Glasgow

Janette Deans organised the service in Edinburgh

Pte **Jeanie Scougall** was born and brought up in Morningside, Edinburgh. One of four children, her youngest brother sadly died at four months however her remaining siblings survived into the 1990s.

From Edinburgh Branch I was joined by June Christie and Dawn Munday, reinforced by Liz Dixon and Penny Ellis from Stirling Branch, and Sue Marcroft from Dumfries Branch. The team are grateful to Fiona Laing who joined them as chief photographer. Their company was much appreciated as well as their efforts of travelling so far to help their fellow sisters.

Edinburgh commemorated Jean Scougall a little differently. The minister of Morningside Parish Church asked if we would attend the morning Sunday service as he wanted the children to hear of service and Remembrance. This proved to be a good decision. The children were invited to join in at the wreath laying and two of them stepped forward. It was a special moment, for all, to have their involvement. After the service the band of sisters joined the parishioners for tea and coffee where we were made to feel very welcome. The parishioners were interested to hear about military service and the story of 'Jeanie'.

Dawn joined me to conduct the service at Jeanie's graveside. It was a special time where we were able to reflect on the sacrifice made by our ATS predecessors.



Dr. Joyce Steele sent this report from Glasgow

Pte **Jane McAulay** was buried in the Roman Catholic cemetery, Great Yarmouth, 460 miles from her home in Springburn, Glasgow. We know little of Jane's upbringing; however, she certainly grew up with the stigma of illegitimacy, born a year before her parents' marriage.

Springburn has no war memorial, posing real problems for planning Jane's service. We felt that Jane deserved to be remembered in a special place, the Volunteers' Monument in Knightswood, which is dedicated to veterans, past, present and future, ensuring that her memory will live on among other veterans. Intensive research by Maureen O'Donnell had failed to find a living relative, but at the eleventh hour we managed to track down Ann Dalglish, daughter of one of Jane's two younger half-sisters, who was keen to participate in the service.

The congregation gathered at the Monument prior to the service, where Bailie Patricia Ferguson, representing the Lord Provost of Glasgow, unveiled a plaque to Jane's memory on a bench in the Monument's Garden (picture bottom right, Pg 10). The plaque was made by veterans at "Glasgow's Bravest", Erskine Homes. Standards of The Highland Light Infantry Association and other veterans' associations formed a Guard of Honour, and Padre George Hunter, an Argyll and Sutherland Highlander veteran, led the service. While Pipe Major Stuart Reid played, wreaths were laid by: Baillie Ferguson; the Vice Lord Dean of Guild of the Merchants House of Glasgow; the Deacon Convenor of the Trades House of Glasgow; Jane's niece; and Mary McCreery, a WRAC veteran and resident at Erskine Homes. The WRAC Association wreath was laid by Ivana Muir. The garden is well-used by locals and visitors - a haven of peace on the busy Great Western Road, so Jane will not be forgotten in her home city of Glasgow.



Rowena Patrick MBE travelled to Northumberland

17 miles north of Corbridge, just off the A68 and down a gated road lies St Cuthbert's Church, Corsenside. An 11th Century church that is believed to have housed fleeing monks during the Viking era. On the northern side of the church, north of the chancel is a pristine white Commonwealth War Grave, under which lies **Private Dorothy Fawkes** ATS. Who was twenty-six on the day of the bombing.

She was returned to this beautiful place and is now remembered by the small congregation who love this church too. The locals joined us for the first part of the service around the grave and then we continued to St Cuthbert's church, concluding with a communion service. The grave overlooks the River Rede in Ridsdale and the tiny hamlet where she was born. The local War Memorial some way down the road remembers her and only seven others from the Corsenside area. Surrounded by sheep looking on, Audrey Smith laid a wreath on behalf of the Association and Rev. Clare Maxim, the Vicar remembered her and the other twenty-five who died that day. It was such a windy day, when Audrey Smith bowed her head in respect and went to look up, she saw the wreath trying to fly away! The three of us then tied the wreath to the memorial to ensure that it did not fly away again in the gale.



Tanya Hall sent this report from Gosforth

Four members of the Newcastle Branch attended the commemoration of **Pte Louisa Maxwell**. She was buried at St Nicholas' Church graveyard Gosforth, Newcastle, and only twenty-two when she died. We were also accompanied by some of the congregation of the church. Father Paul led the service for Private Louisa Maxwell and though the weather forecast predicted we were going to get a thunderstorm during the service, luckily it stayed away until we had left the cemetery.

Pte Maxwell's grave has damage to it. I reported it to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission who have informed me that they will send someone to inspect it to see if it can be repaired or replaced.



Wendy le Gassick attended the service in Stockton On Tees

Priate **Louisa Farnes** was buried at Oxbridge Lane Cemetery, Stockton at only twenty-two years of age. The family had to endure two funerals in two weeks as just after the ATS servicewoman was buried, her uncle, killed in action, was interred just twenty yards away. We were honoured to have some of Louisa's family attend the service including Louisa's sister Mrs Winifred Davis who turns 90 this year and was nine years old when Louisa was killed. Mrs Davis, who continues to tend the grave Louisa now shares with her parents, was able to attend with four out of five of her children to pay their respects to their aunt and sister.

The three Standard bearers did very well, especially WRAC Association Standard Bearer Ann Mahony who overcame some difficulty walking over the uneven grass! We were also thankful to be able to avoid the rain, despite the clouds. Suzanne Allan, Secretary of Cleveland Branch read the service, the bugler Phil Meakings was wonderful, and Winifred said a prayer.



Caroline McEwan-Smith sent her report on the service from Bingley

Commemorating **Pte Kathleen Mary Gaunt** was an absolute honour and finding Kathleen's family was fantastic. Mr Warwick Smith, a second cousin of Kathleen gave a wonderful insight into the life of Kathleen and her cousin Joan who was also ATS. The grave was in need of some TLC but with permission from the family, volunteers from Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Friends of Bingley Cemetery plot generously gave the grave a tidy-up.

The service was well attended by family including Warwick and Ann Smith, Emma Wood (great niece), Layla Wood (great, great niece) and Mark Gaunt (distant cousin). Royal British Legion Standard Bearer Errol Bogle was in attendance, with the service led by the Reverend Martyn Weaver. My fellow WRAC veterans Michelle Sumner, Elaine Spillane and Sharon Morgan-Williams were joined by Lorna McEwan-Smith (ex-Royal Navy, who took the photos), Jack Waterhouse, and Maureen Adamson, Anne Cox, Rachel Wood, Jennifer Behrendt and Jean Robinson (WI and Friends of Bingley Cemetery).

The Rev. Weaver welcomed the family and led a beautiful service. Michelle read the Association Collect followed by the laying of the wreath and I read a personal tribute to both Kathleen and the fallen, written specifically for the occasion by Mr Warwick Smith and which will feature in a future edition of the Lioness. The occasion brought together members of the family who had not previously met but who were able to unite in acknowledging the life and sacrifice made by Kathleen. The event will forever stay with me and in organising the event in Bingley, West Yorkshire, I felt privileged to play my part in laying a wreath to Kathleen, who I feel I had come to know.



Michelle Gibbs organised the service in Leeds

It was a lovely sunny day at Holbeck Cemetery in Leeds to commemorate **Pte Vera Mann**. The Leeds Social branch attended, including: Michelle Chappelle Gibbs, Irene Jones, Krysia Asher, Patricia Rocky Barker, Gwen Marie Jackson, and Julie Loudon. We were also joined by some of the ladies from the Commonwealth War Graves department, who clean the graves in the area. To know that other cemeteries around the UK were holding the same service was wonderful and we all felt so proud to be a part of the service.

Everyone played a part in the service, and afterwards we had a chat with the ladies from the Commonwealth War Graves - what a wonderful service they perform! We had a lovely proud day out of a sad day - thank you to the Courageous 26 ATS ladies at Great Yarmouth.



Dorothy Mitchelmore shares her report from Haltemprice

Priate **Jessie Sharp** was 21 at the time of her death, and is buried together with parents Stanley and Fanny Sharp and other members of her family. I was joined by other members from the East Riding & North Lincolnshire branch including Roberta Grant, Jill Talbot, Wendy Cockerill, Annie Baxter Mulligan, Tracey Sayers, and Lynn Watson as we gathered at Jessie's graveside.

Roberta led the service, during which the poppy wreath was laid by Tracey. We had taken fresh flowers with us in the form of yellow roses, which are traditionally given to symbolise strong ties with friends. As veterans of the WRAC, we feel a strong bond with all the servicewomen who came before us, and on this day we wanted particularly to pay our respects to an ATS servicewoman who was so cruelly taken far too soon. The planter on Jessie's family memorial stone made for a very fitting tribute.

Following the service we made our way to the Wingfield Farm Carvery, in Hessle, for a commemorative lunch where we raised a toast to Jessie and her ATS Sisters-in-Arms and reflected on their short lives. Out of curiosity, I decided to look on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website to see if there were any other war graves of servicewomen in Hessle. It transpires that only two miles away from Jessie, in the nearby Tranby Lane cemetery, another young ATS servicewoman is buried. Private Ethel Clarke, who also died aged 21, on the 26 February 1943, less than three months before the tragedy in Great Yarmouth. I wonder if these two ladies knew each other, as Hessle would have been a fairly small town during WWII. I very much hope so.



Gail Davis organised the gathering in Grimsby

The service for both **Private Ivy Moore** and **Private Roma Pearson** was held at Scartho Road Cemetery in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, where I was joined by branch member Pamela Givens and the Reverend Kay Jones. The families of both servicewomen knew each other before the tragedy and it was appropriate that they were buried one behind the other in their home-town, so it was there that we gathered to pay our respects.

The reverend led the service before the wreaths were laid and we remembered in our prayers the two ATS girls 80 years ago and two others killed in action and buried in this cemetery. Ivy was due to announce her engagement the week she lost her life, and Roma, who was known to all by her middle name Joan had recently written to her sister about her posting to Great Yarmouth, saying that she "cannot understand why it is considered a dangerous area". Her three brothers had all served, one in tanks in the Desert war, one in Burma and one on the convoys to Russia. Her parents had prepared themselves for one of their sons to be wounded or killed in action, but all their sons survived the war and only their daughter was lost.



Dawn Hawker sent this report from Moston

I proudly stood with the Standard of the Manchester Branch WRAC Association at St. Joseph's RC cemetery in Moston, Manchester, shoulder to shoulder with 5 fellow female veterans from the Manchester and Oldham branches of the Association. We were all there to remember and commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the death of **Private Bernadette Bell**. Representing the WRAC were Kath Kirtley of the Oldham Branch and joining me from Manchester Branch were Dawn Fleming, Pip Flegel and Heather Bradbury, with Jeff Hawker BEM and Frank Spencer who also support the Manchester Branch. Four members of the Army Reserve 127 Divisional Support Coy 101 Force Support REME, based in Clifton, joined us at the graveside, lead by Major Charlotte Joyce. Also present were members of the congregation of St Dunstan's church.

As North-West Area Co-Ordinator I read the Service of Commemoration, with Angela Russell and Angela Curran assisting with the readings. Heather Bradbury read out the names of all 26 ATS ladies. Britain was at war and at the age of 22 Bernadette answered her county's call to defend it. She had only been in the ATS for a few months before the bombing. It was an honour that Sunday morning to remember the sacrifice of Bernadette who now lay in a grave with her parents on the outer boundary of that Moston cemetery, Bernadette being the first in the grave she waited for 25 and 36 years to be joined by her father and mother - not the natural way life should go. It is so important that we remember the sacrifice of those killed while serving their country - All gone too soon.



Veronica Hanson organised the service in Doncaster

Private Doris Wimbush from Doncaster was buried in Caister Cemetery in Norfolk, so instead we gathered to remember her in the most appropriate local place, the impressive grade II listed Doncaster Cenotaph. The memorial itself depicts two women, a nurse within the 'Army' panel of engraving, and a large statue of a woman at the very top of the memorial, so it felt like a very appropriate location for us to gather.

I was joined on the day by Anita Fairhurst, Pam Morgan and Christina Seymour, with a few family members of WRAC Doncaster joining us for moral support. The weather was lovely and warm with a touch of wind. We had placed two adverts in the local paper in the hope to find some relatives of Doris Wimbush, but alas, no luck. We know that she had two brothers: the older brother was also in the Army, and during the 1990s told researchers "By the time I got home at the end of the war it was a sad but distant memory". Her younger brother added "I was only a small boy at the time, not able to understand, only remembering how my mother cried".

The order of service was read by Anita, and the wreath was laid by Pam Morgan. I raised and lowered the ATS standard gratefully loaned to us for the occasion, as we paid our respects to Doris Wimbush.



Lorna Jackson attended the service at Louth

I was delighted and deeply honoured to be asked to be a part of this momentous occasion in laying a wreath and holding a short service at the Louth War Memorial to remember the life and sacrifice of **Pte May Johnson**, who was only 20 years old when she died.

WO2 Cathy Munro, Betty Gash and I were in attendance. We each read part of the service and I was honoured to lay the wreath. The War Memorial is located near the centre of the town and we were touched to see several people stop to bow their heads and pay their respects during the laying of the wreath. This will be a day I will never forget!

Betty adds "It was such an honour representing the WRAC Association in my local town. The War memorial is located on a main junction, unveiled in 1921 and erected on land belonging to the alms houses. There is a soldier on the plinth in full service uniform and holding a rifle. The memorial is inscribed with the names of those who died in the First World War with shields added at the base of the memorial to commemorate those who died in the Second World War. The memorial attendees at Louth may have been small in number, but a serving military person in service dress giving the salute made the event that extra special poignance - a service Private May Johnson's family and friends would have appreciated in her memory and commemoration."



Betty, Lorna and Cathy then made their way to Fulstow from where Betty sent her report

The Memorial Service for **Private Marjorie Sutton** and **Sergeant Viola Wells** was held at St Lawrence's Parish Church, Fulstow in Lincolnshire, led by Church Warden Stephen Woodcock MBE and attended by a Deputy Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, the Vice-Chairman of Fulstow Parish Council, Historian Nicola Pike, Church Warden Lesley Thornes, Paula Rogers CEO of the WRAC Association, WO2 Cathy Munro MBE, and my fellow WRAC veteran Lorna Jackson, my husband Michael and many church members and parishioners.

The memorial service was well attended in the small parish church with flowers and 26 lit candles at the altar - one for each of the ATS servicewomen. Stephen conducted the service with Cathy reading from the Old Testament Book of Micah 4: 1 – 5, whilst Paula read the names of the fallen. Four wreaths were laid at the altar steps, by the Deputy Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, the Vice-Chair of the Parish Council, Cathy and me. We were invited to join the Fulstonians at their village hall on the main High Street for refreshments after the Service, where the 2 WRAC Association wreaths for Private Marjorie Sutton and Sergeant Viola Wells were re-laid beside a tablet set into the front wall commemorating those lost in WW1 and WW2.

The parishioners of the small village of Fulstow made us very welcome and played a big part in remembering the death of the 26 servicewomen in Great Yarmouth.



Sandy Warne organised the service in Sheffield

Lance Corporal **Mollie Carter** was born in Sheffield, daughter of Rosamund and William Carter and sister to Betty and Lawrence. Mollie was buried in the family plot in Handsworth, with her grandparents and later, her dad was also laid to rest with her. Mollie is also remembered on the war memorial outside St Mary's Church at Handsworth.

When I was approached by the WRAC Association to honour Mollie, it was with pride and pleasure that I took on the role. I immediately posted on Facebook asking if anyone knew of Mollie's family. Within hours, Mollie's niece Janet contacted me! The post also attracted other people from the area who remembered how Mollie's mother had always spoken about her. I worked alongside Janet and another niece Susan to bring family together for her service and to find out more about Mollie. All the family were brought up knowing about what had happened and how grief-stricken Mollie's parents were for the rest of their lives. In her honour, one of her great nieces was named Mollie and we were delighted that she was able to attend the service.

The grave had, over the years, fallen into a poor state but Mollie's headstone, as it has been maintained by the CWGC was in good condition, albeit Mollie's name had been incorrectly spelt as 'Molly'. This is now being addressed and will hopefully be replaced with one that spells her name correctly. My partner Steve (our official photographer) and I decided, with the family's permission, to repair and clean Mollie's grave which is now in a condition that should hopefully last for many years to come.

Attendees included many of Mollie's family – 12 in total, and it was videoed for family in Australia. The military community was

represented by Steve Bush and Gwen Wilkinson both Royal Signals (Gwen is also ex WRAC). Alison Cairns (nee Woods) also ex WRAC (we did our basic training together) laid the wreath on behalf of the WRAC Association. The family said what a lovely service it was for Mollie and wanted to thank the WRAC Association for bringing it together.



Barbara Johnson sent this report from New Mills

Corporal Margaret Galbraith is memorialised on one of six WWII slate panels at the cenotaph in the grounds of St Georges church New Mills in Derbyshire, her hometown. I had the pleasure of meeting Tony Lawton, Vice-Chairman of the Parish Church Council at St Georges, and his wife Pam a few days before our planned service. The three of us agreed we would share conducting the service on the Sunday and I asked Tony if he would be happy to take the lead, as Margaret's story had really struck a chord with him.

Tony set about finding out as much detail as he could about Margaret's local life prior to her joining the ATS. Margaret had lived not that far from the church in a cottage with her family. She worked in the offices of the local Co-operative Society and was a keen tennis player, being a member of the tennis club in a nearby village. Our own research had found that Margaret's fiancé also sadly died in the fatal bombing raid on Great Yarmouth.

Our cause has been wonderfully championed by Tony in remembering Margaret. He made a wooden cross for hanging the wreath on and found us an excellent bugler, Naomi Martin, who volunteered her services for the Last Post. Church warden, Yvonne Banham kindly ensured the church was open for us on the day and organised a refreshments table for after the service.

On the day the weather held and 15 people came to St Georges to remember Margaret, four of us being veterans of the WRAC. The service ran like clockwork, and everyone headed to the church for tea and cake. A huge thank you to Tony, Pam, Yvonne and Naomi, and the good people of St Georges.



Cheryl Jones organised the service in Aston-Cum-Aughton

For the service to remember **Pte Jean Copley**, I made contact with All Saints Church in Aston-Cum-Aughton to see what we could do and after a few days it was all sorted. On the day, I was accompanied by two other WRAC veterans, Karen Baxter and Leoni Goffin. We were all suited and booted with medals shining in the sun. During the morning church service, the Vicar, the Rev Jim Nuttall talked about the ATS and invited any parishioners to attend the memorial service at the nearby cemetery with us that afternoon.

I was pleasantly surprised to see how many showed up from the church. Bill, a local Army veteran from the Royal British Legion and his wife, three members of the Aston-cum-Aughton History group, and the vicar, himself an RAF veteran. We had a full service at the War Grave of Jean Copley and the moment the wreath was laid at the grave was very moving. The service made me feel very emotional, causing me to reflect where I had been at that age. I was proud to be asked to be a part of Jean Copley's story.

The collection of people that came were wonderful, sharing jokes amongst us left us all in high spirits. It was an honour to attend and I'm glad we could remember this lady 80 years on.



Anne Brown sent in this report from the Nottinghamshire service

Our little ceremony at Holy Trinity Church, Besthorpe was in memory of **LCpl Eileen Hunt** who died aged 21. The Church and its Warden, Sue were very welcoming and kind. Five WRAC Association members joined me: Dot Ryder, Jackie Whitehead, Chris Corker and Cass Bolland, with four family members able to attend as well. Although all four were too young to have known Eileen, they had always known of their aunt or cousin that had been killed in WWII. By providing a service for Eileen they were able to better understand who she was and what had happened to her.

We were honoured to have Lyn Wenham and the Leics & Notts Standard. There was some potential difficulty as the church had been decked out in Coronation bunting which could have caused chaos for the raising of the standard! Leading the service, I was joined by Cass Bolland to read the names of those who died alongside Eileen. The Act of Remembrance was ended with prayers said by the Church Warden. It was a very moving service, and we were delighted to see the plaque where Eileen's name is etched, and to chat with Eileen's niece, Jane Wright, who was very happy to know her aunt had been remembered.

After the service we had tea and cakes, and we were able to visit Eileen's grave afterwards. Everyone thought the concept of remembering this tragedy was a wonderful thing.



Ali Brown OBE attended the service in Staffordshire

Private Nora James died at the age of 24 and was buried at St Mary's Churchyard in the Staffordshire village of Rolleston on Dove.

On the Sunday morning, I left home early to collect Barbara Davies and Marg Davies, both from Hereford Branch, and then continued with the journey to a very beautiful village with St Mary's Church at its centre. We located the Commonwealth War Graves Portland headstone marking her spot, and then met up with Reverend Phyllis who was due to conduct the Service. I was delighted to see about a dozen members of the WRAC Association present along with members of the local community, the local RBL Standard - on parade courtesy of Bryan who was also the Church Warden, and the Standard of the local Branch of the Staffordshire Regiment. The icing on the cake was a bugler in the form of Oliver who turned up immaculate in his Scouts uniform.

At 1400, the church bells rang out and the service started. Reverend Phyllis led the commemoration and prayers and I read out the report of the bombing raid from 1943 along with the complete nominal roll of those who died. Oliver played the Last Post and Reveille perfectly and the whole service was thought provoking and just so beautiful with all of us standing in the churchyard in the sun.

After the service a group of us went to have lunch together and reflect on the day's events. For me, the most poignant memory of the day is knowing that at 1400 on that day, ceremonies were taking place all over the UK to remember those who died in such a terrible event. I did also wonder what Nora would think of us remembering her 80 years on. I hope she would be pleased and recognise her place in the history of women in the Army.



Fiona Gardner CBE reports from Northampton

With so many services taking place across the country it was inevitable that some would be less well attended than others, and with the CEO making a late dash north to handle BBC TV, I found myself the sole representative at the service in Northampton to commemorate **Private Doris Travers**. Arriving at the Council Building I met the Vice Lord-Lieutenant Morcea Walker, Deputy Mayor Cllr Stephen Hibbert, and Chair of the RBL Phil York. Together we made our way to the Northampton War Memorial in a grassed square just in front of the Town Hall.

As the service to remember all 26 ATS ladies that died that day took place in Great Yarmouth, in Northampton we remembered a young woman who was born on the 18th March 1922 and grew up as one of 6 girls not two miles from where we were stood. On her 21st birthday, less than two months before she was killed, she wrote in a letter to her family:

"I am 21 today. It is not a very safe area, we are on the coast. Never mind, we must put the bad with the good. My nerves are getting a bit shaky. I should like to tell you a lot but I can't. I will be coming home in 6 weeks time."

Doris did go home to see her family as she had promised, and caught the overnight train back to Great Yarmouth on the 10th of May, arriving back only hours before she lost her life.

While she lies in the Roman Catholic cemetery nearest to the place where she fell in Great Yarmouth, it was exceptionally moving for me, with local civic representatives, and a Ukrainian family who were passing and felt impelled to join us, to remember Private Doris Travers in her home town, and reflect on her sacrifice, and the 25 other ATS servicewomen who died that fateful day.



Julia Doig organised the service at the Bank of England

Corporal Enid Line worked at The Bank of England before joining the army and she is remembered there on the WWII memorial at the entrance to the Bank. With other veterans gathering at her graveside, I contacted the Bank to investigate the possibility of laying a wreath below her name.

The Bank were keen to support, and soon the notion of half a dozen members laying a wreath became a full-blown service with Padre, Standard Bearer and Bugler. Archivists created poster boards about Enid and life at the Bank during the War, which along with the wreath remained in place for a week for all staff to see when they came and went from work. Life Vice President, Brig (Retd) Nicky Moffat CBE, laid the wreath and said afterwards she'd never heard the Last Post and Reveille sound so wonderful as they rose into the heights of the Bank's foyer.



Those of us from the WRAC Association stood proud in the Bank of England knowing that at the same time fellow members had gathered at Enid's grave side to also lay a wreath.



Diane Anstiss and Pam Hedgecoe sent their reports from Middlesex

Pam said "Knowing the New Southgate Cemetery, which is enormous, I decided to carry out a recce (military training instilled in me!). Julia gave me the section and grave number for **Corporal Enid Line**, and Joan McEntee came with me to locate the grave. This proved impossible, as the numbering was completely random, and parts of the area very overgrown - in fact impenetrable! The next day, I contacted the Crematorium office, and explained our dilemma. They were extremely helpful, and I went back and met the groundsman who had located the grave by this time. He promised to clear a path for us, which he did, and we were able to carry out our plans.

"Sunday, May 14th was a lovely day, and six veterans including four ex WRAC members gathered at 1.45pm, as planned. It was so nice to meet together, and we were able to lay the wreath on the grave easily. Enid's parents were also buried with her, which added to the poignancy of the occasion. We held our service on the roadway, near the grave, as access was not very easy for everyone. The parts of the short service were shared out between us. I am sure we all felt both honoured and privileged to have been part of this national tribute to such courageous servicewomen."

Diane added "I couldn't believe how big the cemetery was; every religion was represented by its own section. Before long Joan arrived with Pam, and Nina Keoghane arrived with help from her family, both veterans themselves.

"Pam read the service and Joan read out the names of the 26 ladies killed in Great Yarmouth. Once the service had finished, Pam, Joan, my daughter Jessica and I went to the grave itself and Joan laid the WRAC Association wreath on the headstone. We took a last look at the grave with its new wreath laid, and then regrouped at the War Memorial for a lovely chat before we went our separate ways. It was an absolute pleasure to pay our respects to Corporal Enid Line."



Col Amanda Hassell reports from Bournemouth

Hosted by the Bournemouth Branch of the WRAC Association, we gathered at East Bournemouth Cemetery on a beautiful dry Sunday. We were delighted to have a Life Vice President of the Association Lt Col (Retd) Sue Westlake MBE to lead a beautiful service as we specifically remembered W/128285 **Pte Jessica Lewis**, aged just 22. The service was supported by Bournemouth Branch chair Jillian Hirst, Col Nan Robertson MBE, Lois Taylor resplendent with medals, and local WRAC Association members Wendy Brimicombe and Sue Young, easily recognisable in their green fleeces. Lt Col Sue Westlake MBE and I read the names of all those tragically killed on that fateful day.

We were honoured to have a local ATS lady join us who had a connection to Jessica. Pearl Penny aged 96 was a close friend of Jessica's sister, who also served in the ATS and has regularly visited Jessica's grave over the years. It was especially poignant that she was able to share her memories of her service in the ATS. Jessica's headstone can be found near to the church alongside another serving ATS lady, W/166208 Private GF Draper ATS who died aged 20 on 6 Dec 1942. If anyone knows anything about Pte Draper or her family, the WRAC Association would love to hear from you.



Great Yarmouth

Whilst our members gathered all across the country, another group congregated, as our members have done annually for decades, in Great Yarmouth; firstly with a small gathering to remember the one ATS servicewoman who was also a local girl from Cobholm, as Penny Muxworthy reports:

After breakfast, and before the day got busy, Lyn Hatch, my husband Jason and I went to pay our respects to **Private Lilian Grimmer** at the Great Yarmouth Town War Memorial in the park gardens. The town boasts two memorials - one tall obelisk to those of World War I, and the lovely stone-walled one with brass panels, for those lost in World War II. The Sword (a bronze longsword with the blade down) from the Cross of Sacrifice stands guard at each end, and the whole is enclosed within a wrought iron fence and gate - easy to access but also easy to keep separate and respectful. Both memorials are sited in St George's Park, a stone's throw from the seafront, making a lovely venue much used by local people and visitors alike. Thankfully the day was dry and welcoming with no sign of the North Sea wind that can blow in these parts. An Association wreath was lain at the WWII memorial for Lilian, alongside the other tokens of remembrance already at the war memorial, demonstrating how all those listed are not forgotten.



Lyn Hatch now picks up the reporting from Great Yarmouth as she reflects on the rest of the day's proceedings including the principal service.

What a difference good weather makes. A small group comprising Sharon and Melody Baker-Joyce, Deserie Mansfield, Penny Muxworthy, Elaine Simpson and I headed out to Old Caister Cemetery and the Roman Catholic Cemetery to lay a rose on each of the Commonwealth War Graves of the eight ATS women interred there. The older part of the RC cemetery had long grass, muddy parts, and neglected graves, and the two headstones lay close together, but sadly not side by side as they had served. Old Caister Cemetery was especially poignant for Ian and Victoria Marriott who were joining us as Ian is the great nephew of Sgt Viola Wells who was also remembered in Fulstow. It was the first time he had been to pay his respects because he had only found out about her when he came across newspaper cuttings and letters in his late father's belongings.

Viola Marriott had married Wilfred Wells 26 days before sadly losing her life. Ian had sent photos of their wedding day and a copy of the marriage certificate, and in just a few moments Viola was more than just a name on the memorial as we were able to share one of the happiest days of her life.



We headed back to the Imperial Hotel where we sat down to lunch on the terrace overlooking the beach, and just before 2 o'clock convened at the site of the fateful bombing to remember all 26 servicewomen named on the plaque whose families had waited 50 years to find out what happened that May morning. We were joined by Rowena Naile MBE who welcomed the assembled group and Sharon Baker-Joyce bearing the National WRAC Association Standard. The short service was led by Association padre the Rev. Sue Wing, and after all the names on the memorial were read out the bugler sounded the Last Post before wreaths were laid. With the service over, afternoon tea was held at the Imperial Hotel as we chatted together and remembered also Joan Awbery and Meg Watson whose relentless efforts to research what happened has ensured that these women are not forgotten.



Events

PAST EVENTS

GUILDFORD CATHEDRAL CENTENARY PLAQUE DEDICATION 31st January 2023

It was a great pleasure to attend the Service of Dedication of the WRAC Association Plaque at Guildford Cathedral. Having been delayed by a few years due to Covid, it was lovely to see a good gathering of members to mark 100 years of the Association (1919 – 2019).

The plaque has been beautifully positioned inside an arch above the WRAC Book of Remembrance, which is diagonally opposite the Lady Chapel and complements the architecture of the cathedral perfectly.



The Service of Dedication was led by The Very Reverend Dianna Gwilliams, Dean of Guildford Cathedral and assisted by Reverend Sue Wing, Honorary Association Padre. A candle was lit by Colonel (Retd) Audrey Smith, an Association Life Vice President. We processed in and recessed out behind one of our Standards. Those in attendance also included Deputy Lord Lieutenant Brigadier Paul Evans OBE and the Mayor of Guildford, Councillor Dennis Booth.

Following the service members were invited to tea and cake in the refectory, which gave us an opportunity to catch up with friends and, in my case, renew old acquaintances. We were then invited to join the rest of the Cathedral's congregation for Choral Evensong.

The ceremony and the plaque reinforce the cathedral as the spiritual home of the WRAC and its predecessors. It already has stained glass windows commemorating the WAAC, QMAAC, ATS and WRAC and is home to their Standards, formerly located at Worthy Down.

Jill Rimmer (Neé Turner, Capt WRAC 1982-1991)



**Processing into Act of Dedication.
Fiona Gardner accompanying the Deputy Lord Lieutenant**



CHORAL EVENSONG WITH THE WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION

The afternoon had been a glorious one for late January and the Cathedral sparkled as we entered. It had been some time since I had last been there, having been posted in as 2IC Headquarters and Holding Company in 1988 at Guildford.

Life does go in full circles and this day I had started the morning leading our School Morning Matins Service with our Reverend. The school where I am Deputy Head currently was originally founded as a Choir School for Boys. We now have a mixed choir and the girl choristers have been a wonderful addition, as is our Head of Choral Music Tali Glynne Jones. She often smiles at my Yorkshire pronunciation of Latin in the Service. Just as that had caused my Staff Sergeant amusement at Sandhurst.

At the Choral Evensong at Guildford Cathedral, which was very much with the WRAC Association, there were two perfectly delivered readings by our Vice President and Membership Council Chairman. The entire service was led by Canon Gilly Myers, who I had the privilege of meeting afterwards. The choristers sang beautifully, and the anthems were musical variations I had not heard before which, considering I attend twice weekly Matins, I thought was quite a feat. We all appreciate the tenacity and challenging work behind the scenes, required by the younger choristers to produce harmony of such quality.

However, the personal highlight for me was to have my former OC Revd Sue Wing deliver the prayers. These were heartfelt and brimming with compassion. It took me back full circle to my days at RMA Sandhurst and the momentary welcome peace of the Sunday Church services there. I am grateful to have crossed paths with her again.

What a way to spend an afternoon off. I felt the WRAC Collect was a huge reminder of the women who serve today and have served in the past and some who have lost their lives doing so. It was also super to catch up with former friends and colleagues.

The standard bearer looked serene and immaculate. She performed the duty of leading us as we all processed out. Let us all remember in this time of turbulence in the world the Collect for Peace and Protection. Thank you all to all folks at the Cathedral for making it a very special afternoon.

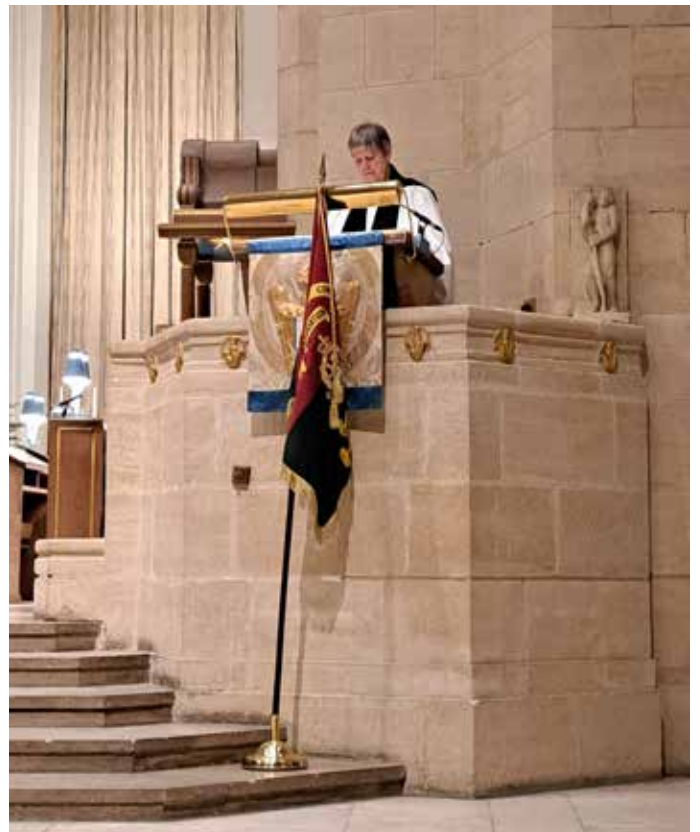
Captain (Retd) Netty Wright



Fiona Gardner reading



Rowena Naile reading



Rev Sue Wing leading prayers



This following report was actually shared with the Royal Corps of Signals

The Women's Royal Army Corps Association (WRAC) formed in 1949, is the successor to the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC) Old Comrades Association formed in 1919 and the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) Old Comrades Association formed in 1938. The current organisation has over 3,000 members and reflects the diversity and breadth of experience of women who have served their country in the British Army.

There have long been strong links between the WRAC and Guilford with their HQ and training units in the area for many years. Guilford Cathedral, therefore, was always considered its spiritual home and it is there their 100-year anniversary Plaque now resides. The Dedication schedule was planned for 2019 but due to the pandemic and other events was delayed until this January 2023.

Despite the delay, the Dedication did go ahead and was very successful. The Dean of Guildford Cathedral, the Very Reverend Dianna Gwilliams, conducted the Act of Dedication attended by around 40 of the Association plus dignitaries. From our own RSA branch both Jim & Grace Blake, plus Sue Westlake (WRAC Life Vice President), attended along with Janet and myself.

The Dedication service was followed by refreshments in the Café with much chatter of the good times and old friends. The dignitaries circulated well. The Mayor, Councillor Dennis Booth, and the Lady Mayoress did the rounds and spoke with us all, but it was noted that the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Surrey monopolised our very own Jim Blake for most of that session.

Although the main event was the Dedication of the Plaque it was the Choral Evensong that had the lasting effect. The Cathedral, a modern construction, is impressive from the interior as well as its exterior with fine acoustics of which the choristers take full advantage and are well rehearsed. The Canon, Gilly Myers, welcomed us all and the lessons were read by Brig (Retd) Fiona Gardner CBE (VP and Chairman of Trustees) and Lt Col (Retd) Rowena Naile MBE (Vice Chair of Trustees and Chair of the Membership Council). The service finished with the singing of the National Anthem to the King, a monarch that none of the attendees would have served under but still obeyed the call to arms.

The WRAC was fully disbanded in 1992 when all those still serving were re-badged to the Corps they were assigned to.

The "Lasses of Richmond Hill" still go marching on.

Chris (husband of Janet) Endean



ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA CHRISTMAS GRANTS VISIT December 2022

Each year the RHC kindly invites a limited number of Association representatives to Chelsea to present Christmas gifts to our in-pensioners. The number of representatives is very small and based on the number of in-pensioners we have identified as ATS or WRAC. We get to meet with our in-pensioners in the Club Bar, give our gifts and have lunch in the Main Hall.



L-R: Monica Parrot, Jan Brodie-Murphy, Rowena Naile (Membership Council Chair), Carol Knight, Julie Winks (Ben Fund Sec), Helen Lloyd & Charmaine (Bimbo) Coleman

On behalf of all the WRAC (and female attached) here may I thank the WRAC Association for the generous monetary gift and present we each received along with the delightful Association Christmas card.

It was kind of you to take the time to visit those Pensioners in the Margaret Thatcher Infirmary who could not join us in the Club House. I know they were looking forward to seeing you all.

Bonny and lively chat throughout and we all so enjoyed talking of our past military days and exploits while serving in the 'lovat'.

Glad we had the opportunity to show you a berth where we live, it gives you a wider insight to our way of life here and will enable you to pass this information onto those WRAC members who would be eligible to apply to come here.

We all so enjoyed your visit and look forward to hearing from, and seeing, you.

**Yours aye,
Jan [Brodie-Murphy]**

Hi Ladies,
Just a note to thank you for visiting us at [Royal Hospital] Chelsea, and delivering our Christmas grant money and gifts; it was lovely to meet the three of you who came to represent the Association.

I hope like Jan [Brodie-Murphy] offered, that we can arrange a warm weather visit for you. Many thanks.

Helen Lloyd

WRAC STATUETTE PRESENTATION TO RHC Wednesday 8th March 2023

As you may remember I was given the go ahead from Ali Brown, our previous Vice President, Membership Council and Trustees, to pursue some type of permanent recognition that women are now resident in the Royal Hospital Chelsea. In January 2020 I began my mission and am delighted that a commissioned statuette was finally presented to the Royal Hospital Chelsea on Wednesday 8th March 2023.

I crossed many hurdles and red tape, and progress was particularly slow due to the pandemic. I finally got there with the help of Tina Kilnan, Heritage & Assurance Manager for the RHC.

I'm proud that the statuette now sits in the RHC Museum in its timeline for all to see. It will be brought out for all formal occasions where a female cohort is present. My grateful thanks to ALL those who have donated to the WRAC Lionesses fundraising events which enabled the silver statuette to be purchased.

Wendy Hooton



Wendy Hooton (fundraiser) with RHC Bear and WRAC Statuette

When the invitation came inviting me to a presentation at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, I had no idea what to expect, all I was told was to wear something smart, no uniform.

The weather on the day was dreadful, heavy rain and wind throughout the whole day. That did not deter any of the invited guests. There was a lovely mixture of both female and male 'In Pensioners' along with male and female staff from the hospital. What a magnificent surprise, to be a part of history in the making, and seeing old friends, well we're more like a family really.

Wendy, the brilliant artist that she is, delivered an outstanding figurine of a beautiful WRAC in her No. 1 dress uniform. Marjorie Cole, the longest serving female In Pensioner accepted the Statuette on behalf of the Royal Hospital, followed by a wonderful speech of acceptance.

The Statuette is classy, sparkly and in proportion, standing on a wooden plinth. No matter where she is displayed, she will evoke many warming conversations for years to come.

Ozzy Osborne



Members of the WRAC Association with female Chelsea Pensioners and staff at Royal Hospital Chelsea



L-R: Jan Brodie-Murphy, Carol Knight, Pat Rosewell, Wendy Hooton, Helen Meade-Davies, Sandy Cawley, Barbara Davies, Elaine (Ozzy) Osborne, Helen Lloyd, Anne Phipps & Monica Parrott

When I got the call inviting me to the presentation of the silver statue to our lady in-pensioner, I was delighted and proud to be asked. When I arrived, I was pleased to see so many ladies in red. It's not often one gets the chance to meet so many in one afternoon. The statuette was on display in WRAC No.1 dress uniform looking as smart as we all were in our day.

The presentation was made by Fiona Gardener, Vice President of the Association, to the Royal Hospital. It was received by IP Marjorie Cole, who was delighted to receive it as representative of the now 16 female pensioners. She then made an amusing and interesting speech.

We were then able to chat with the guests, a mixture of staff, friends, both male and female, and In Pensioners; this over a lovely buffet and a refreshing cup of tea which was a lovely way to end a wonderful afternoon. This was certainly one to remember for a long time and brought about by the action, determination and fundraising of Wendy Hooton - such a wonderful thing to do.

Sandy Cawley



“Now I know what it’s like to win an Oscar” says Marjorie Cole

It really was a proud moment for the Association when we presented a Silver Statuette of a female soldier to The Royal Hospital Chelsea on Wednesday 8th March, International Women’s Day.

It was Wendy Hooton who had the brainwave“let’s present the Chelsea Pensioners with a silver statuette of a female soldier. They’ve got a fella, they should have one of us” she said. And you know Wendy, she backed this up by raising the funds and putting a proposal into HQ and to ‘those that be’ at The Royal Hospital. The response was a resounding “Yes please!!”

The Statuette was to be a WRAC soldier of the rank of Corporal, and bearing the GSM medal for Northern Ireland, as many of you would have looked in your Barrack Dress back in the day - handbag to boot! We hope you’ll agree she looks wonderful.

What better day than International Women’s Day, for the occasion? The Royal Hospital laid on a lovely afternoon tea for attendees to enjoy after speeches from Association Vice President Fiona Gardner, IP Marjorie Cole and CEO Gary Lashko. Sarah Atherton MP was also in attendance, again pertinent since having served in the Intelligence Corps Sarah is the only sitting female MP with Regular military background.

The Association and The Royal Hospital thank Wendy and the Lionesses for raising the funds, and especially to Wendy for her tenacity in seeing this project through. And thank you to the members of Greater London Branch who give up their time to visit RHC on much appreciated morale boosting visits.



Association Vice President, Brigadier (Retd) Fiona Gardner with Association member and Chelsea Pensioner, Marjorie Cole



Royal Hospital Chelsea female In Pensioners, L-R: Helen Lloyd, Charmaine Coleman, Anne Phipps, Marjorie Cole, Monica Parrott, Mary Guidera, Carol Knight, Janet Brodie Murphy, Helen Morse in front, in her wheelchair.

RHC FOUNDER’S DAY Thursday 8th June 2023

Each year we get offered a limited number of invitations/ tickets to the Royal Hospital’s annual Founder’s Day – always early in June. The number we get offered are connected to the number of in-pensioners identifying as ATS or WRAC.

“Thank you so much for arranging for myself and Debbie to attend Founder’s Day. We both enjoyed the day, and it was great to put a face to a name”.

**Susan Feeney &
Debbie Davies**



**L-R: Rowena Nail, Isabel McCord,
Helen Merrington-Rust & Amanda Hassel**



With the King and Queen of The Belgians



WRAC, Association and RHC In-pensioners in Figure Square

A View from the inside:

In August I will have completed my first year as a Chelsea Pensioner at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. On admission a fellow Chelsea Pensioner told me that when he puts on the iconic Scarlet uniform of the Royal Hospital, he grows at least six inches with pride. I totally understand now what he means and, in my case, would say more like 12 inches.

Adorned in Scarlet one is instantly recognised and people from all over the world respect your veteran status and what the Royal Hospital stands for. Often, they will say 'thank you', my reply is always "I will take your message of thanks back to my colleagues". In my day the WRAC was non-combatant and we fulfilled roles and employment so that when men were called away to conflict, we stepped into their shoes. Initially I felt very uncomfortable at being thanked, but as my male colleagues point out they would not have been able to go off without the support of all three female services.

Joining any new establishment, fitting in, learning how it ticks, striving to settle in and being accepted is a real challenge but I got stuck in right away, and eleven months on feel 100% that I have been accepted as a strong and contributing member of the Chelsea Pensioner team.

The opportunities here at the Royal Hospital are many and varied but the individual must actively seek out these opportunities. In my case volunteering to take part in a stand at the Chelsea Flower Show led to an invitation to Windsor Flower Show, where I exhibited four craft items and was introduced to the Duchess of Edinburgh. There we met the PR Manager of the Royal Variety Care Home in Twickenham, and he invited us to a summer concert at the home, where we met residents who are from the world of film and theatre; such wonderful opportunities.

The pinnacle of the year for us is Founder's Day, where we all parade with an audience of 3,000 invited guests. Spinal problems and major spinal surgery in August 2021 enabled

me to walk again, and with dedicated regular physio and hydro sessions I felt I was capable of participating. So, my first experience of being a part of this wonderful pageantry was daunting and challenging. Two hours plus is a long time to stand motionless and I just dreaded the marching, as my balance is very poor. The first two rehearsals were arduous, but that Corps spirit spurs you on. Come the day the parade was longer than expected with the Inspecting Officer, the King of the Belgians, taking such a long time, then he gave a lengthy speech. It was gruelling and only sheer grit got me through.

My memory of that special day will be two-fold - utter fear of falling, and not completing the parade. I then enjoyed the wonderful festivities afterwards in the marquee down on the lawns. Each pensioner can invite up to nine guests. Tables are laid out, and with bars and a dancing area the atmosphere is just a mad party; there are even belly dancers as part of the entertainment. You can self-cater or use the hospital packed lunches. My granddaughter orchestrated the lunch meal, which was delicious fine dining. With a Founder's Day under my belt, I at last felt like one of the pack.

Founder's Day, also known as Oak Apple Day, normally falls on the next Thursday after King Charles II birthday on 29th of May. The story behind the 'Oak Apple' symbolises the future king's escape after the Battle of Worcester in 1651 when he hid in an oak tree, evading capture by the Parliamentary forces. To this day, this tale is honoured by Chelsea Pensioners sporting oak leaves on their uniforms.

Jan Brodie-Murphy



Jan Brodie-Murphy sat on octagan bench

Jan Brodie-Murphy on parade (see head bowed)



If you would like to be considered for a ticket for next year, please send your name and contact details to the Association Secretary, Penny Muxworthy, who will collate and, in due course, advise you of progress.

MARG DAVIES 100 MILE CHARITY WALK IN IRELAND

18th – 25th April 2023

This year, my 10th year of charity walking, I felt it was time to visit Ireland, mostly Northern Ireland (Fermanagh and South Tyrone), but crossing the border now and again into County Donegal. I could take as long as I needed to complete my 100 miles as Denise (as many of you know, my support driver/ medic/cook/etc.) and I were staying with her sister and brother-in-law in Donegal town for the duration. I actually took eight days to complete the 100 miles, starting on Tuesday 18th April 2023 and finishing on Tuesday 25th April 2023.

I knew that my walk was going to be a bit different this year. Normally I complete my walk by following a nationally recognised route from A to B, getting dropped off and picked up each day along the route. Ireland was different as the few 100+ mile linear routes that do exist are over very wild, rugged, boggy and mountainous terrain. One thing my 72 years on this planet has taught me is to set realistic challenges!! As a lone walker I had no intention of traversing mountainous bog-land using just a compass to find my route (there are few marked pathways!). So, forest tracks and minor lanes were the order of the day. I was already a little apprehensive about how my feet would hold up with the constant pounding on metalled road surfaces. Add to that the fact I actually had to make a decision each day as to where I was going to walk (I don't do decisions!), and factor in that I was walking in Ireland for the WRAC Association (as well as Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund) - not a good idea then to walk emblazoned with military insignia. Oh yes, and also factor in the weather as Ireland is more famed for its "liquid sunshine" i.e., rain; it's not called the Emerald Isle for nothing! I was probably more worried about this walk than any other I've completed.

We arrived in sunshine at our 'home for the duration' early on Monday 17th April having caught the overnight ferry from Birkenhead to Belfast. Our hosts explained that the previous week had been quite nice and that it couldn't possibly last. They hoped I'd come well prepared for rain - I had. In fact, I was so well prepared that I had a large suitcase full of walking tops, trousers & socks; another large holdall full of boots, walking trainers, maps and gizmos; not to mention the wet-weather coats and trousers which didn't fit anywhere else, etc. etc!!



Tuesday 18th dawned and I decided to make a start whilst the weather was still holding. George, my brother-in-law, drove me to my start point near Killeter Forest. George spent much of his twenties rallying around Ireland so was well used to driving on the kind of tracks that would get me to and from my walks. He later told me that the first drop-off was one of the most disconcerting experiences of his life - to drop me off in the middle of nowhere to complete a walk that I knew was there on paper! He felt sure that my journey would abruptly stop as the track disappeared in a forest of tangled trees. I have to admit that I also wasn't that certain that the route would work - but I set off with a cheery wave. The path was a broad road of crushed stone, well compacted, so reasonable walking if I kept to the more worn, flattened tracks. It wound its way through the well managed forestry area, sometimes through great swathes of fairly recently felled land, and sometimes I was dwarfed by majestic fir trees towering over me. They'd obviously had some fierce storms over the winter as many trees on the edges had been uprooted and blown over, only one had fallen across the path, as far as I could see. This was the part of my walk that I'd not been able to recce, so I was delighted to find it so manageable. The rest of the day's walk progressed well with many ups and downs befitting such a 'wild', hilly, border country track. In South Tyrone, in particular, there were many informative 'panels' along the route, some of which were along the International Appalachian Trail. (The geology here, in North America and in Scotland is, apparently, the same.)

Day 2 was another linear route, with Denise dropping me off in Belleek & picking me up at Pettigo; it criss-crossed the border in several places. It was a day for pounding my poor feet and battling against the wind. I have to admit that this was not my favourite day's walk, possibly because it was another long day. Some of the scenery was stunning and others made me sad for our environment. Everyone needs to make a living but the stripping of peat and the detritus (plastic & broken pallets) accompanying it was not so good.



My third day started again in the back of beyond, so George volunteered to drop me off on the International Appalachian Trail and pick me up at a place of pilgrimage on Lough Derg another 15+miles, much of it on minor roads. I tried to go off-road on what I thought would involve the simple fording of a stream. It turned out to be a large, fast flowing river! I backtracked and returned to the road. I met George at the quay to 'St Patrick's Purgatory' on Station Island - a retreat and place of pilgrimage for many years. The most interesting sight for both of us, neither being particularly religious, was the rowboat used to carry people back and forth between the quay and the island in earlier times. It was 50 ft long and required 12 men on four oars to propel it and its 150 passengers!



**St Patrick's blessing
with Station Island &
Lough Derg**



Friday 21st April was my 4th day and I drove myself to the start to complete a figure of eight walk, again on the International Appalachian Trail. I was getting used to the lovely weather; another sunny but blustery day with varied terrain and a mixture of forest, Atlantic Bog and pastureland to admire as I walked. I never doubt that my chauffeurs will pick me up at the end of my walks, but I must admit to a huge sigh of relief that my car was still where I'd left it that morning. (Why wouldn't it be?)

Day 5 and over halfway - another circular walk with me driving myself to the start. The day was a little cloudier as I set off from Donegal and headed towards Magho Cliffs overlooking Lough Erne. As I crossed the border into Northern Ireland it started to spit; as I headed up into the hills the rain became heavier; when I arrived at the Lough Navar Forest Loop start it was a pretty constant but gentle rain. Nothing for it but to don my gaiters, waterproof trousers and top, put my waterproof cover over my backpack, unfurl my walking umbrella and set off. Once I'd finished juggling with an umbrella, gizmo and phone camera I made pretty good progress visiting Loughs Meenamine, Anlabin, Achork and finally Navar as I went. Most of the walk was along the Ulster Way, the remainder on the Lough Navar Scenic Drive. The freshly washed vegetation, tumbling streams and tranquil loughs made it a heart-warming walk despite the rain. There was no stopping for meals today, just snacking as I walked, so I was pleased to get back to the car, strip off my soggy outer layers and sit in the warm and dry to munch a belated lunch. I set-off back to Donegal in the rain only to get back and

discover that Denise and her sister, Julia, had enjoyed a dry and sunny day! Still, it was my only damp day so I can't complain.



**The only rainy
the views are** **day I had, but
still stunning!!**

On my way back on Day 3 I had recced Sunday's walk and was not impressed. The advantage of not walking a set route became apparent. Sunday, Day 6, I chose a different route. In fact, I chose two routes. The first, in the morning, was spent around Bundoran, on the coast of Donegal Bay, with Denise, Julia & George. We had breakfast at the Salty Fox and then attempted to walk around the headland and back through the town. I say attempted as there was a police "incident" on the headland and the intended route was closed. George & Julia headed back to their car, but Denise and I forged ahead taking a rather long detour. I really wanted to see the surf and breakers at Tullan Strand, so I kept saying, "just a bit further" despite the ominous clouds heading our way. Those clouds turned into a fairly heavy downpour, and we got soaked. We got back to the car and headed home to dry off. (Bless her, Denise is still speaking to me.) George then drove me for my second walk to Murvagh Beach, a large, sandy beach bounded by Murvagh Golf Course to the east and Donegal Bay to the west. I walked the length of the beach, to the point where the estuary channel to Donegal town is at its narrowest and then back to the carpark, and on to the Golf Club itself where I met up with George again.

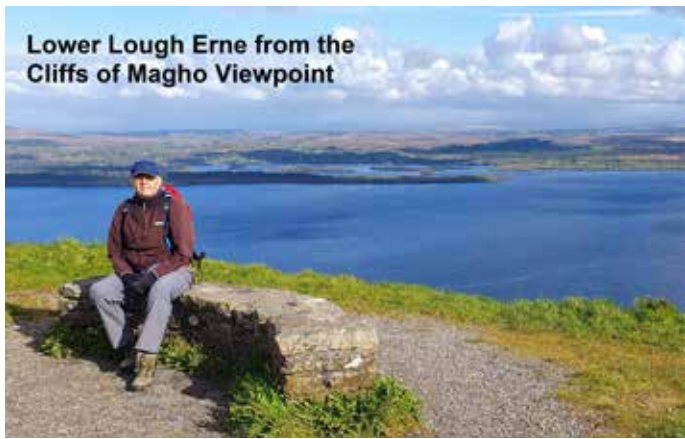


**Support Crew & me,
Bundoran and Donegal Bay**

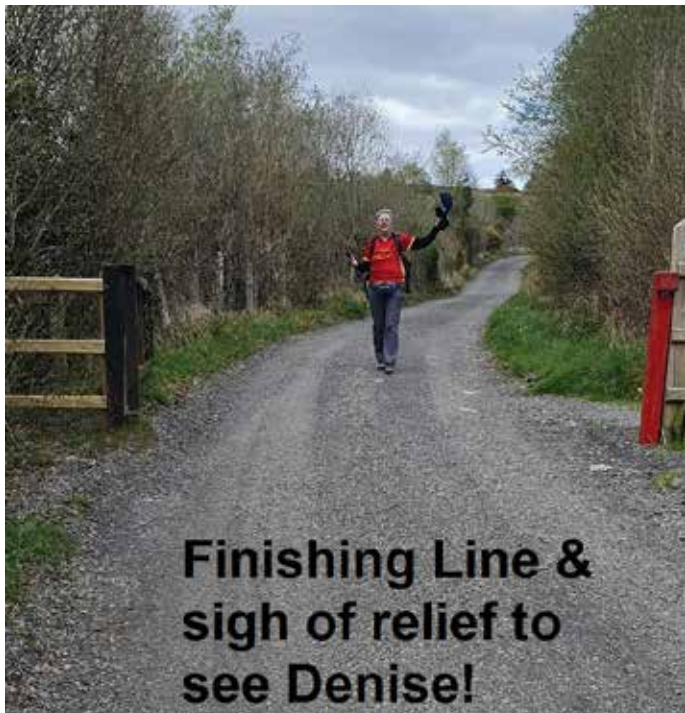
Monday 24th, Day 7, meant another slight change of plan as a section of the second part of my walk was closed! Denise dropped me off at Magho Cliffs Viewpoint then drove back to join Julia and George for coffee at Belleek. In the meantime, as Part 1 of my walk, I made my way, mostly downhill, to Falls Bridge then westward along the road beside the Silles River. I met George where the Ulster Way emerged from Conagher Forest. The next drop off was at Florence Court where my original walk was to have finished. Part 2 of the day's walk was the Red Trail around Florence Court Estate, a National Trust property. The first, wooded part (also the shorter Blue Trail), was really lovely with many interesting features. The middle, longer section, involved some hefty climbing and was a bit more of a slog. Although I could glimpse, once or twice, the nearby Cuilcagh Mountain, for the most part the route was hemmed in by forestry. It became much more pleasant as I neared Florence Court again and could admire the spectacular spring blossom. My chauffeur, George, awaited me in the carpark so it was a swift and pleasant drive home.



**Cuilcagh Mountain
glimpsed from
Florence Court
National Trust**



Day 8, and Final Day, dawned fine if a little chilly. Denise dropped me off where I had left the Ulster Way the previous day. The guidebooks all suggest that one walks the Ulster Way in a clockwise direction but, on this particular section, that would mean walking constantly uphill; I chose to walk in the opposite direction – downhill. My last day's walk was a real pleasure, partly because it was the last, partly because again it was sunny but not too warm, and partly because of the wonderful scenery, flora and fauna (in the form of unidentified birdsong). There was one moment of panic from both of us when Denise told me she was at a car park at Ballinacor not Ballintempo, where I was hoping to be picked up! She described where she was, which I couldn't reconcile with my recce the previous year. Fortunately, at that point, I turned a corner or two and . . . there she was. The car park was exactly as she described it but was about half a mile up the track from the place I'd found on my recce!



The remainder of my time in Ireland was spent on R&R and meeting up with two lovely members of Ulster Branch WRAC Association, Sylvia Connachan and Rosemary Stewart, at the Silverbirch Hotel in Omagh. It's amazing how the camaraderie clicks into place whether you've known someone all your life, just met a few times or just been introduced recently. What a bond the WRAC Association provides. The ladies of Ulster Branch gave me a very generous donation and I reciprocated with a handmade glass Poppy Plaque for them to raffle for funds.



Each year my supporters amaze and humble me with their generosity and again I'm raising funds for two charities. The first is the WRAC Association and my second is the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund, in memory of female veteran, Mel Howell, who died from Pancreatic Cancer in 2022 after a very brief and painful illness.

Am I doing another walk? Probably (poor Denise!). It may even be my home county of Pembrokeshire. It boasts rather a lot of castles. Also, Ali Brown says she's accompanying me in 2025. Watch this space!

You can read about the day-to-day progress of all my walks on my Blog at: <http://margdaviesswalks.blogspot.co.uk>

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CORONATION OF THEIR MAJESTIES KING CHARLES III AND QUEEN CAMILLA
6th May 2023



Liverpool branch enjoying a Coronation tea, where they all had to come in red, white and blue.

Betty Webb's Coronation Attendance & 100th birthday celebrations

Betty Webb, Birmingham Branch member and President, was honoured to be invited to the King and Queen's Coronation in May. "It will top anything I've ever done before", said 100-year-old war hero, Betty Webb, from Worcestershire - who revealed to BBC Hereford & Worcester that she'd been invited to King Charles' Coronation.

"My 100th birthday was quite wonderful, with some totally unexpected privileges and pleasures. Having a reserved seat in Westminster Abbey on the day of the King's crowning was just unbelievable. We had to be seated by 7.30am, which meant a 5am start from our hotel in order to get through all the security procedures. Sitting in the front row in the nave enabled me to see their Majesties, all the royals and dignitaries clearly as they walked past. It was also an opportunity to take in the magnificence of the Abbey and hear the glorious music.

Bletchley Park, where I was stationed from 1941 to 1945, staged a most wonderful party for 60 of my friends and relations – some had travelled from South Africa, Tenerife and the Outer Hebrides. All this enhanced by a fly-over by a Lancaster bomber.

The Birmingham Branch gave me a special lunch, where three members who I had enlisted when I was Recruiting Officer for Birmingham and West Midlands in the '60s, were present.

A truly wonderful 100th birthday".

Betty Webb MBE



Betty Webb & Iona McDonald, Lord Lieutenant of Ayrshire & Arran



DATA PROTECTION ADVICE FOR BRANCH SECRETARIES AND AREA CHAIRS

On 25th May 2018 the 'General Data Protection Regulations' (GDPR) came into force. The WRAC Assoc. updated its Data Protection Policy and produced a Privacy Statement, in line with the new regulations, that are suitable for the size and type of organisation that we are. Both the Policy and Privacy Statement are kept under review by Trustees as/where necessary. The 2018 WRAC Assoc. GDPR Policy required little/no amendments – except that we now stress even more than ever that the Assoc. does / will NOT share or sell Members' data to any third party. The data held and processed by The Association is for 'Legitimate Purposes' (ie in order to fulfil the charity's obligations, objectives and purposes).

However, we make the following suggestions / recommendations to Branch Secretaries and Area Chairs:

Do ... :

... Double-check that your Members are happy for their information to be shared with other Branch / Area Members (and HQ if they are not an Association Member).

... Double-check that those people in a photograph that you are submitting to HQ and/or Lioness are aware and happy that it may be included in the Lioness (the Lioness Editor will not make any double-checks for such permissions). [This equally applies to any guests you may have with you – ensure they too are happy for their image to be included in the Lioness].

Don't ... :

... Share any personal information (*) with other people, unless you have their express permission to do so (ie if HQ send you information on a Member, we will have received that person's permission to share with you, the Branch Secretary. We will not have requested permission to share with anyone else in your branch or Area).

... Publish anyone's personal information / details without their permission.

... Worry! The Regulations apply to those organisations registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). (Most / All of the WRAC Branches and Areas are not registered with the ICO).

HQ office Policy includes covering Members by email.

(*) Personal Information is anything that could easily identify an individual by revealing where they live, what they do, how to contact them, etc.

January 2021

MISSION MOTORSPORT GOODWOOD TRACK DAY 21 June 2023

What an exciting day I spent at the Goodwood Motor racing Circuit in Sussex, teaming up with two other WRAC Veterans, Paula Berry and Jane Griffin-Ash. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting fellow Veterans and, indeed, serving members of the Armed forces.



Jane Griffin-Ash, Pat Rosewell & Paula Berry with some 'greats' of motorsport

The highlights of my day included racing in a red Porsche with a guy called Will. Oh, my word he didn't hold back as we sped around the circuit at 140 miles an hour! I have to say I was hanging on for dear life, but I absolutely loved it. Jane rode in a blue Porsche and after a few circuits that was enough for her as her little legs started to shake.

I then went back for more and rode in an open top Red Morgan. I thought this classic wouldn't go too fast, how wrong was I. My heart was in my mouth! I could smell the rubber and the brake pads burning. I jumped out after the three laps and my little legs were shaking too. It was such an exhilarating experience.

I wasn't finished, I then headed over to the skid pan; I had never done this before. I met up with Jane again. I jumped in the passenger seat with my instructor, Ian, who trains the Metropolitan Police. He talked me through it and showed me how it was done. On my first attempt I was a little apprehensive. On my second attempt I gave it all I could, it was like dancing in a car. I loved it, especially when I did a 360! Jane then went on the skid pan with the instructor and really didn't like it. Her face was a picture. Paula enjoyed her day with us. Although she couldn't partake, she thoroughly enjoyed meeting everyone and looking at the amazing cars.

All those WRAC Veterans out there who like to go fast this is a great day out for you. We had a wonderful track day, in some super classic cars, with compliments of the forces Charity "Mission Motorsport."

Pat Rosewell



There are more of our members going on another Mission Motorsport day in September. If you would like to be considered for future days, please send your name and contact details to the Association office who will collate and, in due course, advise you of progress.

ARMED FORCES DAY 24th June 2023 Falmouth

South West Area decided to support the National Armed Forces Day event in Falmouth by taking a stand in the Charity Tent for the Association. We set up our pitch, with our display board only just fitting into our allotted (and marked out on the floor) space, and we put all our leaflets on the storage container as there was no room for the table and chairs! We had plenty of visitors, and hopefully have recruited a few new members.

The display boards show the history of women in the Army so I was able to educate numerous visitors on our history, the young girls were so surprised to realise that the areas we could work in were so restricted. On Saturday I was assisted for a couple of hours by members of Torbay Branch, ably led by Diana Keenan. Thank you very much for your help.



Rowena Naile & Diana Keenan



We were visited by Johnny Mercer, the Minister of State for Veterans' Affairs, Edward Bolitho OBE the Lord Lieutenant for Cornwall, and Toby Ashworth the High Sheriff for Cornwall. Sadly, no picnics as I was on my own. South West Area did its bit for promoting the Association in an area where 10% of the population are veterans – mainly Army!

Rowena Naile

'100 days to go event', Pendennis Castle, Cornwall



ARMED FORCES DAY Bury St Edmunds

Another successful AFD raising funds for the WRAC Association. Due to another event, I was unable to borrow a gazebo from the West Suffolk Council, so I reached out to my contacts and thankfully the Royal Anglians lent me their 4'x3' pop up gazebo. We set up early on the local Market and raised an amazing £245.43p from our tombola.

Huge thanks to all my helpers - Kath Kay, Val Renouf, Gwen Greenwood, Bev Fenning, Mary Stearn, Catharine (Kempy) Kemp, Nell Frary and Shirley Hudson.

Many thanks to everyone who donated prizes for the tombola and to Mary Stearne for providing the delicious homemade Lemon Drizzle cake and Chocolate Brownies.

Wendy Hooton



Currently the internet is showing that 2024's National event will be in Newtownabbey Borough Council, Antrim, Northern Ireland, on Saturday 22nd June.

ANNUAL ADJUTANT GENERAL'S CORPS COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE (including Antecedent Corps 30th Anniversary) 11th July 2023 National Memorial Arboretum

This annual event, held at the NMA, includes representatives from both the AGC and its antecedent corps, including ourselves. Those parading and participating made preparations and lined up from 11.00, with the Service of Commemoration starting at 12 noon. The service was followed by Afternoon Tea in the Aspects building.

The Association was represented by our Standard, who joined those processing. There were 14 wreaths laid, from representatives of the AGC and AGC Association, SPS, RAPC, RMP and RMP Association, MPS and MPS Association, ETS, RAEC, ASL, MPGS, GSPS and Ali Brown, who represented the Association and laid our wreath.



WRAC & RMP Associations' Standards



Standards at the AGC memorial



PIP'S SCOOTER CHALLENGE 17th July – 22nd July 2023

I joined the WRAC in Coventry, which was my home town, in 1971. I trained at Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Guildford, the home of the WRAC, and served in various locations for the following five years.

Approximately six years ago I became a member of the WRAC Association and in doing so the WRAC Manchester branch was born, of which I am proud to say I am the Chair. Over the years I have enjoyed reunions, events, support and friendship from the WRAC Association and its members. So, I came up with an idea of giving something back, with that the Scooter Sprint, and 'Pip-Stop Crew' was formed consisting of Dawn Hawker (WRAC), Issy Hamilton-Conboy (WRAC), Jeff Hawker BEM (REME) and Frank Spencer (RE), and the Challenge was born.



Pip Stop Crew

The challenge of the Mobility Scooter Sprint started at 1017hrs on Monday 17th July leaving from Coventry Transport Museum. The challenge was started by Deputy Lord Mayor of Coventry (Cllr Mutton) to the applause of WRAC, from different areas of the country, and local military veterans who came to see me off.

We stayed in Premier Inns and Travelodges over the week, whose members of staff were very helpful and interested in what we were doing, and allowed us to charge my scooter batteries overnight in various staff areas, as the scooter was too big to be in my room. My route took me from Binley Woods, to Fenny Compton, Blenheim Palace, Sutton Courtney, Reading, Yateley, Queen Elizabeth Park, and Guildford Cathedral via many other beautiful little villages in between.

There were hairy, scary moments like potholes, which played havoc with my derriere and false teeth. The audio routes skipped sentences when you went over a bump, even causing me to end up on a busy dual carriageway being gesticulated at by passing drivers, slipping into a ditch whilst taking a comfort stop and getting one leg very wet, getting lost on a couple of occasions, and Frank wobbling along the tow paths on a small-wheeled bicycle, his first time on a bike for over 60 years.

The most memorable moments were Family, WRAC Veterans and Dignitaries that waved us off in Coventry; the fantastic Hornton Primary school children who lined the village green cheering and clapping me on my way, which made my 'eye' leak; the New Inn at Kidmore End who, although closed, made us brews and allowed us to use their facilities; the Good Intent Inn, Puttenham, where Kym, WRAC Veteran, had bought lunch for me and the crew, and the locals that bought us rounds were all very generous.



Narrow Roads



Pip at Guildford Cathedral



The final day we called into Queen Elizabeth Park, which will always be 'Our Home', and where we met up with the Manchester Branch supporters and the WRAC Cycle Ladies for a photo opportunity. As we were leaving this area, we bumped into Christine Hayman, who had chosen to meet us as her birthday treat. A local resident of QE Park came to ask if we were 'Just Stop Oil Protesters', as Frank and Dawn were wearing yellow vests.

We then proceeded to Guildford Cathedral where we were met with a lot of cheering and approx. 30 WRAC Veterans from all areas of the country, along with a newly formed group of cadets, BCC, from six years to teenagers. This was an overwhelming moment ... where my eye leaked a little more.

The WRAC Association was represented by Lt Col (Retd) Rowena Naile and also in attendance was a representative from the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Col Guthrie, the Mayor of Guildford and the local MP, Angela Richardson, whom I had met in November 2022 at the 30th Anniversary of the disbandment of the WRAC. The Rev Canon Chris Hollinghurst said prayers and the WRAC Collect and photo shoots were arranged under the WRAC Window.

Our final stop was Guildford Fire Station, where we had a fantastic welcome from the Veterans Group of Blue Light and Military, who had laid on a fabulous spread with drinks and beautiful home-made scones.



Queen Elizabeth Barracks memorial obelisk, Guildford



I'd like to thank The Pip-Stop Crew for their help with planning and supporting me on my Challenge, and to everyone who came and supported me on our way, and a BIG Thank You to each and everyone who donated money, time and support for our chosen charities.

The main aim of the Challenge was not just to support the charities but to raise awareness of the fact that women are Veterans too, and the importance of the WRAC Association to all members, whether Veterans or still serving.

IN IT TOGETHER.

Pip Flegel

Pip completed her journey of 127 miles over six days from Coventry to Guildford Cathedral. So far she has raised over £3,500 for the WRAC Association.

Issy Hamilton

SUMMER EVENT 2023, WORTHY DOWN, WINCHESTER 29th July 2023

Just under 100 Association members came together at Worthy Down for the annual Summer Event. Completely redesigned over recent years, the AGC and RLC arranged for members to visit a modern-day accommodation unit, the gym and Food Services Training Wing (which used to be the computer centre).

Members could also follow the Heritage Trail, including the Association Rose Garden. The day concluded with a group photograph in front of the AGC Lion and Afternoon Tea in the Sports Pavilion.

Travelling down the M3 was a journey taking me back in time. My first get together since I left the WRAC 52 years ago. I was looking forward to seeing Worthy Down and meeting up with like-minded people.

I arrived and was made to feel very welcome. One of the first people to greet me turned out to be from my intake. What were the chances of that? Pat Rosewell jogged my memory about 1969. I had a lovely day out and met up with people I hope to keep in touch with. Seeing the rose garden brought from Guildford was interesting.

Since retiring I have joined the U3A, recently the group at Guildford. Imagine my surprise and nostalgia while driving to a new U3A class to find it is located at Queen Elizabeth Park, Guildford. A new housing estate recently built with a church and supermarket. I'm probably sitting in the middle of the parade square for my lesson!

I look forward to meeting up with everyone in the near future.

Sheila Smith



Sheila Johncey, Jane Freebairn, Rowena Naile, Amanda Hassell, Frances Castle & Fiona Gardner



Association group in front of AGC Lion and cricket pitch



Plinth acknowledging Worthy Down's continuous military use

Association flag flying from the Pavilion



RAOC memorial



Plaque showing original donation of rose garden



EVENTS - FORTHCOMING

WRAC LIONESSES WORCESTER 10k Sunday 17th September 2023

This year's Lionesses run has been highlighted by the Worcester City Run organisers, on their website (<https://worcestercityrun.com/w-r-a-c-lionesses-take-on-worcester-city-runs/>).

"Wendy Hooton, an Army female veteran who served in the Women's Royal Army Corps from 1972-1990 is one of the W.R.A.C Lionesses competing in Worcester City Runs 10K. Wendy was given many opportunities whilst serving which included, learning how to ski, and going on an exchange with the Australian Army based in Melbourne.

After having these opportunities Wendy decided she wanted to give something back and began her fundraising journey for The Women's Royal Army Corps Association, a non-profit organisation. The W.R.A.C no longer receives monies from serving female soldiers so rely totally on legacies, donations, selling branded products and fundraising.

The W.R.A.C Association aims to support women who have shared the unique experience of Service life by:

- Maintaining contact between former members and providing social gatherings.
- Fostering esprit de corps, comradeship and welfare and preserving traditions.
- Helping former members of the A.T.S (our predecessors, WW2 ladies), and W.R.A.C and their dependents who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

Not all women see themselves as veterans as they didn't go to war or serve where there was conflict, but they should! There is a lot of support out there for female veterans whether they served 1 day, 1 year or more. They just need to make contact.

Wendy began fundraising in 2013 by getting sponsored for a 10K run in Manchester where W.R.A.C Lionesses raised £3000. Each year Wendy and the Lionesses continued entering 10K runs at different venues and each year their participation numbers increased. In 2019, the W.R.A.C Lionesses entered York 10K to mark the centenary of the Association. The W.R.A.C Lionesses had 142 runners and raised over £33, 000, which is an extraordinary effort!! The W.R.A.C Lionesses will be joining us at Worcester City Runs in September for their 11th run and we wish the W.R.A.C Lionesses all the best with their fundraising efforts."

Although this year's run/trot/walk will have happened by the time you receive this edition, if you would like to make a donation, all monies to the WRAC Association, this is the link: <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/wrac-lionesses-worcester-10k>

Many thanks as always for all your support.
Wendy Hooton - wendyhootonski@aol.com



REMEMBRANCES November 2023

Applications to march at the London Cenotaph have closed for this year.

If you would like to be considered for the limited number of spaces we get for 2024 please see the A-Z Pages 102 in this edition.

If you have been unsuccessful with London then consider joining the events in Guildford – 'home' Borough of the WRAC and Association. Again, please see A-Z pages 102 for more information. The Borough always makes the Association very welcome and it is good to cement our connections at this annual Act of Remembrance.

All tickets for the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance, on the Saturday, are only available through the RBL – we do not get any Association allocation.

2024 AGM

The 2024 AGM will be held in the Carisbrooke Hall, Victory Services Club, 63/79 Seymour Street, London, W2 2HF on Saturday 16th March 2024, commencing at 14.00. **Any Branch/Group Secretary or HQ Branch member who wishes to submit an item for inclusion in the agenda is to do so by 2nd February 2024 to penny.muxworthy@wraca.org.uk.**

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

SATURDAY 16th MARCH 2024

14.00, The Victory Services Club, London

AGENDA - DRAFT:

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Confirmation of 2023 Minutes
4. Business Arising
5. Governance Report
6. Membership Council Report
7. Benevolent Fund Report
8. Influence Report
9. Annual Report and Accounts
10. Resolutions
 - a. Trustee/Membership Council - TBC
 - b. Branch - TBC
11. Guest Speaker – TBC
12. Any Other Business
13. Date of Next Meeting – Saturday 15th (or 22nd) March 2025 (at GR)

Hopefully there will not be any reasons to cancel an in-person, face-to-face AGM next year. However, a decision has already been agreed that future AGM's will be streamed on Facebook Live should you not be able to make it to London – although you will miss out on Afternoon Tea, sorry.

See insert for Booking Form.

WRAC LIONESSES 12th ANNUAL FUNDRAISING 10k

Sunday 19th May 2024 Bristol Run

COME AND JOIN US FOR A DAY OR WEEKEND OF FUN AND LAUGHTER

RUNNERS, WALKERS AND SUPPORTERS ALL WELCOME

(Walkers must complete within 2 hours)

POST RUN SUPPER & RAFFLE

(Proceeds to the WRAC Association)

DATE: Sunday 19th May 2024

TIME: 0900hrs

PLACE: Bristol City Centre

(Entry details coming soon on our Facebook group)

Contact WENDY HOOTON for more information:

Email: wendyhootonski@aol.com Mobile: 07775505326

Facebook Wendy Hooton

ASK TO JOIN our WRAC LIONESSES FUNDRAISING GROUP ON FACEBOOK
(All requests will be sent a direct message on Messenger prior to acceptance).

[Wendy will let you all know when entries open]

WE ARE WAITING FOR YOU....

SUAVITER IN MODO FORTITER IN RE



GUILDFORD REMEMBERED, October 2024

On **5th October 1974** a bomb exploded in the Horse & Groom pub, Guildford claiming the lives of 2 off-duty WRAC servicewomen, 2 off-duty Scots Guards soldiers and 1 civilian. There were also some 65 people wounded in this and the Seven Stars pub, where another bomb was planted. We are sure some of you will remember this – either because you were there and/or were stationed in Guildford at the time, and/or your friends and colleagues were caught up in them.

On **30th October 1964**, some ten years before the bombings, HM Queen Elizabeth II officially opened the WRAC's Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Guildford. Many of you will have passed through the Barracks gates and buildings – now a housing estate.

We are already in discussion with Guildford Borough Council about appropriately remembering all those killed and injured in the pub bombs, whilst also acknowledging the Opening Anniversary of QE Barracks. Exact details are still to be finalised, so keep your eyes peeled for information, updates, booking forms etc.

In the meantime, if you have any memories of either, or both, of these events please do share them with other members by sending in to Editor@wraca.org.uk for inclusion in future Lioness editions.

ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund

**Making A
Difference**

BENEVOLENT FUND GRANTS

Are you or do you know a former ATS or WRAC servicewoman in need of assistance? Do you know how the Benevolent Fund can help?

The ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund awards one-off financial grants to purchase specific goods, services or facilities for eligible former servicewomen, or their dependents, in need. The charity also provides regular payments (Recurring Grants) to former servicewomen who are either elderly, alone, living on low incomes or in ill health, and makes contributions to top-up care-home fees and the costs of care at home.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR HELP?

Any former ATS or WRAC servicewoman, including TA, with one day's paid service or more, is eligible for assistance.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER CRITERIA?

Yes, you must be in need of financial help. There's also a limit on the amount of savings that you can have above which the Benevolent Fund is unable to make an award.

ONE OFF GRANTS

The fund has helped with one-off grants in a wide range of categories.

funeral costs	respite breaks	furniture
bathroom adaptations	travel and transport	white goods
house adaptations	priority debt	removal expenses
electric wheelchairs/mobility scooters	house repairs	rent, deposits and bonds
riser-recliner chairs	central heating/boilers	food vouchers
stair-lifts	carpets and flooring	general needs
disability aids including electric beds	clothing	

REGULAR CHARITABLE PAYMENTS:

There are a number of different types of Annual Maintenance Grants (AMG) to help with day-to-day living expenses or nursing home care fees. See our website for more details www.wraca.org.uk

SO HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR HELP?

If you are a former ATS or WRAC regular or TA servicewoman who needs assistance, or if you know someone who does, then your first port of call is your local branch of SSAFA or regional Royal British Legion (RBL) office. SSAFA or the RBL will arrange for a trained caseworker to interview you in your home to establish the full range of assistance that you need. The caseworker will complete a report that includes details of your household income. This ensures that your Benevolent Fund's charitable money goes to those in financial need. When the report is complete it is sent to the Benevolent Fund Secretary. Once received, applications are considered at the appropriate grants committee meeting and a decision is taken.

RBL: 0808 802 8080

www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/contact-us



SSAFA: 0800 260 6767

www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you/do-you-need-our-help-or-support



Applications for the above grants cannot be accepted direct by the Benevolent Fund Secretary.

BENEVOLENT FUND EXPENDITURE

Key Facts FY 22/23 Q1-3

- 123 applications for assistance were considered by grant committees.
- 94 awards were granted across 26 categories
- Total spend for this period £164,231.35
- 20 beneficiaries in receipt of an Annual Maintenance Grant
- 4 Care Enhancement Grants awarded for Nursing Home Fees.

2022/23 Q1-3 Top 10 Category One-off Grants



2022/23 Q1-3

Recurring Grants

PRMF AMG £26,700.00	Ben Fund AMG £13,350.00	Ben Fund Support Supplement £9,100.00
	Nursing Home Top Up Fees £9,724.00	PRMF AMG £9,724.00

A SSAFA Caseworker wrote: "An absolutely brilliant response. Thank you so much for your generosity towards Mrs XXX". £1,899.00 riser recliner and £249.00 for a portable walker

"Thank you so much, the Membership Support Grant took away my worries about affording the travel to attend an Association event". £23.50 awarded to an Association Member.

Are you unable to attend events due to finances? Worried about the cost to attend branch meetings or trips?

Then the Membership Support Grant may be able to assist. This grant was introduced to assist members to attend either Branch or Association social events where without financial assistance they would be unable to do so. Grants can be awarded up to £100 per event but must not exceed £200 per year per member. Eligibility criteria applies.

In some circumstances the grant can be used for essential items for members taken into hospital at short notice.

Want to know more?

Contact Julie Winks on 0300 400 1992
or email: benfund@wraca.org.uk



CASE STUDY

Anne Smith from Cornwall received assistance from the Benevolent Fund, along with funds from the Royal Navy and The Royal British Legion, to purchase an Electrically Powered Vehicle. The caseworker commented that to say Anne was delighted would be an understatement. Anne stated ***"This is wonderful, so grateful for all the assistance I received that allowed me to get it. My freedom is restored and I will be able to get out and about again like I used to. Thank you all very much"***.

Her caseworker further commented ***"She is enjoying her contact with her telephone buddy from the WRAC Association. There are several scooter users where she lives and she will get a lot of help from them as she gets used to the scooter; I will also join her for an "expedition" a bit further afield. Thank you for your support"***.

If you feel that you could benefit from assistance, please see the section entitled **"So How Do you Apply for Help"** for more information.



PARTNERSHIP WITH THE VETERANS CHARITY

The rise in the cost of living in recent years is affecting millions of people, including serving personnel and veterans. To help ensure these difficulties are met with a swift and effective response, the WRAC Association has formed a new partnership with The Veterans Charity.

The partnership means that The Veterans Charity will assess and deliver immediate needs support on behalf of WRAC Association, with the Association covering the costs of support provided. Col (Retd) Isabel McCord, Chairman of the ATS & WRAC Benevolent Funds Grants Committee, explains, ***"The new partnership means even more women who served in the Army can apply for rapid essential support during this period of economic hardship."***

The partnership commenced on 1 March 2023, and is underwritten with a grant from the WRAC Association Ben. Fund. The Veterans Charity will use the funds for delivery of rapid support for essentials such as food shopping, utilities support, clothing, household items or communications devices and credit. Beneficiaries have already received assistance with food shopping and bills since the partnership commenced.

Danny Greeno, CEO of The Veterans Charity, adds,

"Hardship is affecting many people and our support exists to deliver a rapid reaction to the most urgent needs, alleviating that hardship and the distress it can cause. We are extremely pleased to have been approached by the WRAC Association to form this exciting new partnership, and to be providing support to female veterans. We have proudly supported many female veterans during the past 15 years, and we are excited to expand this support - most importantly to help ensure that women who served know that support is there for them, should they experience difficulties. Sadly, we are aware that many may not consider themselves entitled to support because they served for a short time due to the restrictions placed on women in the military in the past, but we want to encourage any woman who served to get in touch if they are facing financial difficulties".

If you are in need of immediate assistance please do not hesitate to make contact with The Veterans Charity at www.veteranscharity.org.uk or contact 01271 371001. Please note, that this is for grants to meet immediate needs, requests for assistance with non-urgent items or recurring grants should still be directed through SSAFA or RBL.



Are you a Veteran who is currently in hardship and struggling to make ends meet?

Our Support Programmes

Food/Groceries

Designed to last 2 weeks and fully assessed for dietary, pet and baby need and delivered directly to the beneficiary's doorstep.

Utilities

Whether you have pre-payment meters and top up via Paypoint retailers, smart meters or have an outstanding utility bill (up to £100), we can help with gas and electricity costs.

Clothing/Footwear

Casual, smart or workwear. Always brand new and assessed for size, fit and colour preferences. Delivered directly to the beneficiary's doorstep.

Household and Homeware

Single large appliances or small kitchen appliances, bedding, towels and kitchenware and cookware. Always brand new and usually delivered within just a few days.

Communications

Smartphones, tablets and calling credit/data. Devices are always brand new and from well known suppliers. Smartphones can be SIM free or connected to a specific network if required. PAYG credit of £20 can usually be applied immediately.



About The Veterans Charity

Founded in March 2008, we have been responsible for the creation of some fabulous events which benefit the Veteran and wider Armed Forces Community such as The Forces March, Run To Pegasus and Routes of Remembrance as well as creating the unique memorial at Pegasus Bridge in Normandy.

Since 2011, we have been delivering rapid and vital support directly to Veterans who find themselves battling hardship and the distress it causes.

Despite being a small charity, we operate across the UK, supporting hundreds of Veterans every year. Around 80% of our caseload is referred to us by dozens of other charities and organisations including the NHS, MOD and DWP.

www.veteranscharity.org.uk

Registered Charity No.1123149



BRANCH NEWS

Benefits of being a Branch/Group member – some of your views:

“Membership raises awareness of the military in society. Members are informed of, and invited to, the national events which keep the role of women in the armed forces in the public eye.” KA

“Being part of the WRAC Association and a member of your local branch gives us all a sense of togetherness, a sense of friendship, loyalty and above all laughter”. PF

- **If you organise or co-ordinate a group of female veterans, whether as a Branch or Special Interest Group (be that crafting, in-take or leaving years, where you served, what trade or unit you were attached to, sport, a hobby, etc, etc) please let us know.**
- **Share your news with us.**
- **We will happily share that information with other members and help promote your Group, what you do and who to contact for more information and/or to get involved.**

The most important thing is that you are women ‘Supporting Female Veterans’ – the size or nature of the group matters not. And we are here to help you.

If any branch/group does not list their meeting details (eg when, where, what, etc) please telephone or email their contact person, or look them up on social media – as per their request.

Wales & The West

Area Co-ordinator:

Ann Stack

Email: wales.westmidlands.area@wraca.org.uk

A very warm welcome to you all from Wales & The West Area. Another year of celebrations, and The Coronation of King Charles III and his wife, Queen Camilla, has to be the highlight of the year. Many of our Members took to the streets of London to watch the wonderful displays of ceremony whilst others hosted Branch celebrations, attended Street Parties or watched from the comfort of home. An iconic ATS Veteran from our Area, Betty Webb, also attended The Coronation at Westminster Abbey. What an honour!

The Branches in our Area host some well thought out, exciting and interesting social events, which range from outings to meetings to get-togethers, over lunch or dinner, of which you will read about in our reports. What makes each Branch successful is organising how they do things in the spirit of what works best for their Group Members.

A big thank you to all of you for arranging, attending and supporting Branches and Association Events and for continuing to fly the flag of The WRAC Association and reaching out to WRAC Veterans.

Enjoy our news as we will yours. Don't forget that a warm welcome awaits you if you would like to join, visit or enjoy an event Wales & The West Area Branches are hosting.

AGM: June 10th 2023, the sun shone brightly and Tamworth Branch were finally able to host our Area AGM. Their patience and dedication after having to reschedule several times is outstanding. They have worked tirelessly over the last two years, raising funds and gathering raffle prizes. 36 Veteran WRAC's attended and were met with keyrings,

quizzes, specially made After Dinner Mints emblazoned with our WRAC Badge, tissue holders made in our Corps Colours, a delicious lunch and a very warm welcome.

Guest Speaker Julie Winks, Benevolent Fund Secretary, gave us an excellent presentation about the Benevolent Fund and Member's Support Grant. During the AGM we said farewell to Ali McGowan, who has now stepped down as our Area Secretary. Ali has been simply the best and we wish her the very best. Our Area AGM & Reunion was a celebration of what our Branches are doing and epitomised the enthusiasm that Members in Wales & The West Area show. Thank you to everyone involved in making the day a success.



Birmingham

When: 11.00 1st Wednesday of the month
Where: Soloman Cutler (Wetherspoons), Broad Street, Birmingham City Centre B1 2DS
Contact: Babs Anderson
Tel: 07921 832094
Email: babs.blay@gmail.com

Cardiff

When: 2nd Tuesday of the month 6pm
Where: The Fox & Hounds, Old Church Rd, Whitchurch, Cardiff, CF14 1AD (Please double check before attending in case of changes)
Contact: Branch Secretary: Deserie Mansfield
Email: WRACCardiff1@outlook.com
Facebook: WRAC Cardiff Branch
Twitter: @WRACCardiff

Chester

When: 13.00, 2nd Monday of the month
Where: Chester Military Museum, The Castle, Chester, CH1 2DN
Contact: Pat Sanders
Tel: 07733 270567

Colwyn Bay

When: 1300hrs - 1500hrs last Wednesday of every month
Where: Woody's Lodge, Eirias Park, Colwyn Bay LL29 7SP
Contact: Lynda Goodier
Tel: 07392 729387
Email: goodierlynda@yahoo.co.uk

Derby

Contact: Judy Smith Tel: 07790 848364
Email: judy.smith4529@gmail.com

Gloucestershire

When: 4-8 times a year
Contact: Ann Stack
Email: annnewsnip@hotmail.com
Facebook: Gloucestershire Branch WRAC.

Hereford

When: 19.00 last Tuesday of the month
Where: The Herdsman, 54 Widemarsh, Hereford, HR4 9HG
Contact: Lynda Armstrong
Tel: 01443 837592

Leicestershire & Nottinghamshire

When: 13.30, 2nd Tuesday of the month
Where: Devonshire Place, 78 London Road, Leicester, LE2 0RA
Contact: Sue Slattery
Tel: 0116 259 2743

Marches & Mid-Wales

When: 4 times per year (very informal, friendly meetings including lunch. Often meet up for organised, fun activity, day out)
Where: Location varies, please phone
Contact: Michelle Boyden
Tel: 01588 661166 / 07812037191
Email: midgymoo.1963@gmail.com

Oxfordshire

When: 2nd Saturday each month, 12.30 for lunch
Where: Littlebury Hotel, Bicester
Contact: Karen Smith
Tel: 07923 693656 / 01869 321393

Shropshire

When: 19.00 1st Wednesday of the month (except December and January). Come 1.5 hours earlier if you wish to join us for lunch/dinner.
Where: The Red Lion, Holyhead Road, Wellington, Telford, TF1 2EW
Contact: Chris Powell
Tel: 01743 241646
Email: chris.powell3@mypostoffice.co.uk

Tamworth

Contact: Ann Gwynne (Chairman)
ann.gwynne@yahoo.co.uk
or Chris Whitehead (Secretary)
on chris_wo1@hotmail.com

Worcester

If you are interested in joining a new WRAC Worcester Group, to meet up for a chat and coffee, please
Contact: Jane Griffin-Ash
Tel: 07880 732245
Email janebash@hotmail.co.uk.
Facebook: 'Worcestershire WRAC Group'

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Birmingham

Babs Anderson

Lynn Avenell

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Here in Birmingham Branch, we have been very busy enjoying ourselves with our friends within our Branch and outside it.

At home, we have held our world-famous Christmas Jumper Bash and more recently, our Coronation/Branch Birthday/ Betty Webb's 100th Birthday Bash. We were happy that members from other Branches were able to join us for both events. The amazing Not Forgotten Association invited us to join them for Christmas Lunch and we were happy to accept. It was a joyous occasion which left us all smiling.

We have been lucky enough to be invited to join Hereford, Shropshire and Worcester Branches for some of their get-togethers and have thoroughly

enjoyed ourselves. It's heartwarming to spend quality time with our sister Branches.



Sue Dolphin, Chris Fretwell, John Dolphin, Marilyn Preece, Pat Neale, Morag Hardie



Rosie Garrison and Mabel Lightfoot



The Lord Mayor of Birmingham with Betty Webb



Babs Anderson, Betty Webb and Ali Brown in the ballroom at Bletchley Park

You know us well enough to know that we have done more than just turn up for monthly meetings. We have kept ourselves entertained as much as possible by running a raucous Beetle Drive, went to the panto (Oh yes, we did) and had tea and pastries with the Lord Mayor of Birmingham to celebrate Betty Webb's 100th birthday. Days later, on her actual birthday, Betty was honoured to be allowed to host a gathering of family and friends in the ballroom at Bletchley Park. The highlight of the day was a flypast by a Lancaster Bomber, which Bletchley Park had arranged. It was a wonderful surprise for Betty and her guests. As a Branch, we've been having a thoroughly good time.

As we all know, finding somewhere suitable to hold meetings is a nightmare. Brum Branch has been meeting at the Soloman Cutler, a Wetherspoons pub on Broad Street in Birmingham City Centre, since just before the Covid lockdowns happened where we had been allocated an upstairs room with our own bar and bar staff. It was fabulous. However, since we have returned, we have to share the main bar with the public. At first, we kept ourselves quiet and unobtrusive but that has developed into major table shifting, laughing uproariously and generally enjoying each other's company. We have taken to offering the WRAC Association leaflet to anyone who looks mildly interested. Mostly, we get lots of smiles but occasionally, there is a scowl and muttering. We don't worry about those folk because we are angels compared to some of the other groups who gather there for lunch. The construction workers add colourful language to the ambience, whilst striking teachers and rail workers wave their rather large placards at head height. We, on the other hand, are ladies. There was a lot of confusion on the day a bunch of paramedics turned up, with us all wearing green.

If you happen to be in Brum on any first Wednesday of the month, come and join us if you enjoy a good laugh.

Babs Anderson

Branch Birthday & Coronation Party



Paula Rogers & Babs Anderson



Margaret Davies



Eunace Adams & Brenda



Joyce Nicholls



Silva

Betty Webb's Surprise 100th Birthday Party

Betty was getting ready for the regular monthly meeting with Birmingham Branch members. However, unbeknownst to her, a surprise celebration had been arranged at the Strathallan Hotel with a red, white and blue theme to also mark the King's Coronation.

We can only imagine Betty's feelings of surprise, shock and pride, that not only the girls from the Birmingham Branch were awaiting her arrival, but there were also members of the Association who had travelled from various locations including Manchester, Hereford, Leeds, Gloucester, Tamworth and Winchester, along with others who had travelled to join the celebrations. Rowena Naile, Chairman of the Membership Council also joined us, and we thank her for taking time out from her busy schedule.

After a scrumptious afternoon tea was served and consumed, Betty took centre stage and thanked all those present for attending. The surprise and delight she was experiencing was evident for all to see.

Then the music began and immediately dancing and singing commenced. It was obvious that every one of us was having a truly great afternoon.

Betty chatted to all 60 of the girls in attendance at some point throughout the afternoon. Everyone was in admiration of Betty for her exceptional achievements during her Army career and for the successes she is still achieving, especially reaching such a grand age.



Betty's 100th Birthday / King's Coronation Gathering



Betty with three of the many that she recruited, Joyce Nichols, Babs Anderson and Sue Jennings



Betty Webb with Manchester Branch: Dawn Hawker, Angie Summerell-Wheelden, Wendy Summerell-Wheelden, Izzy Hamilton-Conboy and Pip Flegel,

Once the entertainment had finished, farewells and departures started, but not until everyone had approached Betty before they left.

Some of us started the afternoon sitting with strangers but by the end of the day, we left having added more friends to our already lengthy list.

The afternoon was "Simply the Best".
Lynn Avenell
Birmingham Branch

Remember, you can count on Brum Branch. We have an abacus.

Babs Anderson

Cardiff

Deserie Mansfield

Cardiff Branch has 93 members on our Facebook page with five new members joining us since the last update. Not everyone can attend evening meetups, so we are trying to introduce different methods of engaging with our ladies. Like most branches, we are trying to cater for all who wish to engage, such as evening, coffee catch up, visits etc.

Our Facebook page has an interactive chat space (check in) or pull up a sandbag! This offers ladies opportunity to pop in a chat, which is lovely for the ladies who may not usually "speak" or "post" on Facebook or contact directly. Holidays, retirement and, would you believe it, frogs and other amphibians have been the subject of the discussions. It is early days for this, but it seems to be a good chance for a chin wag and is encouraging conversation. (Find us on: Cardiff Branch Facebook Group – WRAC Cardiff Branch).

2023 VISITS AND EVENTS:

January 21st - Ten Pin Bowling. In conjunction with Cardiff Breakfast Club, we hosted a fantastic, well attended, bowling event / competition – with Alison Brown winning the Best Bowler Trophy. Debbie Amphlett and Kath Smith a close 2nd and 3rd with Deserie Mansfield bringing up the rear and promising to practise for next year!

January 31st - Guildford Dedication, attended by Trish Scott and Deserie Mansfield representing Cardiff Branch.

March 25th - South Wales Aviation Museum. Our ladies had a very enjoyable day mooching around the South Wales Aviation Museum. Although on our doorstep it was an eventful, road closures (garage roof fell off), and sat nav, see every lane in the Vale of Glamorgan, type of drive.



South Wales Aviation Museum, 25th March 2023

The museum, run by volunteers, offers a discount to veterans for a donation fee of £5. It hosts a vast array of military and civilian aircraft and rooms dedicated to other British military roles and activity. Very strange to see that some of our uniform and NBC kit is behind glass in a museum – surely not!

We held a (no money changing hands) guess at who would be first in the fighter jet cockpit, and it is no surprise that Debbie Amphlett was the first – she qualifies this by saying "Someone had to be the test pilot to make sure it was safe for you all". Thank you, Debbie, lol! (Facebook page – South Wales Aviation Museum, Website www.swam.online).

May 16th - The 'Not Forgotten Association' Garden Party. The "NFA" offered Wales & The West Area six Veteran accompanied by six Guest invitations to their Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. We trawled for names with the caveat that those wishing to go should not have attended previously. Janet Palmer and Debbie Cole from our Branch requested the opportunity to visit with Janet Palmer being the lucky one to be pulled out of the hat. Disappointment for Debby initially but she was subsequently invited and was thrilled to go.

The Not Forgotten Association is a British Armed Forces registered charity for serving and ex-servicemen and women that operates throughout the United Kingdom. However, in time, hopefully the connection made with The Not Forgotten will not be forgotten! Who knows ... maybe next year for those who wish to put their names forward for other opportunities. (Website - <https://thenotforgotten.org>)

May 25th - Coffee and Catch Up. Three members of Cardiff Branch met at Coffee 1, Whitchurch (Cardiff). Debbie Amphlett, Marg Davies and Karen Francis had a good old chinwag, and put the world to right? A good time was had by all, so much so that it is hoped to repeat the opportunity for the Area – watch this space, or rather the Facebook page for announcements.

Finally
Sadly, we said goodbye to Theresa (Tess) Collins ATS in Barry on 21st March 2023. Tess was a very proud ATS, and the family gave grateful thanks to those who turned out to offer Tess a military presence on her last Parade. Our ladies travelled miles to attend, so thank you to Babs Anderson, Rosie Garrison who paraded the WRAC Standard, Graham Smith (Newport RBL Standard Bearer) and a special thank you to Jimmy Morham (Veteran Para), Caroline Pech- Harrison and John Jewell



Attendees of the funeral of Tess Collins
ATS, 21st March 2023

(RAF Veterans), and Heather and Lynne who offered their support. I don't have all the surnames and if I have missed anyone then my humble apologies. To all who attended, thank you from me and thank you from the family of Tess Collins.

Next meet in July/August for coffee and catch up or perhaps a picnic in the sunshine – to be decided – all are welcome, keep an eye on the Facebook page for announcements.

Gloucestershire

Ann Stack



Brrrrr... December and a huge snowstorm nearly scuppered our visit to The Medals Office based at Imjin Barracks in Gloucester, but we made it! Imjin Barracks is home to NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps and security was rigorous before we stepped foot onto Camp.

A surprise had been arranged for us with a scheduled visit by Brigadier Caroline Hull, AGC and Head of Armed Forces & Veteran's Services, who had planned to welcome us. We WRAC Veterans are known to her BUT the weather put paid to her visit. However, the gesture was something we all appreciated.



WRAC Imjin Barracks December 2022

We were met by James who led us along Rheindahlen Road (a familiar name known to many who served in Germany) to The Medals Office situated in the building which is also home to The Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre Commemorations Team, commonly known as 'The War Detectives.' WRAC Veteran Tracey, who is part of the team, gave us an informative talk, which at

times was very moving. She spoke about the work they undertake to identify remains of mainly WWI Soldiers found on The Western Front and Worldwide. It was fascinating learning about the different techniques and forensics used to identify those found and how they are matched to current family members as well as who they served with. Once all the investigative work has been completed, a Rededication Service takes place to honour the Fallen Soldier. Science and detective work at its very best to remember those who gave so bravely.

As we remembered the bravery shown by many, we began our tour of The Medals Office led by James. It was fascinating learning that Military Medals were individually made at The Royal Mint housed in The Tower of London before the Industrial Revolution. The first mass produced medal was the Waterloo Medal and the first to be given to 'Ordinary Soldiers.' The highest and most prestigious medal for valour and, of course the most unassuming, was The Victoria Cross. It was made from the metal of a canon from The Crimean War and introduced by Queen Victoria to honour acts of valour during that war. We thoroughly enjoyed seeing, listening and asking questions about the history of The Medals we saw, and many were identified within our own families. A return visit is planned!

As with all of our outings, lunch called and this time it was The Cook House on Camp! Many of us had not stepped into one for over 40 years so it was a trip down memory lane and rounded off a great historical day.

February saw the passing of two of our Lionesses, Frances and Rose. Both of these lovely ladies are missed very much and their support for Gloucestershire Branch played a huge part in making it the warm and welcoming Branch it is today. 13 of us attended a Thanksgiving Service for Frances and in time, we aim to remember her and Rose in a way that is fitting.

February was also the month a group of us attended an Angel Making Workshop which was fun, reflective and a time to talk and remember. An Angel lost her skirt (no Zulu Warriors allowed), one was very cheeky, so she was named Rose, and one of our Angels was in memory of Frances.



Fairy Making Workshop



A very cheeky Fairy



Fairy Making Lunch

Gloucester Prison was our next visit, but not as inmates you'll be pleased to hear! A retired Prison Governor led our tour, and we discovered it was one of the oldest purpose-built prisons in the Country. Built in 1791 and closed down in 2013, it has incarcerated all manner of people from debtors to heinous criminals. The Prison has some interesting history, architectural features, graffiti from the 1700's to when it closed (inmates were considerably taller in 2013), a recorded visit by Pierre Point (the last hangman), and an uncle 5 times removed of a very famous singer. He was spared the noose and sent to a penal Colony in Australia. 'He should be so lucky, lucky, lucky, lucky.' Yes, Kylie Minogue's relative!



Gloucester Prison

As always, we completed our get together with lunch and a visit to The Fountain Inn, which is fast becoming a favourite of ours. A warm welcome awaits those wishing to join us for future events.

Hereford

Lynda Armstrong

It's that time of the year again and here I am writing to let you all know what we as a Branch at Hereford, have been up to. Since I last wrote for The Lioness, a lot has happened for the Branch, some good but sadly some not so good.

We have been fortunate enough to gather a few more members over the past year. Margaret Wallis, Pat Rosewell, Gill Turner, Deserie Mansfield, Sandy Cawley, Lesley Brown, Issy Kempster and Linda Malcolm. Hopefully we will be lucky enough to welcome some of you to one of our meetings very soon.

We had a small change of events in November, instead of having our last evening meeting of the year, Miriam Unwin and Gillian Bastin booked us all in for a lovely afternoon tea. The turnout was well attended, which is great, as we were starting to see our numbers dwindle at the meetings due to the darker nights. We enjoyed it so much that we may have to incorporate this as an annual occurrence. Miriam and Gillian, I hope you're both reading this.



Sharon Baker Joyce, Annabelle Massey, Joy Harvey to name but a few. Afternoon tea in Hereford.

I'd like to use this platform to thank Joyce Nicholls for keeping us all updated in regard to some of our more senior members of The Branch. Joyce goes above and beyond to check up on these ladies, visiting them in their homes, care homes, hospitals etc and then sending us all updates on a regular basis on our Branch Facebook page. Joyce, I know I say it to you countless times, but we really do appreciate all you do for the Branch, thank you so very much.

I'd also like to thank Melody Baker Joyce for her amazing organisational skills to get a birthday card out each month, for each of our members. Just to receive a lovely card through the post does the world of good for some recipients, on their special day.

Our Post Christmas Lunch at The Greenman was, as always, excellent. A

few were panicking they may not be able to get there with so many roads closed due to terrible flooding. But all was fine, and we all enjoyed a stunning meal with equally fabulous company.

In early February we lost our lovely friend and Chairman Mrs Rosemary Jones. Rosemary was a stalwart of The Branch for many, many years and she will be missed so very much. She attended as many WRAC functions, with Joyce Nicholls, as she possibly could, and was also a Standard Bearer for many years for the RBL. Rosemary's funeral was well attended with Jo Foster and Heather Bradbury parading The Standards. Her coffin was decked in The Standard Rosemary carried for the RBL.

We send our best wishes to Mrs Janet Knight, who has been going through so much pain with many different ailments of late. We all hope she's getting better and is now feeling much more comfortable. Also, a couple of our ladies have been in hospital for a range of different reasons, Gillian Bastin and Linda Malcolm have both undergone big operations. We hope they're both feeling much better and hope to see them at our Branch Meetings soon. We send you all lots of gentle hugs and our good wishes for a speedy recovery.



Mrs Janet Knight, in her garden.

In March, sadly our Association AGM in London was cancelled, but a few of us still travelled to The Big Smoke to meet up with friends to eat, drink, chat and listen to the AGM on Pauline Milnes laptop in The Union Jack Club.



London for The Association AGM. Sandy Cawley, Jane Griffin Ash, Issy Hamilton-Conboy, Dawn Hawker, Pip Flegel, Pauline Milnes, Lynda Armstrong, Naomi Burdon and Pauline Marr.

Also, in March we were given the very sad news that Sue Richards (Colonel (Retd)) had sadly passed away. Sue had served in The WRAC from April 1954 to April 1985. Sue religiously attended our annual picnics, our Post Christmas and Veterans Lunches and always enjoyed them. Her funeral was held on April 28th and in great Hereford form we had 2 Standards, 1 being from Birmingham Branch with Rosie Garrison, plus Elaine Smith to sound The Last Post. Eulogies were read out by Audrey Smith and Sue's great nephew Hesketh. Sue Wing performed the lovely service. Sue's friends and family were so thankful for the send-off that was given.

Sharon has been out and about with our Association and Branch Standard. Back in April she paraded for 'The dedication of a Falklands Bench' in Malvern, luckily Jane Griffin Ash was there too and took the photo for us.



Sharon Baker-Joyce in Malvern for The Falklands Bench Dedication.

Our ladies walking group continues to partake of their little jaunts each Monday, very often taking in some beautiful sights of different areas. Their walks always seem to lead them to a nice pub that serves lunches.



Marg Davies, Alison Brown, Jane Griffin-Ash and Elaine (Wolfie) Smith. One of their Monday walks.

In April, Marg Davies started her annual 100-mile walk, in Northern Ireland, to raise funds once again for The Association and Pancreatic Cancer. Well done again Marg, you never fail to impress me with your staggering determination to complete these amazing walks, you truly are an inspiration to us all. Thank you also to Denise Clarke who is always there to take care of you at the end of every day. We all loved seeing your last photo of each day.



Marg's 100 mile walk

At our April meeting, I was sadly informed that our dear friend and ATS member Mrs Jean Butler, had passed away after a fall in hospital in August 2022. Jean would have been 98 in the October. Jean was laid to rest in November but sadly with none of us in attendance, we hadn't been told of events, so we were unable to see her off on her final journey. I have written to her daughter inviting her to our picnic in August to raise a glass of port in memory of the lovely Jean.

We were kindly invited to Brum Branch Coronation and Betty Webb's 100th party in May. We had a fabulous time celebrating with everyone. A lovely afternoon tea, a talk from Betty, a few drinks with friends and a bit of a dance. What a fabulous time we had.



Barbara Davies, Lynda Armstrong, Naomi Burdon, Susan Jennings and Marg Davies at Brum Branch Coronation party.

In May we continued to receive more sad news, that sadly Vi Brown (Capt (Retd)) had passed away. Vi had a fall early last year and had come up against many hurdles in her recovery. Vi served 26 years with the WRAC. Vi's funeral attended with Standards and bugler will take place after this write up has been submitted.

Leicestershire & Nottinghamshire

Chris Corker

Our report must begin with the end of last year and our Christmas Party on 13th December where a great time was had by the members and guests.

2023:

January 10th was the first meeting of the new year but due to the adverse weather – rain, rain and more rain – some members were unable to attend. Those that made it enjoyed nibbles and a natter. Lilian Hollis celebrated her 96th birthday and Gwen Edwards her 93rd birthday.

February 14th members met to re-organise the forthcoming events for the year. Due to such a lot of discussion Bingo had to be adjourned to another time. Sadly, Joan Ford who lived in Skegness passed away and Sue Slattery, Carol Morris and Sandra Smith attended her funeral on the 23rd. Jenny Hearsey celebrated her 85th birthday and Joan Plummer was a glorious 100 years old.

March 14th, we had an amazing talk with slides about the Boys and Girls of WWI by Peter Cousins. Heartbreaking stories of young boys signing up to fight and young girls going to nurse the wounded at the Front. Unfortunately, a planned Veterans Day at Leicester Races was cancelled due to the course being covered in snow.

Sunday 18th three members, Chris, Dot and Sue, were at the Ideal Home Show to rattle the buckets and help fundraise for the Not Forgotten Association, another charity close to our hearts.

Barbara Hewitt celebrated her 90th birthday, Vi Rawlings her 97th, and Pam Richards now a member of the Royal Hospital Chelsea her 91st birthday. [Editor: sadly since Chris sent this report Pam has sadly passed – her funeral was 31st July].

April 11th the talk on Victims Support was cancelled and plans were put in place for the branch Coronation Lunch in May.

May 2nd the branch held a Coronation Buffet Lunch at which there were 35 members including guests. Debbie Kenney provided the celebration cake and Devonshire Place gave us a wonderful buffet, as usual; they really look after us and are very supportive of the branch. Vera Waddington celebrated her 101st birthday.



Branch members and guests



Debbie Kenney cutting the cake

May 14th, three members of the branch attended the ATS Memorial Service at Holy Trinity Church, Besthorpe. It was a beautiful sunny day where we remembered LCpl Eileen Hunt who lost her life in Great Yarmouth in 1943. Lyn Wenham was in attendance with the Branch Standard accompanied by Dot Ryder

and Chris Corker along with 3 other ladies from the Lincoln area Anne Brown, Cas Bolland and Jackie Whitehead.



June 3rd, members of the branch attended the annual fund-raising event at ASDA organized by Debbie Kenney.



Carol Morris, Lynda Pollard, Sue Slattery and Debbie Kenney

June 8th, Sandra Smith and Debbie Kenney attended the Service at the Menai Gate in Ypres to lay the wreath. Both found it to be a very moving experience and the general public who were watching were very emotional too and thought it was wonderful that two women laid the wreath together. June 13th the branch welcomed the Close Harmony Singers and we all enjoyed singing along with them. Agnes Doig celebrated her 92nd birthday.

The remainder of the year is filled with lots of outings and activities, and if you live in the area and would like to join us, please contact the secretary Sue Slattery for more details.

Marches & Mid-Wales

Elaine Smith

Here we are again. Has a year passed since I last reported on what we, at the Marches and Mid-Wales Branch got up to? Days, weeks, months pass me by as I am oblivious to time – every day the same apart from the weather, the weekly band rehearsal and the occasional day away. Still, it's a good job that we have had such a fantastic Secretary organising us all because she gives (gave) me the prompt at the right time – which not surprisingly, coincides with her very, very, VERY detailed Secretary's report. I have become so laid-back over the years that I cannot remember what just happened, never mind what we did last week, last month, last year and gone are the days when I used to be a meticulous, well organised, proactive Chief Clerk.

Although our Secretary, Michelle Boyden used to be one of my junior clerks, she has turned the tables on me – I now do what Michelle wants me to do. "You taught me everything I know", she says very often – pre-fixing each sentence

with "Chief". Well Michelle, I am sure I taught you how to bullet-point but now I am so glad that you don't because I rely (relied) on your minutes to write our Lioness article. (Bernie Dolan – are you reading this?) Bernie has graciously taken over the role of Secretary from Michelle for a while whilst Michelle concentrates on getting back to full physical health, having broken her leg and since (and even before) then she has been suffering with hip and back pain. Fortunately, she has now been given a new hip and is taking a very well-deserved break which will include a long-awaited visit to France to watch the Rugby World Cup in September. She still has a long way to go before back to full health but is keen to return to us at our meetings, and, if she wants to reassume the position of Secretary, the option is open (unless Bernie Dolan falls in love with the post so much that she is loath to give it up).

On to business, and as I peruse the Secretary's Report, I see that we had a Branch trip out to Aberystwyth in July '22 – oh, and yes, I was there. One of our members, Judith Bradbury who we don't see that often, lives in Aberystwyth. It's a long way for her to travel to our meetings, so we decided to meet-up with her there and have lunch. We all went by train and ended up having lunch in a Pizza Parlour. In Michelle's absence (she had a broken leg at this time) we had been set a task to tuck our skirts into our knickers and paddle – and get a photo of it to prove it. This was half-met because none of us wore skirts, (no idea about the knickers) so we rolled up our trouser legs and paddled – it was freezing. No picture to prove it, just the frostbite. Our other task was to have an ice-cream on the prom. – which we managed, no problem.

Pre-Christmas Lunch and Branch Meeting at the Elephant and Castle, Newtown on 14 December '22. Never again! We had pre-booked our meals for 13:00hrs and had the meeting well before that time. When we sat down to eat at 13:00hrs we had to wait another hour before our meals started to come: I say meals – it was either a panini or soup!! As it turned out, Carys had to leave before the food came and completely disgruntled, our Chairman, Lizzie Lawrence refused to pay for the (very expensive) tea and coffee that we'd had during our meeting – quite rightly, complaining about the delay.

We were more fortunate with our Post-Christmas Meeting venue, the Lakeside at Garthmyl on 15 February '23 because, as usual, we turned out in numbers and enjoyed the fantastic food that they always provide there. We always have our meeting and compulsory raffle before the food, sitting on comfy settees and tub chairs near a blazing fire.

Garden Party, Buckingham Palace, 16 May '23. The Not Forgotten Association offered tickets to attend the Garden Party and all members wishing to attend had to put their names forward. The names were put into a hat and the lucky members from our Branch that were chosen to attend were Gill Turner and Gillian Brench. Although Susan Bussey is a member of our branch, she is also a member of the Shrewsbury Branch, and she was chosen as their representative. Plenty of photos! Hopefully Gillian and Gill will provide me with their own little accounts of their day for me to submit separately as there is a limit on how many photographs, we can get published with our branch articles ... and between them, THEY TOOK A LOT!



Buckingham Palace Garden Party: Gill Turner, her mum, Gillian Brench and her sister



Gillian Brench and her bodyguards

Official 'Bugler' at the funeral of the late Colonel Susan Penelope Richards, Hereford Branch. This is my personal account of the day that my nerves took over the control of the whole of my body. I had been asked by the Secretary of Hereford Branch – Lynda Armstrong

(she gets everywhere) – whether I would be willing to play ‘The Last Post’ and the ‘Reveille (The Rouse)’ at the funeral of one of their members as my name had been put forward (that’s what comes of having Rowena Patrick as a Facebook friend!). I am, in my band, what they call a ‘back row cornet’. I took it up from scratch at the age of 60 (I am now 69). I have had no private lessons, just band room classes with the other leaners (7-year-olds) to start with and then just plodded on at home, recording rehearsals and playing along with them over and over again. As for the theory – well, I get through. I am really good at fortissimo (ff) and rubbish at pianissimo (pp). I even colour-in my sheet music so that I don’t have to remember where the sharps and flats are (yellow highlighter on the sharp notes, blue highlighter on the flat notes) and it works for me!! Back row cornets do not play the melodies, we do all the harmonising. Loads of tonguing (I call it ‘tutting’) and harmonising – but never the melody. This means that we don’t play solos. However, both the Last Post and the Rouse can be played without using any valves at all – hence often played on a bugle. It is all a matter of air control. Anyhow I said ‘Yes’ and from then on my nerves built up into a crescendo on the day.

I stood at the back of the Crematorium clenching my Order of Service, which visibly moved a couple of inches every time my rapid heartbeat thudded out of my chest. My legs felt like jelly, and I tried everything to try to calm myself down – but it didn’t work. I knew when I was supposed to start playing – Sue Wing had told me, so I had picked up my cornet ready, putting my Order of Service down on the seat by the side of me, frequently glancing over at it to see how far we had got. Sue gave me the nod and I put the cornet to my lips praying that a note – preferably the right note – would come out of it. I was so relieved to hit my first note – and the rest followed (although I did have to have the sheet music in front of me to make sure I didn’t miss a phrase out). Something else I am not good at is vibrato - only good players can do that without physically wobbling their instrument against their lips, but in this particular situation the vibrato came naturally as it mirrored the strong and rapid beat of my heart (it sounded quite good to be fair. Note to self: “be nervous during band rehearsals”). I think I made a couple of slight errors during ‘The ‘Rouse’ but people told me they didn’t notice them – I still told everyone about them anyway. My first (and possibly only) solo in public, but an honour to be asked to play for such a well-loved lady.

[Incidentally, as a postscript addition – I did two wing-walks and a few loop-the-loops yesterday fastened to a vintage

aircraft and had no nerves at all! What does that tell you?]

May '23, our Branch AGM at The Old School House in somewhere beginning with a double ‘L’ (near Oswestry). Last year this was such a success that we’d decided to go there again. Despite being in hospital Michelle still found time to produce all the paperwork required to run this meeting. As Bernie Dolan lived the nearest to the hospital, she had regularly been visiting Michelle and was given copious amounts of information and advice to pass to us members at the meeting. Michelle also managed to persuade Bernie to act as Secretary in her absence (or beyond, I quote from Michelle’s Secretary’s report, “.... if Bernie and members wish to make her appointment of Secretary permanent and vote accordingly at the AGM, I understand and support”). Well Michelle, we didn’t vote on it because we wanted to give you the option first although Bernie is very willing to continue if you feel like you need a rest. Well done, Michelle.



Branch 2023 AGM Old School House

Thanks Bernie, we really appreciate you ‘stepping into the breach’, dear friend (cheers Shakespeare). As for the AGM, well Bernie had a checklist – dictated by Michelle at her hospital bedside, detailing what she was to bring up, where and when in the proceedings, and Bernie didn’t fail to follow this list to the T, no deviations allowed, even when the Chairman began to speak and Bernie stopped her in the tracks saying “no, we haven’t come to that on my list yet...” Hilarious.

It was a bring-and-share meeting and there was a load of food – and surprisingly not all beige either – some healthy options there. It was soon to be Pat Cooper’s 80th Birthday so we took this opportunity to present her with a lovely big bunch of flowers (which apparently lasted 2 whole weeks) and a birthday cake – which we all shared (no, not a healthy option). All in all, a fantastic day; each member taking home a raffle prize to add to the collection.

Since then – instead of the customary bouquet of flowers we decided to send Michelle a Cornish Cream Tea hamper to aid her recovery, and it seemed to

have worked because as I am typing this a message has appeared in our group chat from Michelle to tell us that she has finally surfaced into the real world, and was taken out for lunch to The Discovery Centre in Craven Arms by Carys and Pat where they had a lovely time and ‘nattered all the way through’. I can definitely believe that because both Michelle and Carys can natter for England – or Wales, or both – and at the same time. She now has made plans with Carys and Pat to go to the WI and may also be doing one of the walk/talk events at the Discovery Centre next month now that her legs are getting back to working order. We have been warned to ‘Watch out – trouble is a brewing’.



Michelle Boyden enjoying her Cornish Cream Tea

Oxfordshire

Karen Smith

Since the printing of the last Lioness, we have lost 2 of our members Jo Rose, and Mary Scarrott, our condolences go out to both their family and friends. Christine Townsend and I attended Mary’s funeral, although I was not aware of Jo Rose’s until after her passing.

I have been attending the Royal British Legion meetings, in the hope of having closer links between them and us - this is work in progress.

With thanks to Wales and the West and The Not Forgotten Association, four of the Oxford Section attended the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday the 16th of May - these being Karen Smith, Midge Holmes (Oxford Veteran), my guest via Wales and West, Flo McGregor (Oxford veteran) and her guest, Sam her daughter, who became our photographer for the day, and our own Helen McKay (sorry I cannot remember her guest’s name only that she is an associate from the Salvation Army which Helen also attends).



L-R: Midge Holmes, Flo McGregor, daughter Sam and Karen Smith



Helen McKay and her Guest



Two of us, Jean Mills and myself, attended a pantomime held in Bicester, which our member Christine Townsend participated in. A good time was had by both of us watching.

As I mentioned, we were hoping to get out and about more this year, so this is our itinerary:

June 24th: Armed Forces Weekend in Bicester at Pingle field with our local military wives group singing, which also includes our own member, Christine Townsend.

July 1st: A joint lunch with the veterans from the RAOC and our WRAC Veterans, organised by Geordie Bone and me. Hopefully the first but not the last.

Pictures in next edition

8th: Our normal meeting at the Littlebury Hotel for Lunch

22nd: Woodstock Museum 1pm, Women at War at SofO museum. The exhibition is on from June 4th till mid-September, group discount can be arranged. Museum closed Monday's, open Sunday

2-5, rest of week 10-5.

29th: Worthy Down visit, all tickets from WRAC Association

August, Saturday 12th: at 12:30pm, Annie's Tea Rooms, Thrupp, Nr Kidlington.

Our regular meet is the second Saturday of every month at the Littlebury Hotel at 12.30 please feel free to join us.

If any other Members are out and about in our area, please let us know and we will meet up for a chat.

Shropshire

Sandra Davies



Well doesn't time fly! We hope that all the branches are well. We have had such a lot to catch up on, so I won't waste too much time here!

2022:

June 3rd - We had a gathering at the Beaconsfield Club to celebrate the Jubilee of our late great Queen.

July 30th - Three of our members volunteered to act as stewards at the tree dedication (and summer party) at the NMA.

August: 6th - Some of us sneaked out of the county to attend the Hereford Branch Jubilee picnic. Thank you for inviting us. 26th - Another Branch event. We booked places for a 3.5hr fish and chip cruise up the Shropshire Union Canal and back. Spirits were high, not the alcoholic type either!



R-L: Debbie, Chris, Edith, Sheila M, Pauline, Margaret, Ruth, Michelle, Sheila J - Fish & chip cruise on the Shropshire Union Canal

September 3rd - Branch annual cream tea event at the Beaconsfield, which was as wonderful as ever.

October: 8th - Dinner Club weekend where the Branch filled a table, no surprise there!

26th - A few members took a coach trip to good old Blackpool. I do believe that it's still standing and that they haven't been banned, which is indeed good news!

November: 3rd - Our Branch thespian, Gladders, was in the production of Calendar Girls, at the Little Theatre in Donnington. There was quite a gang of us, to give support to Gladders. We had such a good laugh, we can't wait for her next outing!

13th - The yearly trip out to parade at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday.

17th - Another coach trip, this time into darkest Wales and Llandudno!

30th - An invite from the NFA to a Christmas party at St James Palace and once again they were on their best behaviour!

December: 7th - Here we are into Christmas party month! This is always fun filled event - the Christmas Jumper bash at Birmingham Branch; thank you for inviting us!

12th - The invites come in thick and fast. This time was an invite from the NFA for their Christmas party at Solihull.

15th - This one was a Branch-only Christmas dinner. It's so nice to sit down with just the branch members and have a good old laugh!

21st - Then we have the annual event of attending the Theatre Severn for the pantomime, (oh yes we did! It's got to be done, sorry!) this time it was Beauty and the Beast, yet another good production with loads of laughs. Afterwards, we made the trek across the road to the Istanbul Turkish restaurant.



R-L: Michelle, Sheila J, Sue, Debbie, Ali, Gladders, Edith, Kin, Jacko, Sheila M, Chris, Michelle's Dad, Sandra - Pantomime time

2023:

January 3rd - Into the New Year we bound. Some of the members took themselves off on a mini break to Newquay in Cornwall. They even gate crashed a Veterans Breakfast club, but I am pleased to say that all went well!

February: 4th - The Branch attended the church service for the last Branch ATS member, Marion Jones, where we formed a guard of honour for her. Her family were overjoyed with our efforts for Marion. RIP Marion, you are now in that ever growing, parade ground in the sky. 18th - Shropshire Branch annual post-Christmas lunch, held as usual at the Beaconsfield. It was good to see so

many members from other branches and we can't thank you enough for joining us.



R_L: Jill, guest, Chris, Ali, Pauline, Sandra, Edith, 2 guests at Branch annual post-Christmas lunch

March 29th - A weekday outing to the Army vs Royal Airforce at the Montgomery Waters Meadow, the home to Shrewsbury Town football club. It is my sad duty to say, the Army didn't turn up! They lost 2 - 1, but hey ho, there's always next time! A helicopter flew in with the ball!



Army vs RAF football match ball being delivered

April 16th - Some of the Branch took part in a walk at Haughmond Hill, for our chosen charity for 2023 of PAWS.



L-R: Ali, Sheila J, Kim, Chris, Denise, Michelle, Debbie - Charity walk on Haughmond Hill

May: 6th - Some of our members made the trek to London to see the Coronation of King Charles III, pity about the weather, but I'm led to believe that they had umbrellas over their drinks, so a tragedy was averted!

16th - Finally, we come to the end of the line, it's probably a case of leaving the best till last. This day will forever be on the lips of the Branch members. We finally had invites to an NFA garden party at Buckingham Palace, in the presence of the Duchess of Edinburgh. Four of our group even got to see the King whilst he was out walking in the gardens, such an added bonus!



R-L: Edith, Pauline, Ali, Steph, Sue, Debbie, Jacko, Chris, Gladders, Sandra - NFA Garden Party at Buckingham Palace

So, there you have it, we're now bang up to date, as such. It's been a pleasure sharing our events and outings with you all. We hope that our paths will cross at some point in the future. We send early Christmas greetings to all branches and members.

Tamworth

Chris Whitehead

Hi again from Tamworth branch, so much to write and so little time. I keep promising myself I will write up as we go along and never do!! Anyhow, we left you last November, since then:

- We had a wonderful Christmas lunch
- We have a new Chair - welcome to Ann Gwynne, and thank you so much to Pat Williams for looking after us for so long, glad you are staying with us.
- We have met monthly since January.
- We have new members - welcome Sue, Christine, Audrey, Irene and Jill.

May was a really busy month: we accepted an invitation to Birmingham branch party to celebrate the King's coronation and of course Betty Webb's 100th birthday. It was a great afternoon with lots of laughs and a lovely afternoon tea.

Next was the 'We will remember her event' at Rolleston on Dove to remember Pte Nora James. It was quite emotional to think there were groups gathering all across the country to commemorate the 26 ATS women who were killed back in 1943.

Then we were very proud that 6 of us (3 plus 3 guests) were invited to The Not Forgotten Garden party in the gardens of Buckingham Palace, by kind permission of the King and hosted by the very lovely Duchess of Edinburgh. What an honour which gave us marvellous memories. We saw the Duchess from a distance and met some great celebrities, other guests and serving members of HM Forces, Yeoman of the Guard, very smart they all were too. We had some brilliant photo opportunities, and the one I attach is whilst we were chatting with Dr Hilary.



At the NFA Buckingham Palace Garden Party

We hosted the Area AGM in June and welcomed Julie Winks, Benevolent Fund Secretary, along with members from the Area.

We are pleased to announce that we have a volunteer to become the Branch Standard Bearer - we are currently looking into getting training for her.

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London & South East

Area Co-ordinator:

Nina Smith

Email: southeast.area@wraca.org

wracnina@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 07771 834 730

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Canterbury

When: 13.00 on the first Wednesday of the month (except Jan, Feb, Mar)

Where: Newport Court, Cowdray Place, Old Dover Road, Canterbury, CT1 3PB

Contact: Jenny Smith

Tel: 01843-613552

Greater London

When: 14.00 Saturdays in March, May, July and September

Where: National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London

Contact: Chrissie Mills

Tel: 07505 199653

Email: Chrissie.mills@hotmail.co.uk

Invicta

When: 4th Saturday of each month

Contact: Karen Radford (Chair)

email: mousemole@msn.com, or Jackie Elliman (Sec)

Facebook: WRAC Invicta Branch

London

When: 1st weekend of each month

Contact: Lauren Fia MacKenzie

Tel: 07709 172351

Worthing

When: 11.00 last Tuesday of the month (except December)

Where: Lancing Parish Hall, 96 South St, Lancing, BN15 8AJ

Contact: Carolyn Hill

Tel: 07790-922110

Invicta

Tia Gregory

Whilst attending the Ashford Kent Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club in January in 2022, a discussion developed about the need to reopen the Royal British Legion Branch Office Ashford Kent for the large veterans and Gurkha community within the Ashford area.

Along with serving Wing Commander Shaun Rhyles MBE, former RN, Callum Knowles, the then serving Mayor of Ashford, and myself with other veterans we set about to do exactly that! With the unwavering support of the RBL Kent Vice Chair Mrs Caye Gould, we were all honoured and delighted to be involved with the successful reopening of the Royal British Legion Branch Office Ashford Kent in March 2022.

We encourage all veterans to come along to 'Pop In' sessions for chats and company over free tea/coffee and biscuits. We try to open the Branch office 10am-12pm Monday to Saturday, volunteers permitting. As the Branch Community Support (BCS) I open the Branch on Saturday mornings. It has been a huge success and the Branch continues to go from strength to strength with our Chairman, Wing Commander Shaun Ryles, as our own Strength and Stay! We actively promote and support veteran's needs, activities and events to encourage a sense of community.

The Branch has been actively participating in a charity initiative funded by Kent Arts and Wellbeing. They have been sponsoring a free twice monthly Photography Club. Actively encouraging those who are interested in photography, or just want to know how to take better pictures with their phone cameras, to get involved by popping along. Furthermore, positively encouraging veterans to reshape their berets, dust off their medals/badges and polish their shoes and take part in having their photographs taken for posterity - having photos taken at relevant landmarks such as the local Cenotaph, memorial gardens and even a WWI Tank as a backdrop. Each participant will receive a framed photo of themselves free of charge. This initiative has been a huge success and tremendous fun. The various types of photos taken of individual veterans and

groups will culminate in a wonderful local exhibition latter in 2023. Further information to follow. The RBL Branch are also going to publish a charity calendar for 2024 to help raise funds for the branch welfare fund.

Fellow WRAC veterans attended the Ashford Kent RBL on Saturday 27 May 2023 for our own specially arranged photo shoot. All the ladies were on fabulous form, flying the Lioness flag, outstanding! The Girls definitely left a lasting impression.



WRAC Lionesses have been honoured by being awarded pride of place in the Ashford Kent RBL Branch Charity Calendar for the month of February, Valentine's month! A collage of WRAC photos will adorn the page including the now iconic picture of Margaret Ahmed Mohamed 'Chelsea Buns' pose. Calendar Girls eat your hearts out!!!

The event concluded with a delicious lady's lunch and more high spirits. The sun shone down on our glorious day and I for one was inordinately proud of what was accomplished that special day in May. WRAC Ladies are welcomed and encouraged to attend any of our collective and inclusive RBL branch events. Carol Toon, Sonia Prince and I regularly attend the official Ashford Kent Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club held on the last Saturday of each month. It would be wonderful to welcome more Lionesses should they wish to attend. Please join our Facebook Page – Ashford Kent Armed Forces & Veteran Breakfast Club.

The Ashford Kent RBL have more social events coming up during this year including a family and friends BBQ in Woodchurch on the August bank holiday weekend 26.08.2023; the annual Poppy Appeal event and the Remembrance Day Parade at the local Cenotaph; plus, a fabulous Black Tie Christmas Ball on Saturday 9th December 2023 to look forward to. For updates of events please view our Facebook Page – Royal British Legion Ashford, Kent

We look forward to hearing from you and to welcome you to any of our meetings and social events. Thank you.

Eastern

Area Co-ordinator:

Lyn Hatch

Email: eastern.area@wraca.org.uk

Cambridge

This branch/group has closed

Colchester & District

Contact: Kerry Warnes

Tel: 0776 3122474

Email: kerrypam@hotmail.com;

Facebook: WRAC/ATS Veterans of Colchester and Surrounding Areas

Grantham

Contact: Sue Goodes,

email: Suegoodes482000@outlook.com

Tel: 07825 577486

Herts/Bucks/Beds

Contact: Chris Barratt

01799 526671

Email: 78chrisbarrett@gmail.com;

Facebook: WRAC/ATS (Herts, Beds, Bucks)

Lincoln & District

Contact: Sue Smith

Tel: 01636-671874

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/Lincoln&District

Lincolnshire

When/Where: Very informal group, meeting as and when commitments allow.

Contact: Mary@faver.plus.com or Suebeever@btinternet.com

Norfolk

Contact: Lyn Hatch
Tel: 07929 070665;
Email wracnorfolk@aol.com;
Facebook: WRAC/ATS Veterans Norfolk

Peterborough & District

Contact: Pam Sussex
Tel: 01733 243944
Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/groups/WRACPeterborough

Suffolk

Contact: Liz Ives
Tel: 01473 807099 / 07714-259949;
Email – eaissafa@outlook.com

Colchester & District

Heather Savin

It is with a heavy heart that I start with the sad news that our Midge/Nan (Margaret May Adams) passed away on 10th March 2023. She was a much-loved member of our branch and will be missed. At her request several members attended the funeral on 4th May 2023 and formed the Guard of Honour. It was the send-off that she had planned down to the last detail which included an entertaining bagpiper. We were able to share our memories of Midge with her family. I have included two photos of her proudly taking part in a Remembrance Parade in Clacton.



Marching in Clacton



After the Parade

We said Au Revoir to Debbie (and Sean) Crowley as they left at the end of May on their epic journey by land and sea to their new life in Spain. We send them best wishes for the future and am sure we will catch up with them when they come back to the homeland.

On Friday 2nd June we had our first dining event at The Albert in Colchester. Sadly, due to prior commitments there were just the four of us there (the Fab 4), but a pleasant evening was spent getting to know each other better and going back in time with tales from our service days. Best of all we were able to take advantage of our Blue Light Cards. I intend to plan another dining event, possibly a lunch, and will try to give as much notice as possible so that there is maximum attendance.

The next date on our calendar is for Seaside Havoc on Sunday 23rd July, this was a favourite event for Midge so we will raise a glass to her then. Kerry is taking the lead in organising it this year so I am fully expecting that she will have a few surprises up her sleeve! We will, no doubt, be entertaining the locals again with our tug of war competition. Photos will follow but I have included one of Midge taking the strain from a previous year.



Beach Tug-of-War Seaside Havoc

We hope to be holding our Summer Barbecue on Sunday 13th August with Dawn putting plans in place for this. As a few members of the branch regularly attend the Colchester Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club we have invited them to join us.

Other events will be going into the diary so that we can regularly meet up and keep the branch alive.

Herts/Bucks/ Beds

Wendy Hooton / Lynn Hatch

Thank you to Chris Buxton-Barrett for organising the lunch at The Plough in Duxford. With it also being St Georges Day, it was suggested that we should wear something red and white. We were

joined by Helen Merrington–Rust on behalf of the Membership Council (and also an Association Trustee), and the ever-entertaining Diana Lidstone and her family. The lunch was a great success, and as Area Coordinator thank you for inviting me. Just a few days later Diana celebrated her 99th birthday, I'm sure she had a great time.

Once lunch was over it was lovely catch up with everyone and thank you to Christine Hayward for volunteering to organise the next event in July.

Lyn Hatch

It was lovely to get everyone together again, at The Plough, Duxford (thanks to Christine Buxton-Barrett for organising), after a long pause due to the pandemic. It is taking a while for our members to feel confident enough to get out and visit public places again. We were joined by our Area Co-ordinator, Lyn Hatch, and also Helen Merrington-Rust MBE, one of the WRAC Association's Trustees. Everyone had an enjoyable lunch and chat. There was so much to catch up on!

We were fortunate to have Diana Lidstone ATS, her daughter Catherine and son Andrew with us. Diana had recently been in hospital but has made a good recovery. Diana also celebrated her 99th birthday, such a milestone. Congratulations from us all and here's to the next one, her centenary and her "telegram" from the King!



Catherine Lidstone and Diana Lidstone



Catherine Lidstone and Diana Lidstone

We are looking forward to our next get together at The Braiche in Luton on Sunday 16th July organised by Christine Hayman.

Thank you to everyone for the wonderful prizes you gave me for our tombola on Armed forces Day in June. (See separate article).

Wendy Hooton

Lincon & District

Jo Worsdall

Our Branch has begun to meet regularly again, after such a long time, moving forward from Covid. We were able to arrange a trip to Bomber Command in Lincoln in May, which was wonderful and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. We toured the site, which was so interesting, and had a lovely lunch. It's so nice to meet up with Branch members again.

We are always on the lookout for new members, please drop us an email, or pick up the 'phone, or have a look at our Facebook page and Sue will be happy to let you know where and when we're meeting up again. We hope to see you soon!!

North West

Area Co-ordinator:
Dawn Hawker

Contact: northwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Bury & Rochdale

Branch now closed.
Please contact Dawn Hawker: northwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Cumbria

If you are interested in joining a newly forming Cumbria Informal Branch please - We can be an informal group who meet as and when - Please let me know if you are interested
Contact: Dawn Hawker, NorthWest Area Co-Ordinator
Email: northwest.area@wracassociation.org.uk

Lancashire

If you are interested in meeting for the occasional informal Saturday lunch
Where: At the Walton Fox, Bamber Bridge, Preston
Contact: Gail Newsham on 07939 505485
Email: gaildkl@talktalk.net

Liverpool

When: 12noon, 1st Wednesday monthly
Where: The Holiday Inn, Lime St, LN1 1NQ (opposite the station)
Contact: Pat Brown
Tel: 0151 724 5966 / 07896-486171
Email: pat-br@hotmail.co.uk

Manchester

When: 11.00 2nd Sunday of the month
Where: The Swinging Bridge, Trafford Boulevard, Trafford Park, M41 7JE
Contact: Pip Flegel 07375-095532
Email: pipflegel2009@gmail.com

Oldham

When: 19.00/19.15 3rd Thursday of the month
Where: Different restaurants – phone for details
Contact: Kath Kirtley 07910 925070
kathleenkirtley@gmail.com
or Susan Feeney 0781 3313508
susan4michael@yahoo.co.uk

Wirral & Chester

When: 19.00, 3rd Tuesday each month
Where: TA Centre, Chetwynd, Wexford Road, Oxtown, Birkenhead, L43 9TF
Contact: Sharon Broderick MBE (Chair)
Tel: 07784-068826
Email: sharonbroderick139@sky.com
Jean Hayes (Secretary)
Email: Hayes_3000@yahoo.co.uk

Manchester

Pip Flegel

Hello Fellow Lionesses from The Manchester Branch. We have been really busy since the last edition of our great Lioness magazine.

Starting with the AGM in March - due to the rail Strike the meeting in London was given over to Zoom but, unknown to myself, a fabulous birthday weekend was arranged by our very own Dawn Hawker and Issy Hamilton-Conboy; Afternoon tea on the 32nd floor of the Shard, the London Eye, Riverboat Cruise, a party at the Union Jack Club, topped off by lunch at the Royal Hospital Chelsea with Monica Parrott and several other Lionesses. The icing on the cake? we Zoomed the WRAC AGM from Harrods. Not everyone gets to attend a WRAC meeting from such salubrious surroundings!



Spending the AGM days partying for Pip's birthday with our Lionesses

In May Wendy, Angie, Heather, Beryl, Dawn F, Dawn H, Issy, Leanne, Kryshna and Pip were invited to the

Buckingham Palace Garden Party by "The Not Forgotten Association", and that too was a really special day. It was fabulous meeting up with other Veterans, members of the Royal Family and celebrities. I wasn't too keen on the pea and mint sandwiches though, they turned your face inside out, although Linda Robson, from 'Birds of a Feather', didn't seem to mind after devouring my leftover sandwiches. Ha ha.



Attending The Garden Party at Buckingham Palace

Manchester Branch attended Moston Cemetery, Manchester in May to remember the 26 ATS servicewomen killed in Great Yarmouth 80 years ago. Wendy Summerell Wheeldon was Manchester's Standard Bearer, and it was an honour to stand in memory for those that stood before us and gave their lives.



Remembering the 26 ATS Servicewomen killed at Great Yarmouth 80 years ago at Moston Cemetery

Also in May, Dawn and I were invited to represent The WRAC Association at Manchester Cathedral for the inauguration of the new Lord Mayor of the City of Manchester Councillor Yasmin Dar. It was a privilege to represent all WRAC at such an occasion.



Dawn Hawker and Pip Flegel attending the Inauguration of the New Lord Mayor of Manchester

Finally, by the time this edition of the Lioness is posted through your letterboxes at home I will have completed My Scooter Sprint Challenge Coventry To Guildford.

Oldham

Kath Kirtley

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We are only a very small group, but we still meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month and sometimes we do manage to go to different events as the photos show.

Hope you are all enjoying the sunshine.



Moston Cemetery for (WWRH) Bernadette Bell ATS



Susan Feeney & Debbie Davies at RHC Founder's Day

Wirral & Chester

Sharon Broderick MBE

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It's been a busy old time for the ladies of the Wirral and Chester branches. The two branches, whilst still operating as separate entities, are very much sister branches and several of the ladies attend both.

The ladies meet once a month for a lunch in the beautiful city of Chester. The shenanigans are legendary apparently! Veterans of the ATS and WRAC from Cheshire and North Wales, eat, chat and giggle the afternoon away.

Over on the Wirral, we hold a formal meeting at Chetwynd Barracks on the third Tuesday of every month. The first Wednesday of the month sees us out for a meal, where we are joined by some

fellow sisters in arms from the WRAF and WRNS.

We had great fun at the coronation celebrations, when Sheila Brown again hosted a wonderful garden party. There was plenty of delicious food, cakes and two trifles. Just to make sure that Pat Sanders had some to take home.

The quizzes, as always, were taken very seriously, and everyone did very well. The same couldn't be said for the Royal Bingo which saw us all tied in knots trying to explain the differences between the crowns and the tiaras! You really had to be there.

Lynne Cooke and Jan Gillison had a steely determination to collect the best prizes, but in the end Dot Thomas and Jean Hayes ran away with it and all Jan and Lynne could do was laugh. We also wished Pat Wakefield a happy 80th birthday in May and welcomed a new friend Carly Hudson into the fold. She joined the army after the WRAC was disbanded but she is very much a Lioness now.

Some of us were very lucky to attend a camp with the Outpost Charity in April in Gruinard Bay, Scotland. Carly Hudson and Sharon Broderick enjoyed a week completely off grid, taking part in activities like rock climbing and abseiling, waterfall walking, canoeing, paddleboarding, archery and volleyball.

Elaine, our resident Puddle Pirate (WRNS), is a history whiz and has very kindly been looking into local service ladies who passed away whilst serving in the military. We are hoping to get to all the local graves in the Wirral and Chester areas to pay our respects prior to Remembrance Sunday.

We are very blessed to have a fabulous group of friends, who love to laugh and have fun. Bring on the next 6 months.



Area Co-ordinator:

Lesley Roberts

Contact: northern.area@wraca.org.uk

Area Secretary: Helen Rowan.

Tel: 07714-950219



Bradford

Contact: Lee Guthrie

Tel: 07909 961188

Email: Lee.guthrie@sky.com

Cleveland

When: 12.30 4th Wednesday of the month

Where: Café Etch, 5 Gilkes St, Middlesbrough, TS1 5ET

Contact: Suzanne Allan

Tel: 07801 571528

Email: s_l_allan@msn.com

Doncaster

Contact: Veronica Hanson

Tel: 01226 714757

East Riding & North Lincolnshire

Contact: Dorothy Mitchelmore

Tel: 07897 449920

Email: mydeluxe06@icloud.com

Grimsby

When: 14.00 2nd Friday of each month

Where: Cartergate Social Club, Cartergate, Grimsby, DN31 1QZ

Contact: Gail Davy Tel: 01472 347868

Hull & East Riding

When: The 1st Friday of the month

Where: Wenlock Barracks, Anlaby Road, Hull, HU3 6PB

Contact: Janet Mitchell

Tel: 01482 508087

or Janet Marshall TEL: 01482 806799

Leeds

When: 12.30 1st Wednesday of the month

Where: The RBL, 73-75 Albion St, Leeds, LS1 5AA

And

When: 11.00 3rd Saturday of each month

Where: The Cosy Club, 53 Albion St, Leeds, LS1 5AA (except January)

Contact: Jayne Maitland

Tel: 07904-084491

Email: jayne849@msn.com

Newcastle

When: 12.00 3rd Thursday of the month

Where: Leazes End Club, 45-47 Leazes Park Road, Newcastle, NE1 4PG

Contact: Tanya Hall Tel: 07590 323497

Sheffield

When: 11.00 1st Thursday of the month except January and August

Where: The Benjamin Huntsman (Wetherspools), Cambridge Street, Sheffield

Contact: Brenda Colley

Tel: 01709 365828

York

When: 14.00-16.00 1st Wednesday of the month (except August), phone to confirm

Where: Haxby & Wiggington Methodist Church Hall, Haxby, York, YO32 2JJ haxbyandwiggingtonmethodistchurch.org.uk

Contact: Feona Dixon

Tel: 01904 633438

East Riding & North Lincolnshire

Dorothy Mitchelmore

The East Yorkshire & North Lincolnshire branch have once again been active since the beginning of the year. We kick started our year with a visit to The Wortley Hotel over the Humber Bridge. This was kindly organised by Angie Liddle.



L-R: Angie Liddell, Jayne Robinson, Roberta Grant at the Wortley Hotel

In March some of our members enjoyed a coach trip to the world famous Bury Market where they had a really fabulous day.

April saw us enjoying a lovely lunch at The Soldiers Rest in Winterton. This was owned by an ex-Army Catering Corps guy. Thanks to Annie Baxter Mulligan for arranging this for the group. Roberta Grant and I have a birthday close to each other and we were pleasantly surprised when we were presented with a lovely birthday cake.



L-R: Roberta Grant & Dorothy Mitchelmore



L-R: Lynn Watson, Dorothy Mitchelmore, Roberta Grant, Barbara Yarborough, Annie Baxter Mulligan, Wendy Corkerill, Tracey Sayers

On 14th May, branch members attended the memorial for Pte Jessie Sharp ATS as part of our 'We Will Remember Her' campaign (photograph in main feature article).

Also, in May a fabulous day at Elsham Hall gardens and country park in Brigg was had by all, especially as the grounds were looking their best in the spring sunshine.



L-R: Annie Baxter Mulligan & Jill Talbot at the gardens

Thanks go to Shirley Taper for alerting us to the fact that a WWII veteran in our area, Wilfred Slater, had sadly died. Wilfred had served in many places and was wounded in both legs by a German sniper attack before being evacuated to Ghent in Belgium. His four remaining family members were the only ones due to attend his funeral so an appeal had been put out in the hope that other veterans may be able to help them to mark Wilfred's passing. Roberta Grant and I were available to attend, and when we arrived it was a beautiful site to see that so many veterans had also responded to the call to ensure Wilfred had the send-off he so deserved. TV media were there, Standard bearers lined the route as he passed, and the Last Post was played.



Funeral of Wilfred Slater

Congratulations go to Annie Baxter Mulligan on receiving her Community Award for all her hard work in her community.



Annie Baxter Mulligan, centre

Also, congratulations to Jill Talbot and the members of the Beverley Armed Forces

Breakfast Club on their award received from the East Yorkshire Council Civic awards.

Well done ladies.



Jill Talbot, centre, and the Beverley Armed Forces Breakfast Club award

We have also had several off-the-cuff gatherings for coffee or lunch during this period, from January to June, and as we move forward into the Summer we are looking forward to our overnight trip to Lake Windermere and the Pendle Witches.

Grimsby

Gail Davy

The Grimsby Branch started off the year with a New Year party, all members brought food, enjoyed a happy time and a good natter. Three members celebrated special birthdays, Carolyn Kirkwood 60, Jean Evans 80 and Judith Field 60. Unfortunately, the Secretary, Gail, had a fall in December damaging her shoulder and had a few months unable to attend. As with all life, the meetings successfully carried on despite her incapacity.

At the March meeting we celebrated Betty Beeby's 80th birthday with a cake. In May Pat Altoft was 90 (photo shows Pat, on left, with Maisie cutting her cake).



Pat Altoft cutting birthday cake



The June meeting was Maisie's 85th birthday, again celebrating with cake, (Maisie is seated in the centre of photo.)



Maise (seated) with birthday cake



Unfortunately, we have lost two of our members, Monica Barnes, Vice-chairman for many years shortly following her husband who died only days earlier, and Lily Corby aged 94 who served in the ATS during the WWII, our only ATS member.

In May we celebrated the King's Coronation with a meal at the Jug and Bottle, our favourite eating place.

On Sunday 14th May, Pam Givens and myself, with my local vicar Rev Kay Jones, attended a service in Grimsby Cemetery for 2 of the girls killed in 1943.

The branch is quite successful, recruiting a few new members this year and enjoying meetings and having fun.

Scotland & N Ireland

Area Co-ordinator:

Janette Deans

Email: scotland.ni.area@wraca.org.uk

Aberdeen

When: 11.00 2nd Monday of the month (except January)

Where: Ma Cameron's (Snug Bar), 6-8 Little Belmont Street, Aberdeen, AB10 1JG

Contact: Sandra Lemmon

Edinburgh

When: 2nd Saturday of the month

Where: The Scot's Guards Club, Cliftonville Terrace, Edinburgh, over the road from Haymarket Station

Contact: Senga Palmer

Tel: 07876 782773

Facebook: Edinburgh and area WRAC/ women who served, social group

Fife & Tayside

When: Last Thursday of the month

Where: Salutation Hotel, 34 South Street, Perth, PH2 8PH

Contact: Debbie Coupland

Email: debbiecoupland14@gmail.com

Glasgow

When: 13.00 2nd Monday of the month

Where: RHF Museum, 518 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, G2 3LW

Contact: Joyce Steele

Tel: 0141 322 5639

Northern Ireland (NI)

Veterans Group

NEW GROUP: If you are interested in learning more about this group please contact Joan McCabe.

Email: joanmccabe24@gmail.com

Stirling

When: 12.00 last Saturday of the month

Contact: Liz Dixon Tel: 01786 743635

Email: liz_m_dixon@yahoo.co.uk

Ulster

When: Meetings 3-4 times per year

Where: Location varies, please call

Contact: Sylvia Connachan

Tel: 02892 693533 or 07484 142194

Email: conna2312@gmail.com

West of Scotland

Based in / around Glasgow area

Contact: Cathy Philip

Email: catriona223@gmail.com

Aberdeen

Sandra Lemmon

On a very cold frosty day in December, we met for Christmas lunch at the Station Hotel, unfortunately the cold penetrated into the dining room. The food was good, served by two very polite waitresses who did an excellent job serving the whole dining room.

We did not meet in January, but that month learned that Mary Macleod, our only surviving ATS lady had died in the nursing home; she had dementia. It was so sad that in the end Mary could not communicate with Joan Bartlett, now our oldest member, whom she had known for many years.

Tributes were paid to Lt Col (Retd) The Lady Martha Bruce who also died in January.

In February Margaret Irvine celebrated her 80th birthday - cake was enjoyed by all.

In March we had more cake, this time to celebrate the golden wedding anniversary of Irene Thomson and her husband, Ian - both come to our meetings. Arrangements were made for Janette Deans, Scotland and Northern Ireland Area Secretary's visit to Aberdeen.

In April, discussed travel to Nigg in Ross-shire, round trip of 280 miles. Moira Thom gave an update on the arrangements for We Will Remember Her, Elizabeth Mackay. Made final plans for Janette's visit.

On 17th April, Sandra Lemmon and Moira Thom, met Janette Deans off the train, we hopped on a bus to meet up with the rest of the branch members at the Dutch Mill where a private room had been booked. We each introduced ourselves giving details of when served, trade and postings. In return Janette told us about being the first intake of WRAC Officers to train at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Janette then gave us a summary of what was discussed at the Membership Council she attended in February. We ended the meeting with a delicious meal and Janette had to leave to catch her train back to Edinburgh. Everyone was delighted that Janette had made the journey to visit us.

At the May meeting a note was read out from Janette of thanks for our hospitality. It was decided our June meeting would be lunch out at Inverurie. Get Well cards were signed and sent to Margaret Irvine and Moyra Brodie, both recently had falls.

On the 14th May, Sandra Lemmon and Moira Thom travelled to Nigg, Ross-shire to attend the memorial service to Elizabeth Mackay and the other 25 A.T.S. ladies who died tragically 80 years ago. Sandra laid the WRAC Association wreath. It was heart-warming to see such a large crowd, the Lord-Lieutenant Joanie Whiteford, the Army Cadets, four ex-WRAC veterans, the local MP, five nieces of Elizabeth, piper, Charlie and many locals who all wanted to be part of the remembrance service.

From Aberdeen we wish all branches fun and friendship in the coming summer months.

Ulster

Sylvia Connachan

Hello Ladies, hope you all had a great Christmas and lovely New Year.

We managed to get our usual February Lunch at New Forge, Belfast. We had 14 members and two guests from the Not Forgotten Association; a good turnout. The food was good as always, and the crack was flowing. Two of our members, Marie Jenkins and Chrissie Tolcher, both had their 80th birthdays and before the lunch, the branch gave them a WRAC Commemorative Medal to mark the occasion. We all had a great afternoon. Roll on next one.



Marie Jenkins and Chrissie Tolcher being presented with WRAC Commemorative Medals

I logged into the AGM on the 18th March 2023; it was a very informative meeting, and I learned a few things from it. It was a good AGM.

My local British Legion, Dromore, held a Kings Coronation charity concert at the Banville Hotel, Banbridge. Elizabeth Montgomery, Sarah Cairns (WRAC), a friend Pat Baker, myself and Victor attended. It was a very good entertaining evening.



Margaret Davies came to Ulster to do her 100-mile walk. We were very pleased to see her, the weather was behaving itself and didn't cause too much bother. Rosemary Stewart and I met up with Marg at Omagh, where we had a lovely meal, and then gave her a donation from our Branch. Our Branch thanks Marg for coming over to Ulster.



Marg Davies in Ulster & being presented with donation

On the 30th April 2023, Jill Hope, Elizabeth Montgomery, Sarah Cairns and myself attended the Anzac ceremony, at Ballance House, Lisburn, which we have attended for the last five years. Sorry no photos.

The ABC Council Office's for my area put on a King Charles Coronation Tea in the Seagoe Hotel, Portadown, which Sarah Cairns and myself attended. It was a very good afternoon and entertainment. Our ATS/WRAC member, Mary Wilson, is in a nursing home in Saintfield and had her own Coronation party. Well done Mary.





On 3rd June 2023, the Royal Irish Regiment, Veterans, had a Parade and Fun Afternoon for all and their families. Sylvia Connachan, Sarah Cairns, Marie Jenkins, Elizabeth Montgomery and Jill Hope attended. It was held at Clonaver Barracks, Belfast, a bit of nostalgia for Marie, Sarah and Elizabeth as they were stationed in that camp.



Ladies we all here hope you have a good summer enjoying yourselves. You all take care, stay safe.



National & Overseas

Band

When: The Band Branch is a national Branch and does not meet on a monthly basis. If you have Band news for the Lioness send direct to Editor@WRACLioness

Griffin

Griffin Branch is a virtual Facebook group primarily designed to unite those ex members of the WRAC who do not yet belong to the Association, or if they do already belong do not have a geographic branch to attend.

Contact: Cathy Munro MBE
Email cathmunro@hotmail.com.
Tel: 01733 201231 (working hours)
Mobile: 07786 260988
Facebook page: WRAC Griffin Branch

Mediterranean

When: At least every 6 months or more – 2nd Wednesday of each month (from 12 September 2017)

Where: Albion Arms, Albion

Perth (Australia)

Contact: Ann Page
ann.page3@bigpond.com

South & South West

Area Co-ordinator:

Amanda Foster

southwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Tel: 07788 316596



It's already halfway through the year and I can't believe how much is going on! Looking back it's great to see what we have done, but looking forward offers more opportunities to gather, chat and catch up with everyone.

A cold January, in fact very cold, at Bovington Tank Museum (then Salisbury Cathedral in March), when I did a sleepout for Alabaré Homes For Veterans. Why mention this? I want to highlight what amazing work Karen Langley (Salisbury Branch) does with the "Boots on the Ground" projects – I don't think she ever stands still, from Garden Projects, Brew and Banter and visits to a Forge to create flowers! I know the Salisbury ladies, and many others, think she does an amazing job – Thank You. Check to see if there are projects (the same or similar) in your area.

February saw Area Co-ordinators catching up for a Volunteering Information Day and Membership Council meeting in London. This is always good, to catch up and see what other branches are doing. I feel that this group is great, offering support to each other.

March arrived kicking and screaming at 100 miles an hour, with the wettest trip ever to Plymouth – arrived making a drowned rat look dry! Great to hear the plans they have for Armed Forces Day. Also caught up with Bristol and was able to hand over the WRAC Anniversary Medals from the Guildford Remembrance trip, so some very happy faces and a lot less rain! Alas due to train strikes I postponed the trip to Portsmouth.



Visit to Bristol branch



Visit to Plymouth branch

May was definitely the month for bank holidays, celebrations and catching up. I would urge you all to not only encourage everyone to become members of our Association but also The Not Forgotten Association. As I was lucky enough to get a direct invite to their Garden Party this enabled me to remind my TA buddy why she should join the WRAC Association as well. Importantly May also allowed many Branches to gather and pay their respects to the ATS Women killed in Great Yarmouth. Our area paid their respects to Jessica Lewis, who was only 22, at Bournemouth Cemetery; and thank you to those who attended.

Lastly it was wonderful to catch up with so many smiling faces at Royal Hospital Chelsea for Founder's Day. Also inspiring and thought provoking – again great to see how everyone chats, so many stories and more importantly more networking opportunities for future adventures. What a positive experience our Veterans are having as In Pensioners. Makes you wonder how they keep up the pace of visits, events, activities and just generally keep busy. Great to see that Salisbury had an away day to catch up with Southampton branch, over a Fish 'n Chip lunch.

On a serious note, though, please remember that we do need to spread the word about our wonderful branches/groups/meetings – we need to keep moving forward. We are a membership led Association, so it's for YOU as members to decide how and when you wish to meet. Whatever you wish to call yourselves, whether you gather in a coffee shop, have a meal or organise a trip – this can be for three, ten or more it's still a gathering of WRAC or as I like to call it "an inspiration" of WRAC.

Looking forward to catching up with new faces at NAFD Falmouth and also the Summer Picnic – Keep Smiling everyone!

Bath

Contact: Sylvia Musgrave
Tel: 01225 339904

Bournemouth

When: 12noon, 2nd Wednesday of the month, March, June, September and December

Where: Lynton Court TableTable restaurant (in Premier Inn), 47 Christchurch Road, Boscombe, BH1 3PA, for informal lunch

Contact: Val Wright Tel: 01202 314047
or Jillian Hurst Tel: 01202 679433

Bristol

When: 12 noon 1st Thursday of the month

Where: Contact the branch for details of location(s)

Contact: Judith Stinchcombe
Tel: 07837 455352

Email: wracbristolbranch@mail.com

Plymouth

When: 4th Tuesday of the month

Where: Moments Café & Memory Hub, 69a New George St, Plymouth.

Contact: Ann Williams (Chair),
Tel: 01752364481 or 07714216592
or Lin Taylor-Greep (Secretary), Tel: 07479927986

Email; m_ann1@blueyonder.co.uk;
creepygreepy@virginmedia.com

Portsmouth & Isle of Wight

When: 10.30 1st Saturday of the month

Where: The Maritime Club, Queen's Street, Portsmouth

Contact: Sally Watson
Tel: 02392-799028

Salisbury

When: Mixture of 'coffee meet-ups' during the day and Saturdays; and 4th Wednesday of the month.

Contact: Amanda Foster
email: SalisburyWRACVets@gmail.com;
Facebook: WRAC Salisbury Branch;
Twitter: @SalisburyWRACVets.

Southampton

When: 19.00-21.30 1st Wednesday of the month

Where: Phone for details

Contact: Jean Doe Tel: 01794 523146

Swindon

For now please contact Amanda Foster for information.

Contact: WRAC Swindon Branch,
WRACSwindonbranch@gmail.com
southwest.area@wraca.org.uk
07788 316596

Torbay & Area

Contact: Pauline Marr
Tel: 07787 763779
Email paulinemarr55@gmail.com

Weymouth & Portland

When: 13.00 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month (no meetings from late December to late February and late June to late September)

Where: RAFA Club, Maiden Street, Weymouth, DT4 8AY

Winchester

When: 2nd Thursday of January, March, September and November plus a summer outing

Where: Location varies depending on lunch or evening meeting

Contact: Herme Emary
winchester18.wrac.sec@gmail.com

Bristol

Judith Stinchcombe

Bristol Ladies have had an exciting few months, working with national and local veteran groups.

Early in the year we had a constructive visit from Amanda Foster, our Area Co-ordinator, to a lunch where we caught up on some of the latest Association projects, a suggestion that we should put a branch leaflet together, and how we can obtain small nuggets of financial support to help with more Bristol awareness.

Early May a small number of local veterans were invited to meet with Rt Hon Johnny Mercer MP, Minister for Veteran Affairs. It was an open forum where nothing was off the agenda. He spoke and answered questions for two hours and ended by saying, "we have come a long way and achieved many things, we know this is not enough, but we are better with, than without. Please do not make it more difficult for us to help you and stay positive by helping each other." I loved it!



Judith Stinchcombe with Johnny Mercer and Siobham Baillie MP for Stroud

In celebration the ladies met in Weston Super Mare for a Coronation Lunch, great banter in true WRAC style.



Bristol Ladies were excited to receive an invitation to the King's Garden Party in May from The Not Forgotten Association; it was a privilege and something that will remain in our treasured memories. The day was well planned, travelling on the train in our finery was an experience, a walk in the sunshine through St James Park on the way, handing over the invite and walking through the gates not knowing what to expect made us tingle. We were greeted by the RAF Central Band, several well-known entertainers - a lovely surprise to see Alfie Boe and Russell Watson, although, sadly no singing, and Sue Pollard, what a joy she was - dainty food and British tea made it a very quintessential afternoon.



Margaret, Helen, Belle and Pauline arriving at Buckingham Palace



Pauline with Russell Watson and Alfie Boe



Sue Pollard with Angie and Judith

We have a couple of members who have been unwell for a while. We miss them as they are reluctant to come out to play; our online and phone contact remains a lifeline for them.

As always Bristol Branch is open to everyone and meets at 12.00 noon on the first Thursday in each month, email: wracbristolbranch@mail.com or telephone 07837 455352 for further details.

Plymouth

Evon Roberts

Plymouth Branch have been quite active in the past few months, as you can see from the photographs. We attended the Not Forgotten Association Christmas Lunch; our Christmas party was at Tamar View Nurseries; and we had a trip to The Windy Ridge Café, which is fast becoming one of our favourites.



Not Forgotten Christmas lunch



Not Forgotten Christmas lunch



Windy Ridge café

Amanda Foster, our Area Co-ordinator, also came down to one of our meetings to tell us more about the Benevolent Fund and things such as the Royal Hospital Chelsea Founder's Day (Garden Party).



Meeting with Area Co-ordinator Amanda Foster

Sadly, in the course of the last few months we have lost three of our members and funerals have been attended by representatives.

We have a new Branch Secretary, whom we welcome with open arms.

We are planning events at Louis Tea Rooms, Callington; House of Marbles, Bovey Tracey; Darts Farm, and we are even thinking about trying for Strawberry Fields at Lifton. So, as you can see, we try to keep active even though most do include food!

We continue to meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month at Moments Cafe in New George Street, Plymouth.

Portsmouth & Isle of Wight

Val Duke

Christmas just wouldn't be the same without our traditional luncheon, this time at the Lady Hamilton's, joined by the IW members. We were not disappointed, it was excellent.



Christmas at the Lady Hamilton

Then, early in January we had news from Winnie, one of our members now living in Canada, that on the 17th December 2022 she had been awarded the Queen Elizabeth Platinum Jubilee medal, presented by the Honourable Lt Governor of New Brunswick, Bienda Murphy.



L-R: The Hon Lt Governor of New Brunswick, Bienda Murphy, Winnie, the Hon. Dorothy Shepherd, Member of the Legislative Assembly, St John, Lancaster

On 17th February, the Portsmouth side of the water took a trip to the official opening of the Veteran's Hotel in Ryde, IoW. We were treated to a finger buffet luncheon and then shown the self-catering accommodation rooms in this unique hotel offering respite, transition, holiday and emergency accommodation to veterans. We were impressed by the planning and quality of the rooms and wish the Community Interest Company every success.



The Veterans Hotel, Ryde

As you may recall from a previous issue of the Lioness, one of our members, Kay, carried out voluntary work for the RAF museum at Tangmere. On 4th March we took a trip to the museum. It was of special interest to me personally as I had flown from Tangmere in a Chipmunk as an Air Cadet when it was still a working RAF Station. Naturally I couldn't resist the opportunity to fly a Lightning in the flight simulator.



RAF Tangmere

The 16th May was the annual Mayor-making ceremony in Portsmouth, which Sally & I were invited to attend as representatives of the WRAC Association.

We were invited to luncheon by Jean Doe, of the Southampton Branch, and a few members were able to accept the kind invitation.

In advance of the annual D-Day commemorations on the seafront, branch members from both Portsmouth & IoW visited the D-Day Museum in Portsmouth and had a lovely day. The D-Day

memorial parade was subsequently attended by Phyllis & Sally, with Sally parading our Standard.

It has been a busy time for branch members recently and we hope to continue being busy throughout the rest of the year. We continue to have coffee mornings at the Maritime club on a regular basis; dates and times for which can be obtained from the branch secretary.

Finally, it is with sadness that since our celebration with Rose Ide on her 103rd birthday we have learned that she passed away peacefully on 3rd March (see obituaries).

Salisbury

Amanda Foster



So far this year we have had a steady stream of events with numbers varying between 10 and 20. In fact the most popular event was our trip to the local Harvester for supper! The local lad, still at college, managed to handle 22 excited, hungry and thirsty ladies very well.



Branch meal at the Harvester

We are lucky to use Salisbury Rugby Club as our 'fixed venue' and they treat us very well, but we also benefit from a very active Salisbury and Amesbury Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club which offers many events each week. This year we have seen ladies attend Adventurous Training type weekends, Forge Working, Boots on the Ground Gardening and many support events – so never a dull moment. These events are often powered by our members as well – thanks to Karen Langley from Alabaré and Jane Ricketts for her breakfast cooking. This is also a soft recruitment option for us, as Veterans often find the Breakfast Club first and then we introduce ourselves. Many of the Salisbury branch are very active with the Club and I would encourage other groups to seek them out – and show some Girl Power!

We have offered coffee mornings with raffles, evening events and day trips so that we can cater for the ages and access/transport options of our membership. One of our day trips was to

Royal Hospital Chelsea (separate report) and this was really enjoyed by those that attended. Other days trips have been to visit Southampton Branch, with a Fish 'n Chip lunch at Romsey, offers to join in with Winchester and our next trip in the planning is a boat trip along the Hamble.



Royal Hospital Chelsea visit, with IP Jan Brodie-Murphy

We have the rest of the year planned out which will include: River Trip, Summer BBQ, Have a Go Bowls, Bingo, Christmas lunch, and not forgetting the Summer Picnic at Worthy Down. More often than not, the best gathering is over a coffee, a bit of cake and a chat. Everyone is welcome, and we look forward to catching up with old friends and making some new friends along the way.

Amanda Foster



Salisbury's secret recruiting agent

Quite a few of our Branch are also members of The Salisbury AFVBC. We have a Brew and Banter every Friday in aid of the local charity Boots on The Ground. This is run by one of our own, Karen Langley. BOTG is a charity which helps veterans, some with addictions, get back on their feet. One way is to take them to a forge run by Will (also a veteran) who teaches the art of metalwork.



L-R: Jackie Clark, Karen Langley, Norma Mcafferty, Shelley Larkin Lepp, Will and Lisa Myerscough. (Unfortunately one of the team (Chris) couldn't attend the 2nd session)

A few of us girls were given the chance to have a go and jumped at the chance. I had already been before and made a poppy but this time it was to be a more difficult rose design. Not only did we work hard, we also laughed continuously, especially as one of my leaves melted in the furnace - I had left it in too long. I had to start again but caught up eventually. The end results were very good, as you can see from the photos. Not bad at all.



Salisbury's secret recruiting agent

We are hoping to go again to put our newfound skills to the test. Watch this space.

Jackie Clark

This was one of the many events organised by Amanda Foster that I was most looking forward to, it was on my bucket list.

We met up at 10am at Salisbury Rugby Club where we were picked up by our minibus. The atmosphere on the bus was great, everyone was so enthusiastic about the trip. It was organised that we would arrive at the RHC for lunch, as our tour would start at 2pm. And as you know, getting there five minutes before the parade is the norm for the forces, so getting there at 2pm would have been late for parade!!

We were unable to use the RHC facilities for our lunch. However, a nice lunch was to be had next door at the National Army Museum, which incidentally is part of the RHC estate anyway. The food was delicious, and to top it off we were able to look around the museum. Well worth a visit, and one of the many museums in London that are free.

As expected, we all managed to be at the gate for our slotted time.

We were greeted by an ex-WRAC Chelsea Pensioner, Jan Brodie-Murphy, who was thrilled that our group were visiting. She took us into the visiting room where we were greeted by our tour guide for the day. One small bit of information Jan gave us about herself is that she cares for Baroness Margaret Thatcher's grave, which is on site, amongst numerous other activities. There is also an Infirmary, providing a state-of-the-art care home which is named after Margaret Thatcher, who was a great supporter of the RHC ... unlike Tony Blair who seemingly wanted to close the RHC! Our tour guide was such a funny guy and had not lost any of the forces banter.



At Royal Hospital Chelsea

The tour tells the story of the 330-year history to the Royal Hospital Chelsea and shows all the Grade I and II listed buildings, together with all artistic masterpieces, this includes the Great Hall, Figure Court and the amazing Wren Chapel. I have to say, the carvings, paintings and the silver altar plate in the Chapel were outstanding. The architects were Christopher Wren and John Soane, which was evident in all the buildings. The whole of the 66 acres were outstanding. Also breathtaking was the current value of £90 million plus per acre all those developers out there must be so envious of the site!

Of particular interest was the change to the accommodation, amazingly only really completed fairly recently. The original accommodation for in-pensioners were really quite small "berths" made from the wood from the old, captured Napoleonic wooden warships, hence the naval term of "berths". The in-pensioners now have very modern and comfortable rooms. This photo shows the basic room the Senior in pensioners would get one just slightly larger.

And what a dining room! The walls are full of the battle honours of every Army engagement, and at the end of the hall is a magnificent painting showing the hospital behind Charles II. Three meals a day in such a setting ... we could all live with that, I guess!

There's a great statue of a Pensioner that has the Soldier's Prayer, before battle, inscribed - "You know how occupied I shall be this day, if I forget you, don't forget me". Poignant indeed.

I did notice in the small museum, next to the shop, was the recently presented silver figure representing the WRAC in pride of place.

Whilst walking around you got the feeling that everyone was smiling and also had a pleasant acknowledgement to visitors. You could see being a Chelsea Pensioner had given members an extra spring in their steps. Our guide told us his life was extremely sad before he became a Chelsea Pensioner as he saw hardly anyone and had nothing to live for. He truly believes, since he joined, it has added 10 more years to his life. What an extraordinary chap.

There are too many activities to mention available to the pensioners, for example bowls, walking rugby, and it was good to hear that the RHC actively encourages its in-pensioners to develop and run activities for the good of all.

We did not want the tour to end. I am sure I am not the only one in the group who feels that there is potentially something to fall back on in our retirement, if successful in application, should you not wish to live on your own later in life.

To end the tour, myself, Jackie Wood and my hubby were reunited with one Chelsea Pensioner who we all served with in Northern Ireland in 1979. Many laughs were had in the bar after the tour. Also, I was very touched that one of the female Pensioners came to see us in the bar for a chat as she had heard there was a WRAC tour.

I would recommend to you all to visit this spectacular place as it is steeped in fascinating history, and a visit to the National Army Museum next door is an added bonus. An excellent day, and a huge thank you to Amanda for organising it.

Southampton

Jean Doe



Hello everyone. At long last do we have happy days ahead? Surely it will be.

My apologies for not sending last time, but the Branch has carried on normally with pretty good results and we also had our Fish and Chip lunch. Last month we had members from Portsmouth, Salisbury and Winchester and it was quite a happy 'do'. We also had two members from my old platoon – they all said how they enjoyed this, and we were very happy to see you. Sadly, (Romsey) car parking is not as easy for non-blue-badge cars, and we will check this out. Probably the car park behind Waitrose would be best.

At the time of writing, we have a few members with health problems. One member has been very poorly; another has been sent home with a carer but is much better and looking forward to joining us soon – she certainly sounds much better. Another, who has long covid, is up and down still; and Bobbi, who was very poorly with Parkinson's, changed her diet to gluten free and has very much improved. Bobbi is a clever lady and produces children's books. Her husband brings her to meetings – its so good to see these improvements. The pandemic has been very unpleasant; let's hope we are all getting back to normal.

So, to you and all, keep well and enjoy life.

[Editor: This arrived too late to make the last edition so included here ...]

Well, hello everybody – Happy New Year and hope you had a good Christmas to start the ball rolling. Let's hope 2023 is better than 2022.

We did manage to keep our meetings in their normal routine. Our venue has been very good, we have a fish and chip lunch 4-5 times a year, and we have a pretty good attendance. We started this year with a speaker, which went well. We do have a little money and hope our good fortune holds up – the steward unfortunately had a heart attack and has been advised to look for a 'quieter' job, so we will let you know; they are moving away.

Watching the (football) Lionesses - the girls play the game as if they enjoy it, they were smiling, their play is quick and clean. The ref does not blow his whistle as much and allows the game to play on. The Lionesses is a very apt name, don't you agree?

This is the start of a very cold week. Last week it was wet so roll on the spring and the lovely flowers like snowdrops, daffodils and the beautiful primroses.

And so, let's make it a good year.

PS Our thanks for issuing a special 'Lioness' following the sudden passing of the Queen. Very seldom of a unique Queen who never forgot her early promises.

Winchester

Herme Emary

Here we are, June, already halfway through the year and thinking about Christmas. Yes, I have already seen one Christmas advert on the TV!

To round off last year's meetings we again visited the Porterhouse in Winchester for a very nice (as always) meal; had a good turnout of nine people considering the weather and distance people had to travel.



Daphne, Margaret, Ray, Kim, Herme, Lynn, Janet, Chris, Maggie

2023 started off a bit slow, our first meeting not being until March and then we had two. The date in March selected for the first meeting clashed with a few other things so a second March date was chosen to give as many as possible the chance to meet up. We had 13 attending, the weather that threatened to be nasty gave us a break. We also welcomed first timer Kris (unfortunately, she had to get back to work so left before the photo).



Ray, JJ, Pete, Daphne, Lynn, Herme, Janice, Lesley, Janet, Chris, Maggie, Margaret



Sandy, Rowena, Emma, Herme, Maggie, Margaret, Ray, Denise, Kim

Better weather for the second meeting, nine attendees which worked well, for a nice chat.

In May I invited everyone to lunch in my garden. The day started cold so sitting outside was in danger of not happening. However, being a hardy lot, some put on coats, and we took to the garden. Not far into the meal the sun came out and it turned into a lovely afternoon. Everyone brought some food with them, and those travelling by car also supplied some folding chairs.



Standing: Ray, Margaret, Sandy, Rowena, Kim. Sitting: Daphne, Maggie, Lynn

Interest Groups

If you co-ordinate or organise a 'special interest' group, let us know so that we can help you and your group out and about the Association. Please give us a contact name and details, for others, who might like to join you

CycleFest

Contact: Liz King
Liz@trispirevents.com

Royal Hospital Chelsea

Contact: (IP) Madge Cole

Royal Hospital Chelsea

(IP) Madge Cole /

Jan Brodie-Murphy

ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAMME

On his appointment as Governor of The Royal Hospital, General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, following up on the manifesto he declared in his application, set about establishing a Veterans Outreach programme aimed at leveraging the influence and reputation of the Royal Hospital Chelsea to provide more direct support to veterans, particularly the elderly, living beyond the perimeter of the Royal Hospital estate.

The COVID pandemic thwarted progress in delivering the programme as swiftly as wished but in September 2022 'RHC Veterans' Outreach' was launched, initially piloting 'Chelsea Outreach', which focuses on veterans in the Greater London area for whom travel to the Royal Hospital is relatively easy. They have run a series of themed events at the Royal Hospital, where veterans from all three Armed Services and the Merchant Navy are invited to enjoy comradeship, and shared memories, hospitality and some fun alongside the 'In Pensioner' residents of the Royal Hospital. The aim of these 'Gateway Events' is to meet veterans and establish their own network of those who may benefit from sharing the activities enjoyed by Chelsea Pensioners on a more regular basis and become in essence 'Out Pensioners'. This offer

will expand once other planned facilities within the Royal Hospital come online.

The programme relies heavily on the active involvement of In Pensioner volunteers connecting and engaging with veterans from outside. As evidenced by their enduring popularity, most Chelsea Pensioners are already experienced and skilled communicators with the members of public as part of their role, both formally and informally, as representatives of the wider veteran community during the many visits and events that they attend. At its most simple this programme is about a veteran who may be lonely and isolated sharing a cup of tea, maybe a sticky bun and some banter with a Chelsea Pensioner.

As part of the programme, they are collaborating closely with NHS partners, in particular with local GP practices who are keen to make use of the programme as a social prescription alternative to medication or treatment. They are also dependant on the veterans' networks already established by other service charities such as SSAFA, ABF, RN/RM Associations and especially Regimental Associations to spread word of their events. The RHC website is also now promoting the programme and publicising events.

The RHC are supported in their programme by delivery partners including, among many others, Department of Work and Pensions, Op COURAGE, SSAFA, Samaritans, and BLESMA. Most of these partners attend our events and provide advice and assistance to veterans as required.

As General Adrian put it as they launched, 'we are currently conducting 'reconnaissance by fire' and once we have established the numbers and requirements of veterans beyond our immediate perimeter, we will have a better idea how we should proceed. We plan for Chelsea Outreach to continue for the foreseeable future with monthly events, as well as continued attendance by Chelsea Pensioners at countless other activities, including various veterans drop-ins, breakfast and lunch clubs and other more formal events. In due course, and having developed our *modus operandi*, we intend to extend this offer beyond London and offer a 'Nationwide Outreach' element in partnership with local service charities and organisations in regions where there are large concentrations of military veterans'.

So, finally, we have been asked to spread the word among Corps or Regimental Association veteran fraternity, particularly any who are London based and let them know they are very welcome to attend any of these events. Flyers for

these RHC events will be featured on: <https://www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/outreach>

Lt Col (Retd) Jonny Lowe, Head of Veterans Outreach, The Royal Hospital Chelsea
VeteransOutreach@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk

News on insurance for Branches ...

The WRAC Association HQ has expanded their insurance policy for Branches to include running, cycling and walking. This means that the Public Liability will cover an incident whereby a Member of a Branch has negligently caused damage eg if a Member taking part in a cycle event with the WRAC Association Cycling Branch ploughs into a mother with a pram because she was riding unsafely along a pavement, whereby the mother with the bent-out-of-shape pram and dodgy leg could claim against the Association's insurance policy.

We also looked into cover for a sailing branch and camping and caravanning branch, however, the insurance company and we couldn't see an eventuality whereby a Member wouldn't already be covered since the owner of any boat, or vehicle, or caravan would have to have their own insurance anyway. Likewise, expeditions or charities offering opportunities for veterans would have to have insurance cover in place eg Turn to Starboard sailing courses.

The additional cover to include running, cycling and walking supplements that are already in place to enable Branches to meet regularly, run market stalls and such like.

Towergate Wilsons specialise in cover for military units and charities such as ours. They also provide individuals with insurance for caravans and sailing boats amongst other things.

So, if the issue of appropriate insurance cover for certain Interest Group branches/groups has been holding you back from starting and promoting one of these let us know, so we can ensure you are included in the list of branches/groups. And we will help you promote your Group as well. You can also attach your phone to your computer, if you have one, using the same cable you use to charge your phone and copy it onto your computer to attach to your email.

PHOTOGRAPHS:

At the Branch Secretaries Meeting Tanya kindly gave some tips on how to maximise the quality of your smartphone photos, so:

- Please send in good quality photographs.
- Limit them to the best (in quality and quantity) – ideally 3 – 4.
- Please 'attach' photographs to emails / articles, ideally as jpegs.
- Please do not embed them within a word (or other) document – it makes it really difficult to copy and share them to the magazine.
- Please title photographs, as least with those in it. You know who they are – I and others may not.

Thank you one and all for your contributions – they make great reading, and it is wonderful to see you all so active, busy and living up to Comradeship, Support and Esprit de Corps.

Please continue to send in your branch/group news, reports and updates – and don't forget, they are not exclusively for those who title themselves 'branches'. If you are part of an 'interest group', eg cycling, caravanning, walking, crafting, etc, please send those reports in too, along with contact details so others can join you.

Editor

PHOTO QUALITY:

Photos that have been sent via or downloaded from platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, facebook etc are automatically made low resolution by the programme often making them unusable in Lioness as we need high resolution images.

Please send us the original photo that was taken. You can attach it to an email directly from your phone (if you have an email account on your phone.)

You can add it to your online storage such as google drive / one-drive / i-cloud etc and then add it to your email article when you are ready to send it in.

You can also attach your phone to your computer, if you have one, using the same cable you use to charge your phone and copy it onto your computer to attach to your email.

CALL TO ACTION

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2023

WRAC Dinner Club:	14 October
Remembrance:	09 November - Field of Remembrance, London 12 November - Guildford Borough Cenotaph, London
Officers Dining Club:	21 October
2024	
AGM:	16 March, Victory Services Club, London
10k Run:	Sunday 19th May
Armed Forces Day:	22 June 2024 National event – Newtownabbey, Antrim And around the country
Summer Event:	TBC
Guildford Remembered:	October 2024 – exact date TBC

GUILDFORD REMEMBERED - OCTOBER 2024

On **5th October 1974** a bomb exploded in the Horse & Groom pub, Guildford claiming the lives of 2 off-duty WRAC servicewomen, 2 off-duty Scots Guards and 1 civilian. There were also some 65 people wounded in this, and another bomb planted at the Seven Stars, pub. We are sure some of you will remember this – either because you were there and/or were stationed in Guildford at the time, and/or your friends and colleagues were caught up in them.

On **30th October 1964**, some ten years before the bombings, HM Queen Elizabeth II officially opened the WRAC's Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Guildford. Many of you will have passed through the Barracks gates and buildings – now a housing estate.

We are already in discussion with Guildford Borough Council about appropriately remembering all those killed and injured in the pub bombs, while also acknowledging the Opening Anniversary of QE Barracks. Exact details are still to be finalised, so keep your eyes peeled for information, updates and booking forms etc.

In the meantime, **if you have any memories of either, or both, of these events please do share them with other members by sending these in to Editor@wraca.org.uk for inclusion in future Lioness editions.**

London

Dates for 2023 are:

- **Thu 09 Nov 2023 Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey.** This will be ticketed.
- **Sun 12 Nov 2023 Cenotaph Parade. This is always ticketed; ticket applications for 2023 have closed.**
 - **Please note** that the RBL's criteria for this Parade, is that participation is only open to Veterans (no carers, unless they also served) and you will need to be in possession of 2 forms of ID, one of which must be photo ID.
- **Sun 12 Nov 2023 Westminster Abbey Service** – Enquire of HQ Office/Tanya what 2023's arrangements may be for this service, but requests will need to be made to the office if you are interested.

Guildford

- **Sun 12 Nov 2023 Guildford Borough Remembrance** events. As one of only two Regiments that have Freedom of the Borough this is a very symbolic venue for the Association and we encourage as many of you as possible to attend (as explained on page 102), especially if you are unsuccessful with London tickets.

Dress on Parade

In line with the Royal British Legion and other Regimental Associations, parade dress is to be smart and appropriate; the norm is for dark colours.

Within the WRAC Association the tradition has arisen to wear a green WRAC Association fleece or a bottle green blazer. Fleeces, sew-on Association badges and scarves are all available from HQ Office and/or the online Shop.

Please note this form of dress is not mandatory.

Those who do not possess it are still very welcome to parade, as long as they are dressed smartly and appropriately. (See Medals & Badges etiquette below for further information).

Since the Association is no longer an active Corps (regiment) Stable belts and forage caps should NOT be worn.

Medals and Badges Etiquette

Etiquette rules for wearing medals, only allow the wearing of official awards.

- The WRAC Association badge and the Veterans badge may be worn on the left lapel by the position of the buttonhole.
- The medals awarded to a deceased Service/ex-Service person may be worn on the right breast by a near relative (no more than one group should be worn by any individual).
- Unofficial medals, or badges, other than the WRAC Association badge/pin and Veterans badge, should not be worn when representing the WRAC Association.
- Unofficial purchased medals and foreign medals which do not have the Sovereign's permission to be worn are not allowed.

Lioness & Postal Information from HQ

Change of Address: Please remember to notify us of any change of address – whether for yourself or a friend. Every time Lioness is distributed a number of copies are returned as we are unaware that Members have moved.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

The 2024 AGM will be held in the Carisbrooke Hall, Victory Services Club, 63/79 Seymour Street, London, W2 2HF on Saturday 16th March 2024, commencing at 14.00.

The AGM will be preceded by a meeting for Branch/Group Secretaries/Points-of-Contact. This is an opportunity to share ideas between branches/groups, ask questions and raise suggestions.

The AGM is your opportunity to hear directly from the Board of Trustees (as listed inside the front cover) on the past year's activities.

If any Branch/Group Secretary, or HQ-branch member, wishes to submit an item for inclusion in the Agenda, please send in writing, to the Association Secretary by 2nd February 2024 (to penny.muxworthy@wraca.org.uk).

TIMETABLE

12:30-13:00	Branch/Group Secretaries Meeting (balcony of the Carisbrooke Hall)
14:00	AGM
15:30	Afternoon tea (for Association members only, must be pre-booked)

AGENDA - DRAFT:

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Confirmation of 2023 Minutes
4. Business Arising
5. Governance Report
6. Membership Council Report
7. Benevolent Fund Report
8. Influence Report
9. Annual Report and Accounts
10. Resolutions
 - a. Trustee/Membership Council
 - b. Branch
11. Guest Speaker – TBC
12. Any Other Business
13. Date of Next Meeting – Saturday 15th (or 22nd) March 2025 (at GR)

Refreshments: Afternoon tea will be served on completion of the AGM. This is only available to WRAC Association members who have pre-booked by completing the form below.

Please use the Booking Form in the Centre Pages, or go to the Association website, to book your place at the AGM and for Afternoon Tea.

WHY RECONNECT AND JOIN THE ASSOCIATION?

WRAC Association Membership

We have our eyes in the front of our heads to look forward, should we not look back at all? We should look back and embrace those memories that we have, the fun, the adventures and the mishaps along the way – they all make us what we are now, proud and strong ex WRAC.

I was lucky enough to get an invite from The Not Forgotten Association to attend their Buckingham Palace Garden Party this year. I actually sent the email back, telling them I went last year so shouldn't go this year – but they insisted, so who am I to argue? I immediately knew who I should invite – Ann Freeth my partner in crime from 6/7 Queens (v) TA – we are one digit between us on our numbers (but she is a year older). Ann and I chat every few months, catch up face to face maybe once a year. If not for the TA we would have never met, never done an ICFT across Brecon, fired Pistols, SMG and Anti-Tank weapons, got up too early, worked long days, went to bed too late and then probably had a few too many beers along the way. Just don't ask about underwear on display, at height, in the Drill Hall! You all know what bonding stuff this is – bruises go but memories last. Divorces, house moves, sickness and health along the way we can still chat for England!

Needless to say, we both enjoyed the day at BP Garden Party and to cap it all Anne saw a neighbour from her village near Horsham – small world and connections! So, this is why YOU should encourage your ex WRAC buddies to join the WRAC Association (or even you if you are not yet an Association Member). You are able to re-connect, re-kindle and even re-live those crazy times we all had when dressed in green.

'Freethie' was just so amazed at the welcome from all our ladies who attended – especially the Manchester Branch who we caught up with afterwards. She said it was like being young again. So why not spread the love and spread the word. Our Branches are often those "best kept secrets" so get out there and you just never know who might be pleased to hear about us and catch up for a brew.

Amanda Foster
Area Co-ordinator, South & West

**For the price of less than 6 cups of coffee
(or a couple of cocktails),
ie £10 a year, you can enjoy these benefits of
Association Membership:**

2 copies of Lioness magazine per year
Events, Friendship and Support through HQ, Area Co-ordinators and network of Branches
Invitation to WRAC Grand Reunions Association and AGMs
Notification of WRAC Association events
Priority booking for WRAC Association and other events
Various updates from HQ and Areas via letter or email
The opportunity to take part in research and surveys to benefit all females in the armed
forces, whether veterans or still serving
Option to apply for tickets to certain non-WRAC Association events (geography and
timescales permitting)

The **Benevolent Fund 'Membership Support Grant'** is (only) open to those who are Association Members and is there to assist members who would like to attend branch, Area or National events but financially feel unable to do so.

The ATS & WRAC Benevolent Fund is open to any female who served in the Army (ATS or WRAC), even if for just one day, up to April 1992. Please speak to a SSAFA or RBL Caseworker if you feel the Ben. Fund could assist you, or someone you know (see page 43).

So, if you, or someone you know, would like to join the Association to benefit from shared laughter, tears, memories and more with other women who served then don't delay, join today.
See the Centre Pages of this Lioness edition or go to our website www.wracassociation.org.uk

BRANCH OR OTHER GROUP NEWS / UPDATES

- If you organise or co-ordinate a group of female veterans, whether as a Branch or Special Interest Group (be that crafting, in-take or leaving years, where you served, what trade or unit you were attached to, sport, a hobby, etc, etc) please let us know.
- Share your news with us.
- We will happily share that information with other members and help promote your Group, what you do and who to contact for more information and/or to get involved.

If you are aware that a Branch/Group listed in Branch News (pages 46-70) has incorrect information (contact person, day/time/venue), is not even listed (or no longer exists) please do let HQ Office, and the Editor, know. Emails were sent out last year to those we have contact details for asking for confirmation and/or updates – thank you to everyone who responded.

There are a few branches we have not heard from, so if you know the up-to-date information please let us know. It does not have to be the official Point of Contact who lets us know.

The information printed is as we know it. We are aware that it does differ to that on the Association website. We want to make sure both sources of information are the same for everyone's benefit.

**The most important thing is that you are women 'Supporting Female Veterans'
– the size or nature of the group matters not.
We are here to help you.**

BUDDY BUDDY SCHEME



That was in the 1940's

Now you can.....

Join the Buddy Buddy Scheme

Become a friend over the telephone with
a fellow veteran and Member of the
Association.

Daunting? But hey you'll definitely
know something about your Buddy:

She's served in the Army...

She's a good egg...

She's also a little daunted like you...but
She's brave too...just like you!

Go for it.....register at www.wraca.org.uk/buddy

FOR PUBLICATION

BRANCH / GROUP REPORTS: For those of you who are able to submit by email please

- Put the detail into the body of the email
- Attach your photos to the email, ideally as jpegs
- Send maximum 4 high resolution photos per Report (or if you've been up to lots, pick the best 1 per event)
- Ensure all photos are the highest resolution possible
- Attach all photos to the email – do not embed them into an attached Word document (we cannot always extract them)

REPORTS / ARTICLES:

- 350 words + 1 photos – for ½ page
- 650 words + up to 2 photos – for full-page

PHOTO QUALITY:

Photos that have been sent via or downloaded from platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, facebook etc are automatically made low resolution by the programme often making them unusable in Lioness as we need high resolution images.

Please send us the original photo that was taken. You can attach it to an email directly from your phone (if you have an email account on your phone.)

You can add it to your online storage such as google drive / one-drive / i-cloud etc and then add it to your email article when you are ready to send it in.

You can also attach your phone to your computer, if you have one, using the same cable you use to charge your phone and copy it onto your computer to the attach to your email.

Next Edition

Copy date: 1st November 2023

In order that your magazine can be put together, printed and delivered in time for early February we really do need your articles by: 1st November 2023.

The only exceptions to this will be short Remembrancetide articles and photos – which need to be to Editor@wraca.org.uk by Tuesday 14th November 2023.

**Feature(s) – AGM (March)
Guildford 1974
Guildford 1964**

Lights, Camera, Action!

To take part in the Legasee Educational Trust filming of individuals' stories of their time in the ATS, WRAC and Army contact:

Martin Bisiker on martin@legasee.org.uk,
or get in touch with the Association office for more via info@wraca.org.uk.

This is your opportunity to share your stories, which will be gathered to also help in the creation of a series of educational teaching resources being developed for secondary school pupils.

More information on the Legasee Education Trust can be found on the opposite page and on their website: www.legasee.org.uk.



DIT DIT DIT DAH DAH DAH DIT DIT DIT

I often thought of my days in Germany with the WRAC and wondered about those friends from the 1960's with whom I had lost touch. One day, my husband bought me a book 'Roger So Far' edited by Nick Kendall-Carpenter, 'A History of 100 years of the Royal Signals'. I noticed that there was no mention of WRAC Spec Ops (we were the first women doing this work since women at Bletchley Park during WWII) so I contacted the author. He suggested it might have been due to the secure nature of the work that little was known about us. Fred Searle, who wrote a comprehensive history of the regiment, said "Their (Royal Corps of Signals) overt activities set them apart from other Regiments and the Corps in general. This eventually led to less and less contact and subsequently, reduced recognition of the role they played." Mr Kendal-Carpenter helpfully suggested that I contact the BVA (Birgelen Veterans Association) which had a membership list of those who served at 13 Signal Regiment. From this I was able to contact the ex-husband of Shelley Shearer, one of my former colleagues. This led on to me finding a number of those of us who trained and worked as WRAC Spec Ops in the 1960's. From my own squad, I met Doreen Chamberlain (formerly Edwards) and Pauline Keane (formerly Holloway). I am also in contact with Shelley Shearer (formerly Davis) from the first squad and Sue Pryor (formerly Gain) from a later squad. Sadly, I have been unable to contact Frankie (Marion) King and Maureen Dobbs from my old squad and found that Mary Shaw from my squad has since passed away.

It hadn't been my aim or ambition to join the army, in fact, I actually wanted to be a Probation Officer. However, my parents moved to London after my 'O' Levels so staying on for 'A' Levels and a career as a Probation Officer was out of the question. I found myself at the beginning of 1964, working at a very tedious job in a bank in central London. Unknown to me, my mother had sent away for a brochure about joining the WRAC - my mother and her two sisters were in the ATS during WWII so we often heard stories about those times. It appealed to me but to be frank, I'm not sure at the time whether it was less about joining up more than getting away from my bank job!

I applied and suggested I train as a Radar Technician. I had little idea what that may entail but very soon after I had an invitation to an interview and tests in Whitehall. Going to the Recruitment Office, I don't recall being nervous although I wasn't a particularly confident 17-year-old. After the tests, the Recruitment Officer, Captain Harrison, suggested that I joined

as a Special Operator (Spec Op), a job which had not been carried out by women since WWII. She didn't give me any details, I doubt she had any herself, but it sounded exciting and within a week I was on the train to Lingfield for basic training. (Lingfield was being used at the time as Guildford was being refurbished). Shelley Shearer had different reasons for joining up, she said "that cycling up and down dale to work in Crediton (Devon), did not appeal. The easier option was to join the WRAC." When Shelley told the Recruitment Officer that the role of Steward appealed to her, she was told that she should aim a little higher and suggested Spec Op training. Like me, she had no idea what she was getting herself into but afterwards she said she felt that she was destined for the Intelligence services!

I don't recall basic training at Lingfield being much of a surprise. My mother and her two sisters had all been in the ATS during WWII so I had heard all about bed making, drill, PT, kit inspections etc. After the bank, it was all rather exciting. Doreen Chamberlain reminded me that we were transferred from the station to the camp in the back of three-ton lorries. Doreen and Maureen Dobbs travelled together and wondered what they had let themselves in for. It didn't help, she said, that they both fell over getting out of the lorry!

I do remember that at Lingfield we had only the mushroom stalks for breakfast while the officers had the mushroom caps! I thought that was rather amusing, as did the rule that we could not go to a certain pub or tattooists and had to dance at least 9 inches apart in the NAAFI. None of these affected me as I was only 17 and had no desire for a tattoo.

Personal Description		Changes of Rank		
Height	5 ft 5 1/2 ins	New Rank	Date	Authority
Colour of eyes	BROWN			
Date of Birth	22.1.47			
Colour of hair	BLACK			
Other visible distinguishing marks				

Jac's ID card



Jac's gang at Lingfield holding (L-R: Frankie King, unknown blonde woman, Jac in jacket and Doreen Edwards in hat)



Jac Denley-Jones platoon at Lingfield 1964 (Jac 2nd row, extreme left, standing)



Lingfield basic training

I soon met up with five other women who were also destined to be Spec Ops, although one transferred jobs after basic training. That left the six of us: Marion (Frankie) King, Doreen Edwards, Pauline Holloway, Maureen Dobbs, Mary Shaw and me.

Frankie was convinced that our bottle green greatcoats were leftovers from the Russian army. We sailed

through the rigours of basic training, our platoon winning both the drill and PT cups. Rather than moving immediately onto our trade training the six of us were posted to Yeovil to complete B3 Clerk's training. The reason, apparently, was that the Spec Op training was quite rigorous so we would have a trade to fall back on if we did not succeed as Spec Ops.

I quite enjoyed our time at Yeovil as we learned to touch type, which came in handy later on, and other aspects of a clerk's life. I also had my first Chinese meal, which I found quite exotic. Shelley recalls that the best thing about Yeovil was that we had syrup on our toast, a luxury not available at other camps. After six weeks at Yeovil, we returned to Holding and Drafting Company at Lingfield for two weeks, before transferring to 224 Signal Squadron at Old Woodhouse, near Loughborough. Shelley was one of the first six WRAC Spec Ops to go to Loughborough. Of those six, two did not complete the course. When Shelley and her cohort arrived, the camp was still being built and she recalls the grand opening of the NAAFI, the beer was plentiful! Apart from the first group there were no other WRAC members on the camp.

The training was lengthy and quite rigorous at times. Doreen reminded me that once we had been "introduced to the mysteries of Morse code" in the education block we were given our green shoulder flashes and moved to the training block. Doreen recalls seeing squaddies carrying black bin liners labelled 'Secret Waste', which still makes her smile today.

We learnt Morse Code, Radio Theory and codes. My 'O' Level Physics (failed) came in handy for Radio Theory. We were in mixed squads with members of the Royal Corps of Signals and many of the men, including the instructors, were resentful of women doing the training. I was growing my hair at the time



Pauline at Yeovil, Clerk's course

and obviously had to have it up while in uniform. One of the instructors used to pull the clips out of my hair during a Morse test so that my hair would fall over my eyes. Once in a code test we were asked the meaning of QRM, Frankie replied: "I am being interfered with manually". The answer referred to interference of a Morse transmission and while

accurate, Frankie could have phrased that better!

After a few weeks, we heard that investigators had visited our friends and family to assess us as a security risk. We were then interviewed in a process known as indoctrination. At the interview, I was asked a lot of personal questions as to whether I was sexually active or whether I knew anyone who was homosexual. Odd questions for a rather naïve 17-year-old. They gave us a brief description of the importance of the work we would be doing and the need for security. At this time we signed the Official Secrets Act. To quote from a document by Fred Searle on the history of 13 Signal Regiment "The 'Y' Services maintain a constant silent watch on the enemies of their country. Their past and continuing contribution to Britain's operational success in peace and war can never be told in full."

The training continued and after about 9 months, in early 1965, we flew to Germany. That was very exciting for me as I had never flown before. We were posted to 13 Signal Regiment near a small village called Birgelen on the Germany/Holland border. For someone who had little experience of travel, this was thrilling. We all settled into work distributed between the four Royal Corps of Signals platoons. There were 6 WRAC Spec Ops who had trained just before us, but we were not on similar shifts. We were soon used to working shifts, especially through the night. One morning we were woken after a night shift by a very irate Second Lieutenant (we only had one officer) who questioned why we were still in bed on an inspection morning. We had been there for a number of months, working shifts and she hadn't realised we worked nights! We were a small cadre of WRAC Spec Ops in a camp of about 500 plus Royal Signals, Intelligence Corps and REME.

The work was interesting. We sat in a large set room with two radios each. We listened to what came in in Morse code and recorded it, monitoring communications from East Germany. Some of the things we were listening to came in quite fast, but we started on the slower ones until we had gained speed. We knew that this was important work, important to the security of our nation.

Eventually, the numbers of us dropped through marriage or postings and the Powers-that-be decided it was too costly to train women when the training was so lengthy. Therefore, those that were left were transferred to be Intelligence Corps Analysts. Further training as WRAC Spec Ops was halted until, I believe, it started again in the 1980's. After a few years, I too got married and in those days it was difficult to continue service. Anyway, my then husband was posted and eventually left the service.

So that is my brief experience of working as a Spec Op in the WRAC in the 1960's and recent events of finding old colleagues. We were young and inexperienced, probably not

knowing much about politics or international affairs and perhaps not really understanding the importance of what we were doing. However, I shall always be proud of my role and time in the WRAC and have very fond memories of the women I met.

By Jac Denley-Jones
with contributions from Doreen Chamberlain, Shelley Shearer, Sue Pryor & Pauline Keane.

References:

- Fred Searle - History of the Regiment
- Nick Kendall-Carpenter – Roger So Far The first 100 years of the Royal Corps of Signals 2020



Reunion at Stag's Head, Sue's pub (L-R: Shelley Shearer, Jac, Pauline Keane (standing), Doreen Chamberlain, Dave (Doreen's husband in our squad), Sue Pryor)

Lance Corporal Minnie Hamilton (nee Bartlett, W/354292)

Hello from Australia.

I found your details from a Christmas card my mother received this Christmas. Mum is 91, and enlisted at Reading on 28 April 1949, just after she turned 18. Mum has dementia and had a stroke a few years back unfortunately and is now in a nursing home, but she remembers her WRAC days with such fondness and gratitude – I've attached a picture of her from last Remembrance Day in her WRAC jacket.



I have found a wonderful scrapbook made by her fellow officers and friends of the 4th Independent Corp when they were stationed in Tanglin Singapore in 1951, including pictures of when Brigadier Dame Mary Coulshed and HRH The Duchess of Kent visited them.

Mum married an Australian who was also stationed in Singapore, and they relocated here - but she maintained lifelong friendships from this experience and I'm so proud of her and her service. I would love to share some of these pics.

Mum was Lance Corporal Minnie Bartlett until she was married in 1952, although she stayed on working for the Secretariat until 1953 before coming to Australia. Her army number is W/354292.

Warm regards
Lydia Hamilton



HRH Duchess of Kent visiting Tanglin, Singapore, 3rd October 1952



Mollie Hendry's (nee Sparrow) story of the 2nd World War as she experienced it.

[Editor: These are Mollie's memories of 1941 – of the War years, 1939 to 1945. Due to its size we will be sharing these recollections, through Lioness, in instalments. Instalment no.1, 1939 & 1940, was in the 2023#1 edition; the remainder will be in 2024#1 edition].

1941: On the 2nd May Rudolf Hess, one of Hitler's henchmen, arrived by plane in Scotland. Nobody seemed to know what to expect of this. He came with all sorts of promises, but the Government did not believe anything he said, and he was put in gaol, where he remained until he died. We were largely kept uninformed about this, apart from knowing of his arrival, but this was just as well. It was known that we had many spies in the country – notices about this were on all the tubes, trains and buses, with in many cases the English sense of humour showing itself like "Be like Dad – keep Mum". I think that this wonderful sense of humour helped to keep the British people going during a very rough time.

Things were getting more and more difficult, as so much of our food had to be brought in from overseas, and the Merchant Navy were suffering many losses from the German subs. Our Navy had a vast job to control so many seas, and so we were rationed, first with clothing on the 2nd June, and in December for food. I would say that this was very fairly and well organised, but it was particularly hard on people living on their own. One could sometimes afford to buy an extra meal at our "British Kitchens", run by the Government, and selling plain but nutritious food.

On the 22nd June Germany attacked Russia! And they had had a "non-aggression pact".

On the 6th December the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour, bringing the USA into the war. Up until then Britain had stood alone.

8th December – Japanese forces land in Malaya; on the 26th Hong Kong surrendered. We had two great warships sunk by the Japanese – the "Repulse" and the "Prince of Wales", with the irreplaceable loss of many brave sailors. Morale in the UK was pretty low at this time. We did not know what to expect next. Of course, the Australian and New Zealand forces were very involved with the new battlefield.

You might be wondering what happened to brother Harry, well he was around England and went up to Glasgow at one time – he was in a clerical position. Eventually some time in 1942 he was sent out to The Far East, which was to prove just as dangerous as anywhere else. He was in Singapore when it was invaded by the Japanese on the 15th February. What a worry for us all, until we got a telegram to say he was now in Burma. Then Burma fell too – and we had to wait for another telegram to tell us he was in India, where he spent the next four years until he was demobbed.

1942: I don't know why I made a note of this, but on the 9th February soap was rationed. I guess I thought this was the last straw!

One place, the island of Malta, still in the hands of the British, suffered many air raids, but the population had caves on the island, which did give them a lot of protection. Such was the admiration of the British Government for this brave little Island, that it was awarded the George Cross, the highest civilian accolade.

Now the Government was getting very short of manpower – so many men were made captive in Europe and elsewhere. So they had to call up the WOMEN. As I was single, then aged 22, and not in a Reserved occupation (working for firm of CAs) – I

was eligible for call-up. We were given the choice of working in a munition factory, on the land, or in the ATS. I chose the latter, as I knew nothing about farming and did not fancy outdoor life in the winter and hated the thought of a factory. I got my call-up papers on the 28th August and had to report to the Queen Elizabeth School in Harrogate (a lovely Spa town in Yorkshire). I quite enjoyed the experience, where we were taught to be soldiers and learn something of the history and regulations. Quite a lot of exercise – square-bashing, PT. and cross-country running. We all developed very large appetites, but the food was good and plenty of it.

After our training, I was sent to London, to General Headquarters Home Forces. At first we were housed at the Admiralty, and then the Rotundas in Westminster. I was initially with G. Ops, but after an altercation with the Chief Clerk of that branch I was sent in disgrace to Home Guard training. I spent many hours typing stencils all about how the Home Guard had to exercise their guns! It was a nice branch, and I was much happier there. However, there was a split coming, when Monty's invading army was formed, and to be known as 21 Army Group. As a number of girls in the HQ did not want to go to Europe, I volunteered and was accepted into A Branch (who were responsible for the troops and reinforcements being sent to the front). This was also a much happier branch, with a Head Clerk I could respect. The HQ of 21 Army Group was stationed at St. Paul's School in Hammersmith, which was where Montgomery was educated. We were billeted along the Hammersmith Road in a luxury block of flats opposite the Olympia Hall, where so many exhibitions were held. We were still having air raids and, believe it or not, there were no air raid shelters near the office or billets. For a time the ATS would go to the Olympia Hall, down into the basement for meals and also at night when the air raids were on. The men had to go there too, so one can imagine that there was a bit of jollity during air raids. After a time, the ATS were informed that they were no longer allowed to go into the basement during air raids, as the engineers had discovered that there were water pipes above the basement, and if we got a hit, or near hit, could all be drowned.

However, it is interesting to note that the men still went there at night. So, what did we do during air raids? Well, we took ourselves out of bed and away from the windows, stood by the stairs and prayed! Fortunately our prayers were answered and we were Ok, but one night a bomb dropped on the basement of a block of flats very close to us, and many people were killed. These high explosives could cause a tremendous amount of damage.

One day, on my way back from lunch I heard a V1 going over and then cut out. I knew that they dived into the ground then, so I crept into the nearest doorway and waited. The silly thing was that the doorway was to a shop and there were plate-glass windows next to me. I heard the bomb go off and realised that it was making for the HQ and dreaded what I might find when I arrived at the scene. As it happened, the bomb hit the spire of the Chapel attached to the school, damaging the Chapel, but the HQ was safe.

During this time progress was being made in France, and we heard that Caen, a large city near the coast, had been captured, but badly damaged, this on the 9th June – only three days after the invasion. We were now thinking about what would happen next and were issued with new kit bags – a vast improvement over the ones we had to sling on our shoulders – these were equipped with proper handles and zip fasteners. We also got tin hats (we'd had gas masks since the outbreak of war). During this time we were getting a lot of air raids – Hitler hoping to demoralize the British people (some hope). We still went to theatres on our off days (one a week) and had to attend first aid lectures.

On the 9th July the HQ was evacuated. These movements always took place on a Sunday, when there were fewer people

about and the roads were a lot clearer. I think the powers-that-be felt that we were much too vulnerable in our present situation, and of course plans had been made for this well in advance. My Sunday job was to type the weekly GROs – General Routine Orders – which took some little time, and I found myself sitting at a desk whilst all around me were men moving furniture. Our destination was Wentworth Golf Course, where the temporary HQ was to be established. It was of course mid-summer, and we were enjoying beautiful weather, so you can imagine that we did not mind going there. My office was in the squash courts, and every bit of the place was occupied. What a lovely place it was – and we had digs in a magnificent home with, I remember, a beautiful magnolia tree in the garden. We were kept very busy during this time, with long hours, and just one day off a week.

To get to our billet we had to use the army transport. One evening, after late duty, the transport had broken down. How was I going to walk all that way in the dark on my own? However, an MP on a motorcycle came out of the HQ, and I asked him for a lift. He was shocked, as they were not allowed to even give us lifts, however he took pity on me and I got back in one piece. Sometimes we would have to work until 10pm or later; as you can imagine it was a very critical time for our branch, being responsible for reinforcements and troop movements. On our off days we usually managed to get a lift and were happy with anything from a staff car to a milk cart!

11th August 1944 - Our lovely holiday (?) was now over and we were off at last to France. Up at 2am, with snacks from NAAFI on the lorry. Moved off at 3.45, stopping at the embarkation area for breakfast and a wonderful welcome from the people of Portsmouth. They knew where we were heading. We embarked on a troopship at 2pm and lay off Portsmouth until 4am. We were situated in the hold, which was not the most comfortable place to get one's head down. Also on board was a contingent of the First Canadian Army. Our toilet facilities left a lot to be desired. Of course, it was a troopship, so what could one expect? A row of seats separated by strips of canvas – but we were all girls together. At 5.30 the ship stopped due to heavy fog. During the evening we had a singsong to a piano accordion, I suppose provided by one of the Canadians. We finally continued at 10am and had a sunny day. We then transferred to LSTs (landing craft) – we had slacks but were not allowed to wear them to climb down into the LSTs because we were told that the French did not like women in slacks!! Can you believe it? I argued, of course, but to no avail.

We finally arrived and landed on a Mulberry Harbour at 9pm and had to wait for ages for transport to take us to our camp, arriving at 12.30am. We were cheered on by soldiers all the way. Supper was served on our arrival at our camp, we were shown our quarters (a tent housing four) and tumbled into bed, very tired. The next day we were awakened at 9.45am, got up, dressed and had breakfast, spent the day looking around, back for tea and bed. The following day we turned up for work (in a marquee) and were reprimanded for taking the previous day off – so had to work late.

The next day it poured with rain, came through our marquee which leaked and had to shut up shop at 8pm. During the lighter evenings we were allowed to go out for a time, and this day we met some Canadians, who plied us with cider. A bit vague here, but I think this was in the town of Bayeux. Our tents were in a field where cider apples grew – much too tart to eat, and if you did, they gave you the colly-wobbles. The rain continued for several days, and we were trying to type sitting under groundsheets slung between the lighting cords. Not very safe and jolly uncomfortable. We finally got a new tent.

As we were the only English girls around at that time, we got a lot of invitations to nearby units. We were allowed two outings a week, had to put down our names and report back afterwards. Good sense, as some of the girls were not very responsible when it came to drinking. There was a dance at an RAF fighter

station, to which we were invited – collected by transport from the RAF and returned (hopefully) in time to sign in. This one had very good food, but there was too much drink available and some of the girls got tight. In spite of the situation, we managed to enjoy life.

We worked very hard but were young and could burn the candle at both ends a little bit. We met many different people, all sorts of soldiers and airmen, and danced at various units – shows (fell off my seat laughing so much). We still had late duties, choir practice, cinema shows – Sundays off, Church service, did chores and were able to have our hair done. Once a week we were allowed to have a shower. These were provided by the Pioneer Corps who erected large marquees by the side of a pond. Water was pumped, filtered, warmed and syphoned through sprays to about twelve showers. We undressed, hung up our clothes on hooks provided and when I was in such a hurry to get under a shower, I slipped on the wet tarpaulin! Caused a few laughs.

On the 22nd September we moved to Brussels. This was a Friday. We drove in convoy through flattened Caen. We had about eight of us to each 10-ton lorry, had all our kit bags piled behind the driver and then had our biscuits (three-piece mattresses) around the sides and sat on them. Caen was so badly damaged that the rubble was just pushed to the sides of the roads, and MPs had to stand at every corner to make sure the drivers took the right road. There were not even any signposts. It is very sad to see a town so destroyed – this I think was the cause of the unfriendly attitude of the French towards us – here were the people who caused all this damage. Forget that we were there to liberate them!

However, we proceeded north, staying overnight at Amiens – arrived at 8.30pm. What a treat to have a real bed to sleep in at the hotel. It was raining and we had to unload the transport in the dark, and I could not find my kitbag. Found it the next morning in the road, where it had been dropped and unseen, soaked through, but the other girls lent me anything I needed. We were told by one of the staff that only a month previously the German women had been sleeping in those beds! Who cares?

The further north we went, the warmer the greeting. Flags were flying and everyone was cheering us as we passed through towns, and even some were handing out beer.

24th September – three and a half months after D Day we arrived in Brussels. What a lovely place, and as we were the first ATS to arrive there, we were given a wonderful welcome. I was given a lovely bouquet of flowers and ate two ice creams.

Back to work, nice offices but ours were rather dingy. We discovered some SS hats and other souvenirs. Thrilled with the trams in Brussels, but all on the wrong side of the road. Found interesting cafes and danced with Belgian men, who pumped their arms (I suppose we were a novelty). The cafes were lovely. I enjoyed Brussels, with its lovely shops, wide streets, and friendly people, who told us quite a bit about life under German rule. We made a few friends among the Belgian people and were lucky that one of us (Hazel) was fluent in French. Mine was very limited. Whilst in Brussels I had a visit from the brother of a friend of mine, who was in the SAS. They were getting leave there after a few sorties. On the 25th November I got my first stripe. Still working in the typing pool.

Now we headed for the winter, and by December it was very cold. We had no heating and no hot water. Lovely billet, in a street lined with beautiful chestnut trees, but still no hot water. The flats we stayed in had two bathrooms and about three or four bedrooms. We had an entrance hall to the building and a lift, and I was on the fifth floor. On the 22nd December the Germans made an advance into Belgium, causing some anxiety. On Christmas Day the ORs were treated to dinner at Bon Marche – a very large store, served by the officers. A very good meal. The following day I worked until 7pm, and then went dancing.

Forty Years Ago a Detachment of WRAC were Posted to the Falkland Islands

I joined the WRAC on the 9th April 1979 and on the 9th April 2023 I am still serving as a member of AGC (ETS) Reserves. Memories, and there are plenty of them, but I thought I would write an article about a very memorable event - the first detachment of WRAC posted to the Falkland Islands in 1983. There was arduous training prior to deployment, hard work in post, plenty of socialising and then the return to the UK after four months. With the help of extracts from my diary I will recall what it was like to be part of the first detachment of WRAC to the Falklands.

The detachment consisted of the following:

Captain Diane Foster (OC)

Sgt Sally Thurman, Sgt Gill Rich

Cpl Sarah Hickson, Cpl Rodgers, Cpl Kay Sharman, Cpl Sonia Steinert

LCpl Ann Burman, LCpl Goodison, LCpl Lesley Marsden,

LCpl Dawn Parker, LCpl Roscow, LCpl Sanderson

Pte Ewing, Pte Taff Fairhurst, Pte Garvock, Pte Jones,

Pte Warburton, Pte Mary Wilson, Pte Ferris

I apologise if your name is spelt wrong or I have forgotten your first name.

I was a Cpl Clerk at HQ UKLF, Wilton when Part One orders, a daily occurrence in 1983, trawled for Clerks, Chefs, Postal Couriers, Intelligence, Supply Controllers and Supply Specialists. On the 6th April posting orders came through; 18th April I was informed WRAC were definitely going to the Falkland Islands with a posting date of the 29th June. On the 24th May the Admin Instruction for the Falklands Islands was available. On Wednesday the 29th June nineteen girls plus 1 officer, the lucky volunteers for this posting, reported to Guildford. We were issued with extra kit and clothing, received additional first aid and map reading lessons before having a dental check-up followed by a cholera jab. Saturday was a day off before we departed for the Brecon Beacons, Wales on Sunday the 3rd July for five days of 'fun'. I loosely use the word fun.

It is best at this stage to remind you not to compare the WRAC to the Army of today but just to laugh at what we as woman had to do for a posting to the Falklands. The press comments make interesting reading 40 years on.

The Mail on Sunday Jul 17 1983 –

The Army sends its first 20 girls to join 4,500 men. The Army is aware that sending girls out to the Falklands is an experiment. But it's one that senior officers believe can be delayed no longer.

The degree of enthusiasm with which the bored soldiers of the Falklands press their attentions – and the way her (Capt Foster) girls stand up to the severest tests yet for Britain's integrated Army.

The team building exercises consisted of a lecture on survival, completing an assault course, raft building and racing, climbing over a 15ft wall, walking a beam and many other strenuous exercises. At this point I would like to highlight we had been given no extra 'build up' PT training and the daily jobs of those selected were in trades which involved very little physical exercise, if any. Assault courses were not part of the WRAC criteria, and this was only day 1!!!



WRAC Detachment, 1983





WRAC Detachment training in Wales

Day two consisted of four hard tasks to complete. Climbing and abseiling down a slate mine, riding on a death slide over water starting from a very high point, climbing over a ravine (80ft drop below), using ropes only and abseiling down a 300 ft wall. No wonder we had bruised legs, scratches everywhere and felt tired.

The next three days were hilarious, memorable and eventful. The task was to walk and survive in the Welsh hills for three days carrying your kit and everything you needed for three days, including the tent. Please be aware the tents were not the throw-up ones of today but cotton with metal poles. I carried a 46lb (20.1 kg) rucksack. The group was split up into groups of three. The first night was luxury as we had a tent to sleep in and we all met at one rendezvous. The second night, in pairs, we slept in individual plastic bags to protect us from the elements. The official name was a survival bag! All I can say is I am glad it didn't rain, and it was fantastic not to have to carry the tent.

Let me conjure up a picture of the hotel room (day 2 sleeping arrangements):

Two 7ft long and 4ft wide clear plastic bags were placed next to each other on a very hard uneven mattress. Each bag contained a dark green sleeping bag, I suppose one could call it a twin room. The mattress consisted of rabbit droppings, moss, grass, living insects and of course the odd stone to ensure you had a cold stone massage when you turned over. There was no underbed storage or safe so what better place to store your belongings and keep them safe than using them as a pillow. The rucksack was approximately the same length of a pillow, and the height could be adjusted. The view was a 360-degree picture of hills, bracken and the occasional wildlife. The light was off during the night for a few hours. It was on a timer I think, quite modern for 1983, but I am sure you all know when you are tired you could sleep on a clothesline.

Washing, both our bodies and mess tins, was carried out in the freezing cold stream. Wim Hoff's breathing technique had not been taught to us; this would have proved very useful. The saying by the 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche "What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger" springs to mind here. The positive was no tent to carry in the rucksack for the final days walking. The map reading back to base went well once we had stopped resting the compass on the bonnet of a vehicle and the metal fence post - we just had a memory block and forgot the important part of the map reading lesson, metal can impact the readings of the compass needle. I have certainly learnt from that mistake. To top the week off we had the Daily Mail meet us for photographs and interviews. It was just what everyone wanted, not, after working hard for five days and looking bedraggled. The discipline and team bonding had worked, we all smiled through it.

After another hectic week on leave preparing for the posting and purchasing more thermal clothing it was back to Guildford on Monday 18th July. Tuesday 19th July we left for Brize Norton but first more press photographs. I remember explicitly being chosen and told to walk, carrying this large bear, in front of the group. It may have helped the press but for me it was awful. The bear was from someone who was posted at Guildford. It certainly was not the mascot of the detachment as the press reported. More photographs, some hanging out of the back of a 4 tonner (lorry) before Brigadier McKee waved us goodbye. This must have been a big occasion as it made the national news, even a snippet in the German papers.

The Falkland Island troop ship the KEREN, an old cross-channel ferry, was at Ascension Islands waiting to transport us to the Falkland Islands. I was seasick before we left the port so you can imagine what my next 10-day journey was like. Women were not armed in 1983 so being taught how to fire the SMG was new to us all. Looking back, it would have been better to have had the SMG lessons on dry land prior to departure. In the Falklands I never did see a 15ft wall that I wanted to climb over. After 10 days at sea, it was good to arrive at Port Stanley on Tuesday 2nd August. Some of the advance party had been flown off the ship prior to arriving at Port Stanley.

The accommodation consisted of living in cabins on an old, smelly and cold ship called the Rangeterra. From the ship I first saw Port Stanley buildings and thought they were very colourful, basic and plentiful. However, in the morning when I looked out and saw the hills, I thought we had moved at night to another location. We had not moved; the tide had turned the boat!! As the Rangeterra was not docked alongside the shore we had to catch a Kiwi (small boat) to and from work. This event just added to the many experiences of the posting. We all had different jobs. I was a Cpl Clerk and worked with the Joint Force Signal Squadron. I shared a desk, literally half a desk each with another clerk. I loved working for the SO2's of the 3 services and Lt Col Jolly R. Signals, who was also from HQ UKLF. I found it strange wearing trousers, a jumper and boots to work after being used to a neatly pressed blouse and skirt with court shoes.

The social life was very good, maybe that's an understatement. When I read my diary it says on many of the pages, 'had an invite to HMS BIRMINGHAM', 'had an invite to the bread factory', 'had an invite to a cocktail party on HMS HERALD', 'went on HMS BROADSWORD', 'went on HMS SOUTHAMPTON', etc, etc. Every three months the ships rotated and there were welcoming parties and leaving parties. It was very convenient being on the Rangeterra as the ships moored alongside. Not far to walk to ensure we were back in our cabins for bed-check. I think I write for most when I say we worked hard, played hard and enjoyed every minute. The only problem with all the social events was what to wear. I tried to remember what dress (I only had two), I had worn to the

shore-based restaurant, Upland Goose on my last visit so I did not wear the same dress. Once again, the press enjoyed taking photos of us in wellies and a dress when going off to enjoy a night out. In complete contrast I continued with making the most of life and had my confirmation lessons whilst in Port Stanley. There were many opportunities, and it was up to each individual to engage or decline.

21st September we moved from the Rangeterra to the Falkland Sound and on to a Coastel, a floating hotel. It was a contrast to the previous accommodation. If you remember the prison ship moored off Dorset you will know what our accommodation looked like. After the Rangeterra it was new, bright, airy, no Kiwi to work and certainly no prison. Unless one could call having bed checks routinely taking away one's liberty.

Besides all the invites to parties there were plenty of opportunities to learn about the Falklands conflict, the Islands and the penguins. Many of the areas on the Islands were out

of bounds. This was due to mines moving around in the peat bogs. Whilst learning about the Islands and visiting many battle grounds and memorials there were opportunities to travel in Chinooks, Hercules and Bristow helicopters. On one occasion a group of us went fishing and was exposed to all four seasons in one day, which was the norm on the island.

On Friday the 2nd December we left the Falkland Islands and flew on a Hercules to Ascension Island. I much preferred the squashed, bucket seat, noisy flight to the ship. We arrived at Brize Norton at 22:10 hrs on the 3rd December and stayed overnight before arriving back at Guildford on Sunday the 4th December. A sudden end to the friendships we had built as we all went our separate ways, no Facebook or Whats App group. This is just one of the many experiences being a member of the WRAC provided me with. If anyone wants to get in touch, please email ksdmsd@hotmail.com as it would be absolutely fantastic if we could all meet up again.

Kay Sharman-Davies AGC (ETS)

No.1 Training Company WRAC Permanent Staff, December 1970

Editor: Pippa Jarman has shared these with us – perhaps you recognise yourself or a friend/colleague.



No.1 Training Company WRAC, Permanent Staff, December 1970

No 1 Training Company WRAC
Permanent Staff December 1970 2

Lt Col	Lt Col	Lt Col	Pa
McGREGG	HUTCHINSON	HOSCHER	WILLIAMS
	(Regt Stores)		(clerk)
Cpl	Cpl	Pa	Cpl
Peters	Seaton	Banks	Hutchell
		(clerk)	
			Cpl
			Lanyon
			Homes
			Pa
			Duncombe
			(Regt Stores)
			Cpl
			Houson
Sgt	WO II	2Lt	LT
Mackay	Higdon	BSS	Bowden
			Bennett
			Jarman
			2Lt
			Kearney
			Sgt
			Martin
			Remp

In the Assembly Hall, Queen Elizabeth Park, Guildford.

WRAC Association (incorporating ATS and WRAC Benevolent Fund)

Anti-Discrimination Policy

The WRAC Association does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, colour, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status in any of its' activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, employment of staff, selection of Trustees and Council members, membership and esprit de corps activities, and the distribution of Benevolence and other services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all our members.

Reunions & Dinners



Royal Military Police Association Annual Reunion

On the weekend of Friday 28th – Sunday 30th April 2023, the Royal Military Police Association held its 77th Annual Reunion. This year, it was hosted by Solent Branch RMPA (formerly Depot Branch) and was held at The Royal Maritime Hotel in Portsmouth.

A formal dinner was held on the Saturday night, in the company of Brigadier Viv Buck, Provost Marshal (Army), who is the first female appointed to the position of PM(A). Several ex-WRAC Provost attended the reunion dinner, as did other WRAC veterans alongside husbands/partners.

June 2023 saw Brig Buck's 4-year tenure come to an end, as she was due to retire from the Army after a career spanning 31 years. At the time of the reunion she was preparing to hand over to the next appointed PM(A) who, incidentally, is another female.

The accompanying photograph shows all those attending the reunion dinner, who had the privilege to wear the WRAC cap badge, together with Brig V Buck, PM(A) and a current serving female member of RMP.

I suggested a photo of all the WRAC veterans with the PM(A) as it would be the last opportunity before she hands over, but rather we went for larger group photo. It will be nice to get WRAC Provost on the map.

Regards

Kath Potts (WO4585531 Hamilton K J)



L-R: Chris (Kelly) Melisi; Irene Furlong; Sheila (Houghton-Draeger) Paynter; Lucia Turner (serving member); June Stevenson; Kathryn (Hamilton) Potts; Jean Butler; Brig Viv Buck, PM(A); Julia (Nunn) Bartholomew; Jackie Moody; Sue Smith; Liz Usher; Dawn (Fitzgerald) Pickett; Mary Wilson; Carol Campbell-Smith; Wendy Baber; Sylvia (Gooding) Adams and Sheila Pearce

WRAC & RMAS Sisterhood Officers' Dinner 19 November 2022

The WRAC & RMAS Sisterhood Officers' Dinner moved to a new location in 2022, and we dined and were looked after very well at the Union Jack Club. It was great to see 80 attendees at the Dinner, the inevitable last minute cancellations due to illness (covid!) meant a few more missed an excellent night. The commissioning years were from 1958 to 1999, resulting in lots of old friends meeting up and new friends being made. WSC 913 held a mini reunion, and other intakes may like to do that next year when the Dinner will be held on Saturday 21st October.

Many thanks to Ish Thomson and Sue Hatton who have been organising the Dinner for far more years than they envisaged.

Trumpeters/Buglers for Entitled Funerals - UPDATE

We recently received this information which some may find of interest:

"A veteran is entitled to a trumpeter/bugler provided by public money if they have completed pensionable service or completed an operational tour (NI, Iraq etc). If this was not the case then they would be required to pay for the costs. The army has a process so that trumpeters and buglers can be allocated appropriately.

Any Gunners that are entitled to a bugler/trumpeter can contact the Army Music Tasking Authority who will send the appropriate; the trumpeters will sound the Last Post.

To apply for this service individuals should contact the Army Music Tasking authority at LONDIST-SSTAArmyBandsMailbox@mod.gov.uk

Trumpet Major, Kings Troop:
KingsTpRHA-TptMaj@mod.gov.uk

NOTE: This is subject to availability. You will also need to complete form JSP 813, which can be found by googling JSP 813'



WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS DINNER CLUB

Application for Membership

Please complete the form in BLOCK LETTERS

Full Name: Known as:

Address:

..... Post Code:

Tel No: Mobile:

Email:

WRAC/Armed Forces Service From: To:

Army/Service No:

Surname(s) when serving:

Trade/Job when serving:

I wish to join the WRAC Dinner Club and enclose £20 for 5-year Membership
Cheque/Postal Order must be made payable to: **WRAC Dinner Club**

**To pay by Bank Transfer the Account Number is 16974260 and the Sort Code 30-98-90.
Please put the Applicant's full name as the reference**

Signature: Date:

Please return the completed form to:

**Heather Bradbury, WRAC Dinner Club Membership Secretary
107 Canaan, The Pastures, Lowton, Warrington WA3 1EG**

Email: heather.bradbury@icloud.com

A 2nd Class Postage Stamp would be much appreciated. Thank you

(WRAC Dinner Club Membership Secretary to input Membership No:)

CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

Margaret (Marg) Davies



Marg Davies was nominated for a Certificate of Appreciation this year to mark the 10th year of her walking 100 miles in a week, raising funds for the WRAC Association and other charities.

She unfailingly investigates, plots and plans her routes meticulously. Her wife, Denise, drops her off at the start of each day's walk, and picks her up at the end.

Some walks are linear, from end to end. In the past few years, she has completed 100 miles in England, Wales, Scotland and this year saw her off to Northern Ireland, to complete her aim of walking in all four nations.

Before her walks she raises money by doing raffles and also having a fund-raising page online. Marg also completes a blog each day, which must be exhausting after a long day's walk. All her walks for the past 7 years are readable on: margdaviesswalks.blogspot.co.uk.

This is what she says about why she does these amazing walks:

"In 2007 I was diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer. I went through a couple of operations & five years of treatment for cancer. I have many friends who have had or are dealing with cancer. In 2016 I lost an inspirational mentor and teaching colleague to cancer. In 2008, when I suffered panic attacks and a crisis of confidence, some members of the Women's Royal Army Corps Association with whom I had served 'found' me. The comradeship and support that they and the Association gave helped (and still helps) me fight the demons that a life-threatening illness can produce.

After I was given the all-clear in 2013, I realised a number of things. Firstly, I had put on a large amount of weight. Secondly, that life was too precious to waste or to put things off. I have

always loved walking and had often thought I would like to do a Long-Distance Walk at some time. Now seemed as good a time as any and it might even help me lose some weight. It struck me that if I was walking a long way then maybe I could raise a little money for Cancer Research and the WRAC Association to say a small 'Thank-you.'"

Marg is well known within the Association and is unfailingly cheerful and encouraging to all members. She was especially so to me when I first joined the Association. She was very friendly, helpful and encouraging, so much so I've been doing long distance walking because of her influence, which has helped me both physically and mentally.

Jane Griffin-Ash
Worcestershire Branch

I have no hesitation in supporting the nomination of Margaret Davies for a Certificate of Appreciation.

Marg unfailingly supports Branches within our Area by attending get-togethers and outings. She encourages WRAC Association Membership to those new to Branches and is enthusiastic about the benefits of doing so. She is an inspiration to many with her determined fund-raising and lengthy 100-mile walks, undertaken to benefit many, as well as spreading the word and advertising the WRAC Association.

Marg is also involved with the WRAC Dinner Club and has been since 2015. She is currently serving as Treasurer following standing down as Chairman. An enormous amount of time is given by her to support this yearly event and, in keeping with reaching out to WRAC Veteran's, the Dinner Club has been instrumental in re-connecting friends, and promoting the WRAC Association and its Benevolence.

Margaret gives her all and is a passionate supporter of all things WRAC. She epitomises the very best of what a WRAC Veteran is; Hardworking, Kind, Strong-minded, and admired by all who know her as well as being a friend to many.

Gentle in Manner, Resolute in Deed

Ann Stack
Wales & The West Area Co-ordinator

Deserie Mansfield

Deserie responded to a Lioness request asking for volunteers to support our campaign to find memorials for the ATS servicewomen killed in Great Yarmouth 11th May 1943. Taking on all 22 of those based in England, Deserie tracked down where these women were already remembered on their local war memorials, and investigated the possibility of adding them where they are missing. As the 80th anniversary of the tragedy approached, Deserie also worked to ensure there would be a Memorial Service at every location, giving our members the chance to pay their respects and meet with other local members.

The countless hours which Deserie has given the Association to pull off this mammoth event show her dedication to honour those who served before her, on top of her work as Secretary of Cardiff Branch supporting those who remain members today. Thanks Deserie, you are much appreciated.

Paula Rogers
CEO



Elizabeth (Liz) Dixon

Liz is currently Stirling Branch organiser; a position she has held officially since 2019, but her efforts predate this by a considerable number of years. During her time as Chair she has organised events, day trips, fundraising events, and written articles for the Lioness. She has visited Branch members in care, in hospital and at home when they could not attend meetings. She is a caring and helpful 'Lioness' who instinctively looks after and cares for those in her Branch and the wider Association.

She runs a tight ship and organises Branch lunches monthly with good attendance. During the Pandemic she ensured that all the ladies were kept in touch with each other by any means possible for their safety and wellbeing.

Liz is thoroughly deserving of a Certificate of Appreciation for her dedication and support that she gives to all aspects of her membership of the WRAC Association

Helen Jephcote
Stirling Branch

Liz has been involved with Stirling Branch since returning to her hometown towards the end of her military career. She has been a keen event organiser for the Branch over the years and

is now the official 'Branch organiser'. Post Covid, the Branch has re-established its routine and meets the last Saturday of the month. This is no mean feat since she has to use every possible means of communication to gather everyone - Facebook, email, text, WhatsApp and phone calls. Liz works tirelessly to keep the Branch running and it is paying off with a steady number meeting each month.

During Covid she maintained contact with members of the Association ensuring that they were coping with the restrictions. When anyone is ill, she will either visit or find someone to go in her place. Stirling Branch exists because Liz is prepared to work hard on everyone's behalf. Her event management is impressive, and this has included Afternoon Tea at Stirling Castle for the Branch's Christmas event.

She is also a keen supporter of Edinburgh Branch meetings travelling to the capital city whenever possible. She makes a valuable contribution to the fun on these occasions!

Recognition of her efforts is long overdue. She epitomises the WRAC ethos in all aspects and is a great example to others. This nomination has my full endorsement. Long may her enthusiasm continue and thank you to her for all she does.

Helen Jephcote
Scotland & Northern Ireland Area Co-ordinator

Chris Fretwell



Chris Fretwell took over as Birmingham Branch Treasurer in October 2010, when the previous treasurer stood down at our AGM. Chris had five minutes notice to then find a replacement Chairman, as she held that role at the time.

Chris is one of life's organisers and keeps us all in order when it comes to sorting out and paying for events, getting there, and having a great time. She enjoys dealing with the nitty gritty of Branch life, collecting subs from our annual members because they like it that way, paying our little bills and running the Bonus Ball Lottery for fundraising.

Chris's no-nonsense approach ensures that life actually happens efficiently in our Branch. She is not afraid to make decisions on our behalf, but also excels as a team player. Chris's efforts on behalf of Birmingham Branch are long overdue for recognition.

Babs Anderson
Birmingham Branch

Chris' willingness to meet the needs of those in Branch and organise events that all enjoy and participate in makes her a worthy nominee.

Chris has been an active Member of Birmingham Branch for many years, has served as Branch Chairman, and for the past 13 years as Treasurer. Chris is a loyal, caring member of the Branch and continues to give her time selflessly to ensure its Members and the Branch continue to thrive.

Chris gives willingly to others to engage and promote a sense of belonging and camaraderie amongst Veterans. The commitment Chris has shown, and continues to demonstrate, epitomises the exemplary qualities of a WRAC Veteran and Member of the WRAC Association.

Ann Stack
Wales & The West Area Co-ordinator

Janette Deans

Janette responded to a Lioness request asking for volunteers to support our campaign to find memorials for the ATS servicewomen killed in Great Yarmouth on 11th May 1943. Taking on all four of those based in Scotland, Janette tracked down where these women were already remembered on their local war memorials, and investigated the possibility of adding them where they are missing, uncovering wonderful and sometimes tragic stories about their lives along the way. As the 80th anniversary of the tragedy approached,

Janette also worked to ensure there would be a memorial service at every location, giving our members the chance to pay their respects and meet with other local members.

The countless hours which Janette has given the Association to pull off this mammoth event show her dedication to honour those who served before her, on top of her work as Secretary for Scotland and Northern Ireland Area supporting those who remain members today. Thanks Janette, you are much appreciated.

Paula Rogers
CEO

Jan Foster



Jan Foster is one of our QA friends, who joined the WRAC Association as soon as she realised that she could. Her infectious enthusiasm has permeated all aspects of our Association, as she careers headlong into every event possible.

Jan made a difference to many of us during the first lockdown of 2020, when she was working as a nurse on the front line for

60+ hours a week and yet found time to 'entertain the troops' with her crazy antics on video. She ran obstacle races against herself around the garden, re-enacted Queen music videos, attended a 'virtual' pub themed get-together every Saturday evening and has organised a Secret Santa for the past 3 years. Many of us received a surprise package through the post during lockdown, containing a hug in a bag and a little, hand painted figure in green, wearing a beret and tie. It made a massive difference, just because she thought to do it.

Before she even became a member of the WRAC Association, she led the cheering for years, as our squad turned the corner onto Horseguards on the home stretch of the Remembrance Day Cenotaph march past. She has been our chief cheerleader at many events, including the annual 10k runs and has sometimes volunteered to help the organisers by handing out medals and goody bags. Not to mention offering medical advice about blisters and other injuries to us mere mortals.

It seems that Jan's role in life is to care for everyone, but particularly her Sisters-in-Arms. For example, last August, she travelled across the Pennines to support another member of the WRAC Association as she dealt with the loss of her partner and the subsequent funeral arrangements, not leaving until she was certain everything was as good as it could be.

Jan's determination to have fun with life and include all her WRAC Association friends is refreshing and joyous.

Babs Anderson
Birmingham Branch

Jan is a force of nature and attends and supports many national and local WRAC events. She extends the hand of friendship to all and sweeps everybody along with her enthusiasm and loyalty to the WRAC.

I endorse this nomination.

Ann Stack
Wales & The West Area Coordinator

Marie Smedley

Marie was Secretary of the Branch when I joined in 2019. She welcomed me, along with the other members, but went out of her way to make sure I knew what was happening. We believe Marie first took over the post early in 2015.

Marie has attended AGMs within the area, other Branch/Group events and WRAC Grand Reunions, and encouraged and supported other members from our small Branch to attend. She encouraged me to attend an area AGM and collected me in her car, even though it was out of her way. Despite a couple of personal difficulties (family, health and work), for years she continued to be our Secretary, including fundraising to hold our area AGM, which was postponed numerous times due to Covid.

She arranged Zoom sessions for our Branch and sent us all handmade cards to keep our spirits up during lockdown and as soon as we were able to meet up, arranged locations where we could be socially distant but still have a chat, until she finally resigned from the post at our own AGM in March 2022.

Marie continues to support me in my new role as Secretary, answering all sorts of questions about previous activities. I could not have done it without her, especially as we headed towards finally running the Wales and the West AGM (which again had to be postponed due to the sad news about our dear late Queen).

Marie made cards for all our birthdays as Secretary and continues to ensure we all get one on our special days. She continues to keep our Facebook page up to date with meetings and other information, such as local veterans' breakfasts, and

actively encourages others to join us when she attends these and others meetings, such as the local RBL.

Christine Whitehead
Tamworth Branch

Marie Smedley has been a consistent, hardworking member of Tamworth Branch for over 10 years. Encouraging others to take on responsibility within the Branch, and supporting them through the process, has ensured that Tamworth Branch continues to thrive. Marie is always on hand to advise, and her support has given confidence to those who have taken over new roles. This is so important as it makes the difference between a Branch continuing or at worst, closing.

Marie's kindness during Lockdown in spending time to make homemade cards and to then send them to each and every person ensured nobody was left feeling alone and coupled with regular Zoom meetings, encouraged contact, albeit virtually.

Marie actively spreads the word about the WRAC Association and Tamworth Branch to the various Veteran Organisations she attends and encourages her fellow WRAC Veterans to do the same.

Marie continues to be a constant in her Branch and the everyday input she gives, reassures and helps those in Tamworth Branch to move forward successfully.

I endorse this nomination.

Ann Stack
Wales and the West Area Co-ordinator

Susan Marcroft OBE

Susan has been a member of the WRAC Association for a very long time. In that time, she has held office as Secretary to the Area Co-ordinator, Secretary of the Dumfries Branch then Chair until she stood down in 2022. She maintains the group coordination and contact role to ensure members are informed of news from the Area Coordinator.

She keeps the Branch together and has immersed herself in organising its events, transporting members to and from those events, and supporting area and national events. During the pandemic and lock down periods she kept the Branch in touch with emails, letters, and phone calls for support and camaraderie.

In recognition of her years of dedication and service to the WRAC Association nationally, and locally in Dumfries, Susan is deserving of a Certificate of Appreciation for her continuing support.

Dumfries Branch

Sue has been involved with the Association for a number of years; although the dates have been difficult to establish. When Jo Young took over as Area Chair in 2007 Sue was secretary for Dumfries Branch and of the Area. She handed over as Area Secretary in 2010 but has continued to act as the Branch organiser. Although Dumfries is no longer officially a Branch, Sue felt it was time to stand down last year, but she continues to act as the contact for the Branch.

Whenever anyone visits, she will organise for its members to meet up and more importantly she continues to keep contact with the members in the area. She turns up at Area events and this can involve travelling a considerable distance. It is through her hard work, care and organisational skills that we still count Dumfries as a Branch, and I know that the Dumfries Branch members value her enormously.

Susan is a well-respected lady, friendly, professional, caring and kind; she should be recognised for her dedication and excellent work. This nomination is long overdue and is fully endorsed by me. Thank you, Susan and long may your support continue.

Helen Jephcote

Scotland & Northern Ireland Area Co-ordinator

Nicola Scott

Nicola is the first person from the local WRAC Association that I met. I was visiting the NMA at the time and I now realise members of the Tamworth Branch are often there, visiting the WRAC Plot and supporting other events, and Nicola is first among these. She encouraged me to join the Association and gave me details of the Branch, where she assured me I would be welcome.

Nicola has been treasurer of the Tamworth Branch since 2009, around the time that it was formed, and is one of the three main administrators who supports our Branch along with the Secretary and the Chair. Nicola has stood in for both positions in the past.

She has also stood in for our Standard Bearer at an ATS event at Guildford Cathedral. The last few years have been a challenge as we have been fundraising to support running the AGM for Wales and The West Area. Booking, and cancelling, venues has been difficult and frustrating. Nicola still works and has had significant pulls on her from family over the last few years, so plans her WRAC activities around her other commitments, but is there to support the running of our group whenever she can.

Nicola has arranged our Christmas get-togethers, last year and in the past, and is pivotal to our Remembrance Day activities. She attends area AGM's and WRAC Grand Reunions and

encourages others within the group to support her. Nicola queued in London to pay all our respects to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, our late Queen, whilst she lay in state last year, and when we met for a short time regarding our need to cancel our AGM, she gave us all a taste of the solemnity and camaraderie that she experienced.

Christine Whitehead

Tamworth Branch

Nicola was at the formation of Tamworth and District Branch in 2009 and during this time she has undertaken the duties of Chair and Secretary, and to date is now the Treasurer as well as being an Administrator with two others in the Branch. A long tenure which continues, and she is still giving her best to Tamworth Branch. Nicola continues to organise events within the Branch and encourages fellow Veterans to attend regional events hosted by the WRAC Association and Dinner Club, and local events such as Remembrance Sunday.

Nicola, and those like her, are the backbone of Branches. They step up, encourage, support; are a welcome face, and promote the benefits of joining local WRAC Groups/ Branches and the WRAC Association. The fact that Tamworth Branch is 14 years old and established is testament to her consistent loyalty and giving to the Branch.

I endorse this nomination.

Ann Stack

Wales & The West Area Co-ordinator

DON'T FORGET

Anyone can nominate another member for a Certificate of Appreciation. If you have someone in mind please ask your Branch/Group Point of Contact or the HQ Office for a Nomination Form. Complete the form, send it to your Area Co-ordinator for confirmation and support, who will send it to the Membership Council for confirmation. Once an award has been confirmed a Certificate will be issued and sent to your Area Co-ordinator for presentation to the nominee at the most appropriate Area, or Branch, event.

We really are very grateful to everyone who helps the Association and other members and are keen to ensure they are appropriately recognised. Perhaps someone kept you all updated and briefed during Covid and/or provided practical support in some way; perhaps they have been a stalwart of the branch/group ensuring there are things to do, places to go and information shared. Certificates of Appreciation are one way of demonstrating that someone's work has been recognised and appropriately thanked.

Remembrance



FALKLANDS SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE Haughley Suffolk

I received an invitation from Stowmarket Royal Naval Association to attend the annual Falklands Service of Remembrance from Peter (Chivs) Chivers. On arrival I was asked if I would like to lay the South Atlantic Medal Association (SAMA) wreath. It was an absolute honour and an emotional moment.

The service was held at The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin March Church in Haughley, Suffolk. Afterwards we all went to The Maypole, at Wetherden, for light refreshments where Margaret Buttle, the Lead for Friends of Haughley War Memorial, had provided a lovely buffet.

Wendy Hooton



50TH ANNIVERSARY M62 COACH BOMB 4th February 1974

A Memorial Service for the 50th Anniversary of the M62 coach bomb will be held on Sunday 4th February 2024 at 11.00 am at Hartshead Moor service station (situated on the westbound carriageway between junctions 25/26 of the M62 motorway. Access can be gained from the eastbound carriageway via the foot bridge)

The two photos are one of the coach, and the other is of the Memorial from a few years ago.

The event is well attended, by 200 - 300 people, including survivors and bereaved families, military personnel and local dignitaries. I was one of those survivors on the coach, twelve others were killed.

**Many Thanks
Jenny McMahon**

[Editor: If anyone wants any more information please contact the Association Office and we will put you in touch with Jenny]



*Dave and Jenny McMahon at
M62 Memorial 2015*

Association News and Updates

CONGRATULATIONS

... to the following who have celebrated their 100th birthdays since the last Lioness edition:

Lilian Graham, Bury St Edmunds (January)
Patricia E Jones, Redlynch, Australia (February)
Mary Crellin, Ajax, Canada (February)
Jeanne N H Kick BEM, Hove (March)
Margaret Pollitt, Romford (March)
C D Harvey, Albion Park Rail, Australia (March)
Muriel Foulsham, Cardiff (April)
Betty Webb MBE, Wythall (May)
Ivy Norwood, Leicester (June)
Alice McLean, Egham (July)



If you know of any ex-ATS who is due to celebrate their 100th birthday in late 2023 and 2024 please let us know. We may not have their details but want to ensure that we send them the Associations' very best wishes along with a card and some flowers. Please let HQ Office know.

Beryl Ramsay (nee Boulding)

An outreach worker from Veterans in Communities contacted us with details of Beryl's 100th birthday, held at Fence, Lancashire. Her daughter was literally overwhelmed at the possibility of a Standard and even more so of a birthday card from the Association.

The Veteran's Association also posted these birthday congratulations on their Facebook pages:
Photo credit Brian Thompson



Congratulations to ATS veteran Ella Thompson who recently celebrated her 100th birthday. Born in Cleethorpes, Ella was then attached to the Royal Artillery Heavy Anti-Aircraft site in the New Forest. She learned how to drive a lorry but was not allowed to continue when her superiors found out she needed a cushion to see over the dashboard!

Ella married her Royal Navy sweetheart James and left the ATS in 1943 when she fell pregnant, but then went on to support the war effort welding tank turrets in Vickers, now BAE systems, in Barrow-in-Furness where she lives today.

MOVING HOUSE?

If you have moved recently, or are about to move **please** let us have your new address (and email address) as soon as possible. This will help us reduce the number of Lioness magazines which are returned undelivered.

Please email your change of address to
office.manager@wracaorg.uk,
phone us on 0300 400 1992 or post to WRAC Association,
Unit 11 Basepoint, Winnall Valley Road, Winchester SO23 0LD.

PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR OLD POST CODE.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Saturday 18th March 2023

Once again sadly, this time due to rail strikes, the AGM had to be held online and streamed live on Facebook. Our guest speaker this year was Col Vicki Whiting, ADC AGC.

A graduate of Oxford Brookes University, Vicki Whiting joined the AGC (SPS) in 1998 after commissioning from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Her early career was spent in Germany supporting Logistics and Engineer regiments. As a Major she deployed to Basra with 12 Mech Brigade and Kabul as MA to Chief CJ5, and completed staff appointments in the Defence College of Logistics and Personnel Administration, and the Army Personnel Centre. As DCOS 38 Brigade in Northern Ireland she was responsible for all G1/G4 support to the G8 Summit in Enniskillen.

On promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in 2015, her initial appointment was as SO1 Current Ops in the Army Personnel Services Group. Having spent 6 months as the Army's fellow at Chatham House and 6 months at the NATO Defence College in Rome, she then assumed the role as Executive Officer to the Assistant Chief of Staff J2, a Norwegian 1*, within SHAPE. In June 2021, she was promoted to Colonel and assigned as Corps Colonel AGC.



She maintains a strong interest in Strategic Defence Studies and as a graduate in languages, she practiced her French language skills while volunteering at the local animal rescue centre in Mons. She enjoys travel, good food, a good book and playing netball.

Col Vicki wrote after the AGM thanking us very much for inviting her, and saying how much she is looking forward to looking in on everyone at the Summer Event afternoon tea.

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD SATURDAY 18TH MARCH 2023
Online (via zoom, and streamed live on Facebook)

Present:	Fiona Gardner CBE	Vice President
	Rowena Naile MBE	Chair of Membership Council
	Isabel McCord	Chair of Benevolent Fund Grants Committee
	Tim Savage	Treasurer
	Paula Rogers	Chief Executive Officer
	Penny Muxworthy	Association Secretary & Editor of Lioness

51 members logged in individually over 'zoom' (including 3 Life Vice presidents, 7 Trustees and 4 Area Co-ordinators). (NB More than 1 member could have been on 1 zoom feed).
600 views via Facebook Live

Before the meeting started the CEO explained how the day's online meeting would work including the Q&A and Voting functions on Zoom (sadly this was unavailable on Facebook Live).

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks. The Chairman started the meeting by thanking everyone for joining this year's AGM, via zoom or Facebook live, apologising that we were unable to meet in person, due to travel disruptions upsetting our plans; however, we know the online format works as it was done during the pandemic. The Chairman confirmed that everyone on the Zoom call has a vote and can send us questions - we will answer as many as we can in the time available and progress any remaining ones offline. Paula and Tanya are working the IT and Penny, the Association Secretary, is taking the Minutes.

The Chairman recorded our deepest sadness at the passing of our Patron, Queen Elizabeth II. "I am grateful for the work by Penny, Sue Westlake and many others to produce our Lioness commemorative edition, and to all those who sent in stories and reminiscences". The Chairman added that we are waiting on a decision from the Palace as to whether we will be allocated a Royal Patron, and that we will let everyone know as soon as we hear. We also lost Lady Martha Bruce, a former Lt Col WRAC and a Life Vice President – another remarkable woman who gave a lifetime of service.

The Chairman welcomed our guest speaker for the day, Colonel Vicki Whiting, Corps Colonel of the AGC. "We are delighted you could join us and look forward to listening to you later this afternoon."

2. Apologies for Absence. Apologies were received from the following: Monica Jones and Sue Mackenzie (Trustees) and 5 Members.

3. Confirmation of Minutes. The Minutes of the previous AGM, held March 2022, were published in Lioness 2022/2 and circulated; no comments had been received.

Proposal: It was proposed that the Chairman sign the minutes of the 2022 AGM as a true record.

Proposed: Fiona Gardner

Seconded: Barbara Davies

Agreed: All

They will be signed by the Chairman at the next face-to-face opportunity.

4. Business Arising from the Previous Minutes. There was no business arising.

5. Governance Report. The Chairman briefly covered the management of the Association, leaving Tim Savage (Treasurer) to cover the Finance elements and Accounts at Item 9.

The Trustees have met 3 times this year – in two Trustees meetings and one away-day where the focus was on volunteering. Barbara Davies stood down as a Trustee and Treasurer last summer, as announced at last year's AGM; Tim Savage replaced her as Treasurer. The Chairman reiterated her thanks for all Barb did as a Trustee and as Treasurer. We are currently in process of hopefully recruiting two new Trustees and we very much plan to introduce them to you in the near future.

We have changed our approach to the Annual Report. It has always been comprehensive and informative, an excellent reference for all things Association. We have tried to make it a more accessible read and so have split the finance report from the activities. The Annual Report, shared on screen, is available online via our website, and everyone will get a copy with the next Lioness (edition 2023#2). This Annual Report says everything it needs to say and meets all the requirements of the Charity Commission, but in a more targeted and visual way. We do hope you like it.

There were no questions or queries raised.

6. Membership Council Report. As reported by the Chair of Membership Council (CMC), highlighting: Our condolences to the family and friends of Major Mack Maskins McIntyre who died suddenly in November, having attended the WRAC and Sandhurst Officers Dinner Club four days earlier. Many will be aware she was South West Area Chairman for many years, as well as being a stalwart member of the Association. Mack will be remembered for many reasons, not least as she commanded the WRAC Association contingent at the Cenotaph for 14 years.

The CMC reminded everyone that the Membership Council comprises all the Area Coordinators, Life Vice Presidents, the Ben. Fund Chairman and herself, as Chair. The Council is now well bedded in and directs the activities that the Association puts on for our members.

It was with pleasure that the CMC said we had put on more events than ever before in the last year, organised by the HQ, and we have travelled all over the country:

- Our AGM last March in Leeds was part of the Grand Reunion.
- In May we dedicated a replacement plaque to 26 members of the ATS killed in an air raid, on 11th May 1944, in Great Yarmouth.
- In July we met to dedicate the replacement tree at the National Memorial Arboretum and have a picnic listening to the wonderful Yorkshire Military Band.
- We joined together in September, either in person or on-line, for a Service of Thanksgiving for our late Patron, HM the Queen, which we added into the Scotland and NI Area AGM.
- In November we returned to London and Guildford for Remembrance activities. It was a real honour to introduce the Queen Consort, at the Field of Remembrance, to the group of Association members. We were very pleased to be represented at the Festival of Remembrance by Senga Palmer and Pauline Milnes, commemorating Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee. Those who went to Guildford for Remembrance Day were treated royally and hopefully we will always have a good representation.
- At the end of January, we met at Guildford Cathedral for the dedication of the plaque to commemorate our centenary as an Association.

With these different events we were much more accessible to members and it was excellent to see so many different members attending Association events, other than those at Branch level or not at all.

Our plans for this year take us around the country again:

- 14th May we will gather in Great Yarmouth, and at numerous satellite locations, to commemorate the ATS servicewomen killed in the 1943 bombing raid. These events highlight the 'We Will Remember Her' campaign and where each of the ATS servicewomen were from. We would really like you as members to attend one of the locations to take part in the Remembrance.
- The national Armed Forces Day is taking place in Falmouth and South West Area are representing the Association.
- The summer event is being held at Worthy Down, which is the home of the AGC and the RLC. The Queen Elizabeth Barracks Rose Garden is now there, along with various Deepcut Memorials. Worthy Down is where, in old terms, the clerks, pay clerks and chefs were trained so it will be interesting to see how different life is for our current soldiers. We are also encouraging members to visit the RLC museum at Worthy Down, and the AGC Museum, which houses some of our history, in Winchester. It will be a great opportunity to gather together and reminisce.

We had 3,012 members at 30th January this year, compared to 3,003 January 2022. While this looks as if we are standing still Life member numbers have decreased by 82 and new (annual) members have increased by just over 90. According to the 2021 Census there were 171,565 female veterans across England and Wales. Assuming that half of those were Army there must be a good 85,000 potential members in England and Wales alone! We all need to look out for these ladies and encourage them to join the Association for camaraderie and support, and to be able to contribute to the national policy for female veterans.

You will all have recently received your copy of the new Members Handbook along with the key fob with your Lioness. Although few of you today are 'new' members, we thought you might like to see the new handbook and maybe reminded of some of what the Association can provide for you. We are always keen for members to get together in whatever form they wish - wherever 2 or more of you are getting together then please send details to the Association HQ for publication on the website and in Lioness if you would like to encourage more to join you. Groups can be as informal or formal as your group members want them to be, or as suits your needs. The groups can be interest and/or geographical based.

In response to some members not liking the web address WRACA we are taking steps for that website address to be for external facing use, and there will be a second WRAC Association titled website for members to use and access.

Importantly I thank the Members of the Membership Council for all their hard work in the last year, in particular the following Area Coordinators and their teams of members who provided assistance for the events in their area: Lesley Roberts for the Grand Reunion, Lyn Hatch for the ATS Memorial, Ann Stack for the Summer Event and Helen Jephcote for the Service of Thanksgiving. Thanks also to Life Vice President Audrey Smith for organising the Association attendance at the Guildford Remembrance Day events. Last, but not least, I thank the staff of the Association for their work helping all the members in the last year – Paula the CEO, Penny the Association Secretary, Julia the Finance Officer, Julie the Ben Fund Secretary and Tanya the Office Manager. Without all these people helping the members would not have had such a busy and rewarding year.

The CMC concluded by saying she is looking forward to visiting various branches in the near future and meeting more members.

There were no questions or queries raised.

7. Benevolent Fund Report: (Also see: Ben. Fund AGM presentation slides) The Ben. Fund Chairman started with thank you's and also highlighted:

Thank you to Trustees, members of the Membership Council and the Association members who have sat on the Major Grants Committee Meetings. Your knowledge, experience and advice is invaluable in making sure we make the right decisions. A big thank you to Julie our Ben. Fund Secretary - she has provided unstinting support to our veterans and to the caseworkers. And last, but not least, to the service charities who provide the caseworkers - in the main are the RBL and SSAFA. The ABF provides financial support where the amount exceeds our financial limit - the majority of cases being where Nursing Home Top Up payments exceed our £100 limit and, in some cases, funeral costs.

Who Qualifies. As a reminder the chairman confirmed grant qualification as:

Only 1 day's service in ATS or WRAC, both regular and TA.

It's a 'help up rather than a handout', taking care not to create a dependency on charity payments.

If you or someone you know might qualify, please don't hesitate to call for an informal chat.

Or contact your local SSAFA branch or the RBL.

Financial Year 2021/2022. How did we do in 2021/2022?

Total spend of £188,753. 212 applications of which 161 were successful.

The **Membership Support Grant** is there to help members of limited financial means to attend events eg Reunions, annual events (NMA) and this year's Summer Event in July at Winchester. Grants are maximum £100 per event and £200 per member per year. In February this year we extended the grant to include essential items (eg toiletries, night wear, phone card top up) for when members with limited financial means go into hospital.

We give help in a wide variety of one-off grants. The top 5 one-off spend categories include funeral costs (the largest at £25,706), followed by household goods such as furniture, carpets etc (£20,975). Electrical items such as fridges, washing machines are classified as White goods.

We also provide regular payments.

Annual payments.

- The **Princess Royal Memorial grants** are for our veterans who are over state retirement pension age – 14 plus 3 overseas awarded.
- The **Ben Fund Annual Maintenance Grant** is for those below state retirement age. It is particularly useful for those who are in the group of women where their retirement date has been delayed – 2 awarded.
- **Care Enhancement Grants** include third party top up for nursing/care home fees (9 awarded) and contributions towards care at home costs (1 awarded).
- The **Ben Fund Support Supplement** is awarded where our veteran is below state retirement age and does not need an annual payment but needs one for a shorter period to cover perhaps being off work due to illness or needing to care for a relative – 8 awarded.

Changes to Grant Giving Criteria We keep the grant giving criteria under review to make sure we are providing as much support as we can. The Ben. Fund is very healthy financially so in July last year Trustees agreed to increase:

- The upper limit we can pay for recurring grants to £50/week, £60 for overseas (from £40)
- The Care Enhancement Grants to £100/week (from £50).
- The amount of savings a veteran can have and still be eligible for a grant, to £5k for a single, £10k for a couple, £12k for dependent children.

These increases will have made a difference at a time of rapidly rising prices so we are really pleased to be able to afford the changes.

Cost of Living Crisis. Additional to these changes we have given extra support to all our veterans receiving regular payments - £100 March and £250 September 2022, and another £250 by the beginning of April this year.

In terms of one-off grants we have funded £5,764 on priority debt (eg. rent and electricity) and £6,946 on general needs.

The Veterans Charity provides immediate support to veterans of all 3 services and cap badges. As we cannot provide such immediate support, we have set up a partnering arrangement with the Veterans Charity so that all important immediate support can be delivered to our veterans as quickly as possible. Please contact the charity if you or anyone you know needs such support.

Publicity. We need as much publicity as possible to make our veterans aware of the help we can give them. A story from someone who has received help from us is the best way of getting the message out (a bit like the Satisfied Soldier stories you may remember), so if we have helped you or anyone you know and you would like to share your story please let us know.

There were no questions or queries raised.

8. Influence Report: (Also see: Influence presentation slides) As presented by the Vice president:

Two years ago members were briefed on the Trustees' agreed Association Strategy, with four pillars –

- Governance - a baseline
- Membership – our core purpose,
- Benevolence – bringing financial support to those in need, and
- Influence – expanding Influence within the military charity sector and beyond to improve support for our female veterans.

Last year members were briefed on what we had been doing in the Influence arena and who we are engaged with, now this year focusing on the Why:

- Why we are engaged with Influence,
- Outcomes achieved so far,
- Look forward on how we are planning to continue this work, and achieve more on behalf of you, our members, on behalf of veterans of the ATS and WRAC – our prospective members, and if we can benefit the next generation of female veterans along the way then terrific - that will be our legacy.

So Why is Influence important to us?

As an Association we can support the branch structure delivering local camaraderie and mutual support. We can organise larger events, such as the Grand Reunion, NMA events, and Remembrance where we can get together and share companionship. We can deliver benevolent support to those in greatest need and call on the ABF The Soldiers' Charity and others to help too. And we have roughly 3,000 members – the people we are here to serve. And what we do is very important – to you, and to the Trustees.

We have recently seen the census data for England and Wales (Scotland coming next year and NIreland did not ask the veteran question) from which we now know there are 231,305 female veterans in England and Wales, of whom over 170,000 are aged 50+ (highlighted in an accompanying presentation slide2). Realistically half of those will be Army – some 85,000. That is an enormous number of potential members out there – all eligible for benevolent support, all eligible to join, all deserving of our support.

The VP shared a map (presentation slide 3) showing these 85k are spread across England and Wales - so just about every region, local authority and NHS provider. While we can do so much, there is a lot we cannot do. We alone cannot improve health and wellbeing services, we cannot address financial inequality, unfairness in local authority provisions for female veterans, barriers to females accessing military charitable provisions – whether that be care homes, employment services or anything else.

By working with others we can have a voice and pursue improvements across a wide range of issues affecting female veterans, but to achieve that voice we need to be seen and heard. We have for many years been a member of Cobseo – the Confederation of British Service Charities, (along with just about every military charity in the UK). This year Paula, our CEO, has successfully been elected to the Cobseo Executive, making sure that females are considered in the collective Cobseo approach to meeting veteran's needs. Ali Brown, one of our Life VPs, is now the Chair of the Cobseo Female Veterans Cluster, where both Paula and I sit on the Executive, and we gather SME's to ensure that female needs are represented. Paula is also on the Executive of the single capbadge network. Female veterans' issues are now on the agenda of politicians and policy branches; female veterans is included in the Government's Office for Veterans Affairs (ie lead on policy for veterans) Action Plan, funding research to understand their needs and provide an evidence base for change; and the OVA are now going to produce a dedicated Women's Veterans Strategy.

The visibility of women's issues, across health, access and differing needs, has grown from next to nothing to where we are now – female issues driving agendas and being supported and funded.

And we started it; to be precise Nicky Young started it. She stood up at the Cobseo AGM in 2019 and asked the simplest of questions – "what are you doing for female veterans"? A question the Cobseo Executive could not answer, leading to the Female cluster being formed - which secured NHS funding to deliver the 'We Also Served' report on Women's Health. The Sarah Atherton report on 'Serving and Veteran women' followed, along with engagement with the Office for Veterans Affairs and the MOD. Research was funded and has delivered the evidence base to act; with some 16 research projects still in play and a body of lived experience evidence. The Devolved Administrations are now engaged.

We were the spark that transformed female veterans from an invisible cohort to a visible community that are being heard; and we are now seeing outputs –

We have already made a difference. Through the Female Veterans cluster group, with members representing health, care sector, employment, pensions, the service charities; progress has already been made:

- The NHS are now looking at services through a female lens. WRAC Association member Nicky Murdoch chairs the Armed Forces Patient and Public voice group – which advises the NHS on the health needs of the Armed Forces Community. Ali Brown leads on female veterans and LGBT issues; and there are 6 female veterans on the group. And having an effect – addiction was raised as an issue at one of those groups and as a result the NHS are looking at their services accordingly.
- As a sign of the visibility and awareness of female issues, females have been at the heart of planning and delivering the

- Veterans Trauma network, and Op Courage – the integrated mental health service for veterans.
- Female employment advisors are now in place through the Career Transition Partnership for today's service leavers and the Forces Employment Charity are leading a Women into Employment initiative to help female veterans into employment.
- The Care Cluster is looking at accessibility of military care homes for female veterans. I was at the Royal Hospital last week where our female in-pensioners are making such a difference; but there are other homes that have perhaps not been as appealing – as an example, we were approached at the Cobseo AGM by Brig Martin Nadin, CE of Scottish Veterans Residences, asking if we could assist in ensuring their communications and set up was welcoming of female veterans. Jo Young volunteered to visit and advise. A small thing perhaps but because we were visible we were asked to help; because of our branch network we were able to help and because of us – perhaps some ladies will be welcomed into that home. Just last week the NI Veterans Advice line approached us for assistance to help them address the under representation of women using their service.
- Forces Pension Society has published information to clarify entitlements – both to promote unclaimed pensions for those that qualify; and explain that prior to 1975 there were no preserved pensions. We will link those responses on our website.
- TOS – LGBTQ+ - A Government appointed Independent Review chaired by Lord Etherton to look at the experiences of serving under the ban, and the impact on people affected. Many of you I know contributed to the calls for evidence, in fact over half the responses were from females, and the report is expected May 2023.
- Veteran Supported Housing. The female veterans cluster highlighted the unsuitability of VSH for women and families needing a safe space. There are now four suitable homes for female veterans – Wilton, Aldershot, Catterick and Scotland – all with self-contained flats, CCTV, support staff on site, and a bar on sexual offenders being admitted.

This is just the start. Work is underway into Veterans in the Criminal Justice system, into homelessness, barriers to accessing services, and across loneliness, and the TOS issues affecting women. We are leading on the loneliness issue, with an aim to use the Tackling Loneliness Toolkit and analysis of our own research to understand the effectiveness of measures such as the Buddy Buddy scheme. The Devolved Administrations are also now engaged with progress in Scotland, Wales and NI.

To take this work forward the Female Veterans Cluster needed resources. The Cluster funded Paula to lead the development of an Armed Forces Covenant Trust application for £300k over 3 years to fund two posts to deliver the Female Veterans Transformation project. I am delighted to announce that bid has been successful and we, as an Association, will provide the umbrella for those posts, to take forward a female veterans' standard for every other military charity to achieve, and drive forward the Cluster Action plan to deliver real, substantive change that will benefit you, all those potential members we know are out there, and every other female veteran that comes along.

I know that amongst our members are ladies who one day will need the services we are trying to improve. I am very proud of our role as an Association in addressing female veterans issues, and changing the lived experience for female veterans in need.

There were no questions or queries raised.

9. Annual Report & Accounts: (Also see: Treasurer's / Financial report) As presented by the Treasurer - Auditor's report (slide 2)

The Treasurer was delighted to report that our Auditors, Rothmans, have found the accounts for 2022 to be in good order again. There are no outstanding actions to be taken. Rothman's Financial statement stated "In our opinion, the financial statements: Give a true and fair view of the state of the Charity's affairs as at 30th September 2022 and of its income and expenditure for the year ended;

Have been properly prepared in accordance with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;

Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011."

The auditors carry out extensive checks to ensure that we are meeting the guidelines set out by the Charity Commission and the Auditors found us to be compliant in all respects. In particular, we annually review our policies in order to demonstrate transparency; we make efficient use of resources; we are well-governed and well-managed whilst remaining true to our values and making a positive difference to our members. "The Trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the Association's ability to continue as a going concern."

Income and Expenditure (slide 3)

We continue to spend more than we receive in income both in the Association Fund and the Benevolent Fund. This is unlikely to ever be an issue for the Benevolent Fund given the healthy state of the fund - indeed we continue to look for further ways to spend more money on benevolence to support our members.

For the Association, the situation is a little different. Whilst we have made excellent progress over the recent past to put the Association in a much better place financially, we do rely heavily on the very generous donations and legacies we receive to keep the Association in good financial health. We remind members that if you are planning on leaving any money to the Women's Royal Army Corps Association, we suggest that you leave it to the Association rather than to the Benevolent Fund which will allow us to continue to support your Association activities.

This year, our overall expenditure has exceeded our income by £180,031. (See the accounts)

	2022	2021	2020
Income	£330,839	£278,346	£325,727
Expenditure	£510,870	£406,416	£514,566
Surplus/Overspend	-£180,031	-£128,070	-£188,839

After reconciliation of funds, including those invested, the total value of the funds (Association and Benevolent Fund combined) as at 30th September 2022 were just under £8M (£7,724,183). This is down £1,268,499 from 2021.

Donations and legacies (slide 4)

In 2022 we have again been fortunate to receive generous donations and legacies totalling £45,336. We continue to be most grateful to those of you who are able to donate or make a legacy to the benefit of the WRAC Association. In particular, we thank Wendy Hooton and her Lionesses, and Marg Davies who continue to raise significant funds for our association every year - we are all ensuring the longevity of our Charity. Details of all donations and legacies received can be found at the back of the Annual Accounts.

Investments (slide 5)

The main income stream for both the Association and the Benevolent Fund is the income derived from our Investment portfolio, the objectives of which are set out in our Investment Policy. The Investment Policy directs that Trustees instruct Brewin Dolphin to manage the charity's investments.

Investment Dividends and Deposit Interest returns for the year were up £5,721 on last year.

Association	£38,956	up £2,633
Benevolent Fund	£182,291	up £3,088
Total	£221,247	up £5,721

As at the end of September 2022, the invested funds with Brewin Dolphin had a market value of:

Association	£1,408,504	£1,637,675 (2021)
Benevolent Fund	£6,259,001	£7,263,074 (2021)
Total Value	£7,667,505	£8,900,747 (2021) down £1,233,242 from 2021

Afternote: As at 17th March this year, the total value of the invested funds is £7,709,507.34 - moving back in the right direction!

Published accounts

The Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ending 30th September 2022 will be published in Lioness 2023#2 edition.

There were no questions or queries raised.

10. Resolutions. There were no Trustee or Branch Proposals

11. Guest Speaker – Col Vicki Whiting, AGC RHQ-Col-AGC (Also see: Col Vicki Whiting's AGM presentation).

The Chairman introduced Col Vicki Whiting, our guest speaker, who started by summarising her army career from being commissioned in 1998 to becoming Corps Colonel of the AGC with postings around the UK, Europe and in Afghanistan. As Corps Colonel she is responsible for recruitment, engagement, career development and the wellbeing of 7,000 regular soldiers, 2,000 reserve and the small Corps HQ office of approx. 40 personnel at Worthy Down. She also serves as a Chair of the AGC Association and of the AGC Museum.

Col Vicki updated on recent changes in the army to better accommodate females including (slide3):

- flexible duties; and women being able to serve in ground close combat roles (2018);
- wrap-around childcare options; and ability to wear trousers with all uniforms (2020) – this is leading into a discussion around the Coronation Procession where initially the Palace said all females to be in trousers (like the band) but the practical considerations are that the boots with No1 trousers aren't supplied in smaller sizes for females, so females now have option of wearing skirts;
- hair policy (hair can now be worn in a pony tail or plait, unless ceremonial – popular with younger cohort); and emergency sanitary hygiene boxes on operations and exercises (2021);
- and bespoke female virtus narrow body armour (from last year),
- all built on the hard work done by the WRAC servicewomen.

Females currently make up about 11.1% of approx. 16k total army, with impressive cohort of younger officers coming through for the future. Col Vicki shared the numbers and percentage of females in senior ranks and within the infantry.

	Total Strength	No. of Females	% Females
Gen / Lt Gen	14	1	7.1%
Maj Gen	43	1	2.3%
Brig	150	9	6.0%
Col	509	47	9.2%
Infantry	17096	62	0.4%

Col Vicki highlighted how the WRAC 'flame is being kept alive' (slide4):

- The WRAC Rose Garden, transplanted from Guildford to Worthy Down and now, after the redevelopment, planted by the Parade Ground, and forming part of the Heritage Trail.
- The Worthy Down re-development has left only 3 original buildings on site.
- The WRAC piano has recently been returned to the Officers Mess.
- Partnering with the Association and Legatee in a project to record oral histories.
- Redevelopment of the AGC Museum, which includes some items from antecedent corps including WRAC and ATS. The AGC Association gave a grant of £250k towards the redevelopment which is looking to digitising much of the collection to make more modern and accessible.
- AGC is only thirty years old and so the AGC Association has not done much with their veterans, rather veterans have had more to do with antecedent Associations (eg WRAC Association, RAPCA, RMPA, etc). The AGC Association is now setting up regional branches, of which there are 8 so far, and any of the events they run will be open to any antecedent corps' veterans.
- Happy to be hosting the Association Summer Event in July.

She concluded by saying there is very much a golden thread from the WRAC Association to the AGC. So many of the gains the army benefits from today are due to so many of the people at this AGM today. "The Army, AGC and Worthy Down pay tribute to 'you'". More than ever the army is a good career for a woman and Col Vicki would 'absolutely recommend' it as a career.

The Chairman invited questions from members:

- "My grand-daughter is thinking of joining the army, what is your advice?" – "Do it!". The opportunities now are so broad; go with your heart. Women are more established in some corps/regiments than others so do your research and go with the part of the army you feel most affinity with.
- "Why is wrong size footwear still issued?" – In most uniform there is no availability issues. 'Blues' no longer issued generally, just limited issue for those who work at Sandhurst or on ceremonial duties in London. Col Vicki's first Blues were when she became Corps Colonel, after 26 years' service. Because of the low numbers involved it often has to be obtained through a tailor rather than 'issue' because not financially viable to mass-produce for small quantities. However, compared to 30 years ago when nothing fitted, great progress has been made and attitudes are changing. Trousers that fit females still required. The will is there to make more progress on uniform. Getting any uniform changes granted remains a stumbling block at committee stage – so some work still to do.
- "Women have been introduced to the gunners, engineers, air corps, signals etc, but how is integration going with the infantry and armoured corps? Going well? Not so well? Are the recruits coming through in numbers? What is the likelihood of transference to AGC in future (when prospect of digging trenches for ever pales?" Col Vicki spoke to the infantry Corps Colonel and "it is going really well". AGC are seeing quite a few transferring when they realise everyone has a desk job, so why not do it as an HR administrator in/with AGC. Also, large number of transfers from gunners and engineers. Always is an element of transfers by both females and males. Col Vicki surprised at numbers currently in the infantry as she always believed females are more vocationally-minded and looking to the future

There were no further questions, so the Chairman thanked Col Vicki hugely and concluded with a members' quote, "... thrilled to see how women are represented in the army. I wish I was serving now".

12. Any Other Business. There was no other business tabled or raised.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking Paula Rogers, Tanya Park and Penny Muxworthy for their support today; the Management Board for their work and today's presentations; the Trustees, Membership Council and members who all give of their time and energies to the Association; and to everyone for their continued support and comradeship.

The Chairman also reminded everyone of the following:

- Sunday 14th May - 80th Anniversary Commemoration of the 26 ATS ladies killed in a bombing raid on Great Yarmouth and satellite events.
- Saturday 29th July – Summer Event at Worthy Down
- Thursday 8th June - If anyone wishes to be considered for Royal Hospital Chelsea Founder's Day please email the office by start of coming week.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting. The corresponding date next year is Saturday 16th March 2024 – venue and details tbc.

The meeting closed at 15.35.

Signed as a true record.

Chairman:

Date:

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

THE WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 30.09.2022 £	Total Funds Year Ended 30.09.2021 £
INCOME FROM:					
Donations and legacies	1	44,842	32,337	77,179	52,676
Charitable activities	2	22,360	-	22,360	-
Investments	3	38,956	182,291	221,247	215,526
Other income	4	9,740	313	10,053	10,144
TOTAL INCOME		115,898	214,941	330,839	278,346
EXPENDITURE ON:					
Raising funds	6	7,096	31,436	38,532	40,457
Charitable activities	7	161,978	310,360	472,338	365,959
Total Expenditure		169,074	341,796	510,870	406,416
Net Gains / (losses) on investments	10	(194,392)	(894,076)	(1,088,468)	1,564,398
NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)		(247,568)	(1,020,931)	(1,268,499)	1,436,328
Transfers between funds	16	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		(247,568)	(1,020,931)	(1,268,499)	1,436,328
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds brought forward	19	1,652,053	7,340,629	8,992,682	7,556,354
Total funds carried forward		1,404,485	6,319,698	7,724,183	8,992,682

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

**BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2022**

	Notes	2022 £	2021 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Intangible assets	8	10,100	11,994
Tangible assets	9	3,525	4,528
Investments	10	7,667,505	8,901,216
		7,681,130	8,917,738
CURRENT ASSETS			
Stock	11	3,982	5,782
Debtors	12	43,624	31,776
Cash at bank and in hand	13	17,511	67,004
		65,117	104,562
LIABILITIES			
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	14	22,064	29,618
NET CURRENT ASSETS		43,053	74,944
TOTAL NET ASSETS		7,724,183	8,992,682
FUNDS OF THE CHARITY			
Restricted Funds:			
The Benevolent Funds	17	6,310,169	7,340,629
The COBSEO Female Cluster Group Fund	18	9,529	-
Unrestricted funds:			
General Funds	19	1,404,485	1,652,053
Designated funds:			
Membership life subscription fund	16	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS		7,724,183	8,992,682

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 7 Feb 23 and were signed on its behalf by:



Brigadier (Retired) Fiona Gardner CBE, Chairman

Association Notices A - Z

Change of Address. Please remember to notify us of any change of address. Every time Lioness is distributed a number of copies are returned as we are unaware that Members have moved.



Donations. You can send a donation to the Association at any time. More information can be found inside this edition. Donations can also be made online via the Association website or by phone 0300-400-1992. Whatever you decide to do, PLEASE make sure that we have a Gift Aid form from you - if you pay tax, we can reclaim the tax and the government adds to the donation you have made, without it costing you any more.



Dress on Parade. In line with the Royal British Legion and other Regimental Associations, parade dress is to be smart and appropriate; the norm is for dark colours. Since the Association is no longer an active Corps (regiment) Stable belts and forage caps should NOT be worn. Within the WRAC Association the tradition has arisen to wear a green WRAC Association fleece or a bottle green blazer. **Please note that this form of dress is not mandatory and those who do not possess it are still very welcome to parade, as long as they are dressed smartly and appropriately.** (See Medals & Badges etiquette below for further information).



Event Tickets. We occasionally receive free tickets for events, or invitations to attend functions organised by The Not Forgotten Association. Historically these have primarily been offered to regional Branch members. However if you are an **HQ Branch member** and would like to register your interest in being sent information about these events please email office.manager@wraca.org.uk and type **EVENT TICKET REGISTER** as the subject heading. Please note that the vast majority of these events take place in London or the South.



Lioness (audio version). Due to the size of recent Lioness editions we have been unable to offer this service. However, we continue to keep it on file and will resume as, when and if it is possible.



Lioness. Articles for inclusion in the next edition of Lioness must be received by **1st November 2023**. Please email direct to editor@wraca.org.uk. Please type the text into the body of the email, not as an attached document.



Please send photos as attachments to the email; do NOT embed them into a document, as it makes life very difficult this end. Ideally send just 3 or 4 good quality photos (jpg format only). Additionally, if you are able to give names to people in a photo that would be helpful, and we will try and include.

Medals and Badges Etiquette. Etiquette rules for wearing medals only allow the wearing of official awards.



The WRAC Association badge and the Veterans badge may be worn on the left lapel by the position of the buttonhole.

- The medals awarded to a deceased Service/ex-Service person may be worn on the right breast by a near relative (no more than one group should be worn by any individual).
- Unofficial medals, or badges, other than the WRAC Association badge/pin and Veterans badge, should not be worn when representing the WRAC Association.
- Unofficial purchased medals and foreign medals which do not have the Sovereign's permission to be worn are not allowed.

Memorabilia. We have a selection of Association Memorabilia available to purchase online via the website, by post or by phone.



Remembrance. By tradition The Association receives an allocation of tickets for the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey on the Thursday prior to Remembrance Sunday, for the Cenotaph Parade and for the service in Westminster Abbey on Remembrance Sunday, via the RBL, and for Remembrance in Guildford. Tickets are open to any member of the WRAC Association who wishes to attend, prior attendance or Branch participation are not a prerequisite.



At going to press we confirm the dates for 2023 are:
Thu 09 Nov 2023 Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey. This will be ticketed – please apply to the HQ Office if you wish to attend.

Sun 12 Nov 2023 Cenotaph Parade. This is always ticketed. Applications for 2023 have now closed – if you are interested in attending in 2024 please contact HQ Office/Tanya via letter or email (office.manager@wraca.org.uk) no later than 01 July 2024

• **Please note** that the RBL's criteria for this Parade, is that participation is only open to Veterans (no carers, unless they also served) and you will need to be in possession of 2 forms of ID, one of which must be photo ID.

• **Sun 12 Nov 2023 Guildford Borough Remembrance events.** As one of only two Regiments that have Freedom of the Borough this is a very symbolic venue for the Association. We are invited each year to the Service of Remembrance in Guildford (the 'mother' city of the WRAC Association). This is hugely significant to the Association as we enjoy Freedom of the Borough. Please consider attending here if you are unable to attend the London Cenotaph. Space in the church is limited. Please contact HQ Office/Tanya via letter or email (office.manager@wraca.org.uk) if you wish to attend.

• **Sun 12 Nov 2023 Westminster Abbey Service** – Enquire of HQ Office/Tanya what 2023's arrangements may be for this service, but requests will need to be made to the office if you are interested, by email (office.manager@wraca.org.uk) or letter only.
• If demand exceeds supply a ballot will take place, as with all events.

Overseas Members. Overseas Members are requested to pay an additional £5.00 per year to cover additional Lioness postage costs. Only sterling payments can be accepted.



Veterans UK. Veterans UK is your one stop shop for all queries about Service Records, Medals, Pensions and much more. Go to www.veterans-uk.info or phone 0808 1914 2 18.



Subscriptions. Annual Members are reminded that subscriptions are due as at 01 October. Subscriptions can be paid online, by phone (0300 400 1992), by post with a cheque/postal order (sterling only) payable to WRAC Association or via your Branch.



For your convenience, we now offer multiple-year (3, 6 or 10 years) subscriptions (after your initial first year of Membership). See Member Log-in area of the Association website or telephone HQ office manager on 0300-400-1992. (No discounts apply).

WRAC Dinner Club. The WRAC Dinner Club meets every year on the second Saturday in October (Saturday 14th October 2023), full details can be found at www.wracdinnerclub.co.uk.

WRAC Officers' Dining Club. The WRAC Officer's Dining Club Dinner will take place on Saturday 21st October 2023. For more details email wracofficersdc@gmail.com or visit the Facebook Closed Group 'WRAC Officers' Dining Club'.

NEWS & VIEWS (general)

OTHER (military) ASSOCIATIONS / ORGANISATIONS:

Shirley Ghobrial Air Forces Trials

I was successfully selected by RBL to join the Air Forces Trials in Las Vegas, to compete in the swimming and cycling. I feel very honoured and privileged, but a lot of hard work put in to get to this stage. I received a bronze medal for 50 meter swim relay; a gold medal for personal best in freestyle 50 meter, beating my time by 9 seconds, and I was competing as a 60 year-old against 23 – 39 year-old women. I was also awarded a UK-Team certificate.

This was a remarkable experience, and I got so much from this. I am due to also go to Israel to compete in the Veterans games there – where I received 1 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze.

Best wishes, Shirley (Feb/March 2023)



Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service – the new name for the Veterans Trauma Network

The Veterans Trauma Network (VTN) is now called Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service. This brings the service in line with other Armed Forces healthcare services provided by the NHS in England, Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service; Op NOVA; Supporting Veterans in the Justice System and, most recently Op COMMUNITY; Armed Forces Community Support, helping to build a recognisable suite of services.

The decision to rename the VTN, Op RESTORE, was informed by engagement with veterans, providers and charities over several months and we hope it will encourage people to feel confident in the NHS referral pathways. Whilst there are some things that the NHS will not be able to restore in full, we aim to support veterans to restore their health and quality of life as best we can.

Op RESTORE is a service for anyone who has served at least one day in the UK Armed Forces and, as a result of their service, acquired a significant, lasting physical illness or injury. Op RESTORE will continue to accept only GP referrals; GPs

can obtain a referral form by emailing imperial.oprestore@nhs.net

Op RESTORE uses a network of both civilian and military consultants, along with welfare support from military charities, to support a veteran's health using a holistic approach. Whilst Op RESTORE cannot shorten NHS waiting times, it seeks to ensure the veteran 'waits well' and is seen by the most appropriate clinician for their needs.

Please share this information with your friends, families, colleagues and networks as appropriate. Your support over the coming weeks and months in sharing this exciting news will be much welcomed.

With best wishes

Kate Davies CBE, National Director for Armed Forces, Health and Justice, Sexual Assault Services and Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse

and

Shehan Hettiaratchy, National Clinical Director for Op RESTORE

The Veterans' Adviceline for Statutory Professionals (VASP) Service in Northern Ireland

My name is Mark Ewing, and I am the Project Manager for the Veterans' Adviceline for Statutory Professionals (VASP) Service. The VASP Service is a Northern Ireland signposting service, whereby individuals who come across Veterans as clients or in their routine interactions can contact the VASP Service to obtain signposting support to the myriad of Veteran organizations and State Welfare Services available to support Veterans and their families.

The Adviceline is open to statutory professionals, the community & voluntary sectors and individual Veterans seeking advice from the VASP Service in NI.

The Service offers signposting assistance and advice on State Benefits, War Disablement Pension advice, Service/Preserved Pensions advice, physical, mental, and emotional support referrals to assistive Veteran organizations.

The VASP Service can signpost, assist, and advocate on housing and homelessness issues and can provide up to 2 nights' emergency accommodation. It can give welfare signposting, bereavement, financial grant applications and general welfare advice. It can refer clients to activity-based projects to aid mental health. Separately, it can also get access for Veterans holidays, respite, legal signposting, employment, and signposting to Regimental Associations.

You may wish to know the VASP Service is a two-year project funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund, with the hope that it will remain in place beyond the project timeline. The Adviceline is centered and facilitated by the Somme Nursing Home, works alongside the Veterans Support Office (VSO) and is endorsed by the NI Commissioner for Veterans. The Adviceline is a key part of the Northern Ireland structure for the delivery of support to Veterans, and it has assisted with almost 500 calls in its first year.

I hope this information regarding the VASP Service in Northern Ireland may be of use to you. If I can be of any assistance please contact me at the VASP Service, the telephone number is 07551 397384 or you may email VASP@sommenursing.org

The poster features a large green telephone handset on the left. A central vertical line has several red arrows pointing outwards, each containing text: 'Welfare Assistance', 'Ex-Service Organisations', 'Physical/Mental Health', 'Financial/Legal', 'Family Support', and 'Camaraderie'. The text 'Veterans' Adviceline' is arched over the top, and 'For Statutory Professionals' is arched under the bottom. At the top left is the VSO logo (Veterans Support Office, Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office). At the top center is 'The Somme NURSING HOME' logo. At the top right is 'THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST' logo. Below the handset, the text 'Connecting people to veteran organisations' is written in blue. At the bottom, the contact information is listed: 'Adviceline: 07551 397384' and 'Email: VASP@sommenursing.org'.

I am also very happy to come along and talk to any groups about the VASP Service so that knowledge of what it offers is freely available.

Hugh James Military Conference 2023 Women in the Armed Forces Community

Tuesday 10th October, 9.00am - 4.00pm
**Hugh James, Two Central Square,
Cardiff, CF10 1FS**

This conference will recognise the challenges faced by female serving personnel, veterans and their families and champion their achievements during service and in civilian life.

The conference will be hosted by Simon Ellis, Partner and Head of the Military department and Francesca Bamsey, Senior Associate here at Hugh James. The conference will finish off with a Q&A, where you have the opportunity to submit questions to the speakers.



If you are interested in attending visit their website and register (<https://sites-hughjames.vuturevx.com/105/874/landing-pages/rsvp-blank.asp?sid=3fb16775-79ac-4ded-9617-b08db169c9ca>)

or contact: hjevents@hughjames.com

THEIR FINEST HOUR

A University of Oxford project aims to preserve stories and memories of the Second World War.

Millions of us in Britain and across the world have treasured stories and objects that have been passed down to us by our parents, grandparents and other family members who lived through the Second World War. Unfortunately, these wartime stories and objects are inevitably in danger of being lost as people move house, declutter, pass away, and simply forget.

Their Finest Hour (theirfinesthour.org) is a University of Oxford project that aims to collect and digitally archive as many of these stories and objects as possible before they are lost to history.

You can help the project in three ways:

1. By organising a Digital Collection Day in your local community. Digital Collection Days are typically one-day events where members of the public can bring along war-related stories, memories, photographs, diaries, letters and any other mementos to be digitised (i.e. photographed) and uploaded to a free-to-access online archive.
2. By attending a Digital Collection Day in your area (see our 'Events' page for more details).
3. By submitting WW2 stories and photos of objects directly to our archive from the comfort of your/their own home.

We are doing this now because the stories and objects of the men, women, and children who were part of the 1939-1945 generation are being lost. Very few families in the British Empire and the Commonwealth were untouched by the war. In what was a truly global conflict, over 8.5 million people from the Empire and Dominions served in all major theatres of the war. Many of those affected have since passed their stories and objects onto their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all of whom now act as custodians of their relatives' remarkable legacy.

We are interested in collecting all WW2-related stories and objects, from the extraordinary to the seemingly 'ordinary'.

We want our archive to reflect the diverse experiences of all those affected by the war: men and women across the British Empire and the Commonwealth who worked in industry, on the land, or in other roles; ran households and fought a daily battle of rationing; served in or supported the armed forces; and even those who refused to go to war for political or religious reasons. We are also interested in preserving children's experiences of the war and would like to hear about any relatives who refused to talk about their wartime experience.

All digitised stories and objects will be free to access via our website from 6 June 2024, the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

For further information, please visit theirfinesthour.org or email theirfinesthour@ell.ox.ac.uk.

We have been asked to share this with our members. While this is taking part at Wimbledon football club stadium we have been made aware that there are other football clubs around the country offering, or looking to offer, something similar in their area. If you are interested we suggest you contact the Community Development Manager of your local club and see what, if anything, they have planned.



afvbc
ARMED FORCES & VETERANS
BREAKFAST CLUBS

AFC WIMBLEDON
PLOUGH LANE, SW17 0NR
MONDAYS
10:30am - 12:00pm

MEET OLD COMRADES - MAKE NEW FRIENDS - RETURN TO THE TRIBE

Tel: 07915 295 373
Email: fiona.sutherland@afcwf.org.uk

 **AFC WIMBLEDON
FOUNDATION**

VETERANS CARD – HOW TO APPLY

From the Veterans UK website

"A new ID card for armed forces veterans, which will help them access specialist support and services, has started to be issued to service leavers.

The cards allow veterans to easily verify their service to the NHS, their local authority, and charities, helping them to access support and services where needed.

All other veterans will be able to apply for a new ID card by the end of this year, to mark their time in the armed forces".

Service description

To apply for a veteran's ID card the service will allow users and providers of beneficial services to veterans to confirm that someone has served in the UK armed forces in a one-off, simple process, so veterans can access the services they are entitled to.

The service allows a veteran to:
request a physical veteran's ID card
request a digital veteran's ID card
sign up to a mailing list for veterans

Service users

This service is for UK armed forces veterans. This is now available to those who left prior to 2018.

However, it is still a 'work in progress' so contact Veterans UK direct for more information and guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk>

VETERANS RAIL CARD – HOW TO APPLY 1/3 off rail travel

- For UK Veterans who served at least one day in His Majesty's Armed Forces or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations
- Buy a Railcard and keep it with you when you travel (on your phone or wallet)
- Save on most tickets including Advance tickets

Go to: <https://www.veterans-railcard.co.uk/> for more information and application forms. Alternatively have a conversation with your local rail operator / ticket office.

DEFENCE DISCOUNT SERVICE

Some of you may know about this Service offered to all those serving in, or who served in, the Armed Forces and the armed forces community. The below is taken from the 'home page' of their website – so please take a look, sign up and take advantage of the discounts they have negotiated for your benefit.

"The official MoD discount service for the Armed Forces, Veterans and Armed Forces Community. It provides discounts both online and on the high street for members of the Armed Forces, Veterans and Armed Forces Community.

Defence Discount Service is home of the Defence Privilege Card, the vetted discount card that can be used in stores, restaurants and venues to obtain armed forces discounts. This discount card allows Veterans and the Armed Forces Community to have a card that can allow them to receive military discounts."

VETERANS BADGE – HOW TO APPLY

You can get an armed forces veterans badge if you've served in any of the UK armed forces - there's no fee.

Eligibility

You can apply if you were in the:

- army
- Royal Navy
- Royal Marines
- Royal Air Force (RAF)
- volunteer or regular reserves

You cannot apply if you:

- served in the armed forces of another country
- served alongside the UK armed forces, for example in the Canadian Navy or Royal Australian Air Force

How to apply

Download and fill in the application for an armed forces veterans badge, via the government website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-veterans-badge-application-form>), or

You can also call the enquiries line to get a paper application form sent to you.

Medals and veterans badges enquiries

Freephone (UK): 0800 085 3600

Telephone (from overseas): +44 141 224 3600

You'll need to give as much information on the form as possible, such as:

- the force you served in, for example the army or Royal Navy
- service number
- period of service

Post the form to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) Medal Office - the address is on the form. Do not send the form by email.

After you've applied

You'll usually get your veterans badge within 6 to 8 weeks of applying.

If you lose your badge, you can apply for a replacement.

Get help

If you need to contact MOD about your veterans badge application, you can phone, fax or send an email to dbs-modmo-vetsbadge@mod.gov.uk.

You canNOT apply for a veterans badge by email.

WHO QUALIFIES?

**Serving Armed Forces
Reserve Forces
Spouses/Partners of serving personnel
HM Armed Forces Veterans (ex serving)
MoD Civil Servants
Bereaved Family Members
War/Service Widow(er)s
Cadet Forces (over 16)
NATO Personnel in the UK**

<https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/>



Obituaries - Their Final Salute



Lieutenant Colonel The Lady Martha Bruce OBE TD DL 7th November 1921 – 22nd January 2023



I did not have the opportunity to meet Lady Martha, which is my loss, one I truly regret. Having shared reminiscences with those who knew her and read with great interest the wonderful obituary in the Telegraph, I realise that she led a most fascinating life, in many ways ahead of her time, and was a lady who would have thrived on the opportunities we all enjoy today. In the absence of personal knowledge, I have unashamedly drawn from the Telegraph obituary to add further substance to the contributions covering her military service.

Lt Col The Lady Martha Bruce was an intrepid, public-spirited character whose inherited sense of duty was allied to great determination and get-up-and-go. Her varied career took her from wartime anti-aircraft gun-sites to Scotland's first women-only prison, Cornton Vale, where she was governor from 1975 to 1983.

Lady Martha Veronica Bruce was born on November 7th 1921, the eldest child of the 10th Earl of Elgin and 14th Earl of Kincardine and his wife Katherine ("Kitty", née Cochrane). She and her five younger siblings grew up at Broomhall, the family's neo-classical seat overlooking the Firth of Forth, in Fife, then still adorned with their ancestor Robert the Bruce's sword of state, along with other various ancient artefacts acquired by the 7th Earl.

Among several governesses recruited to educate the Bruce children was a local lass called Marion Crawford, who remembered them as "a charming family, very simple and friendly". The governess's subsequent charges were the two princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret, who affectionately nicknamed her "Crawfie". Lady Martha was later sent to Downham School, Hertfordshire, where she became head girl and won a first-class girl-guiding certificate.

Lady Martha's military service is covered by contributions from

Audrey Smith and Ali Brown. Her other great passion was penal welfare and reform. In 1968 she successfully applied for the post of assistant governor at Greenock prison. After two years she was appointed governor there; and when the new women-only prison, Cornton Vale, in Stirlingshire, opened in 1975, she became its first governor. Cornton Vale comprised a total of 217 cells housing all categories, from young offenders serving short sentences to women serving life for murder. The women lived in units of seven rooms with a kitchen and bathroom.

Lady Martha's priority in both prisons was always rehabilitation. "Punishment for prisoners is loss of freedom," she said. "But within these closed conditions we try to give prisoners we can trust all the freedom we can." Lessons were given in domestic skills and home management – cooking, dressmaking, laundry work, and even how to clean the house. Lady Martha explained "budgeting is the key. So many of them get into trouble because they don't know how to use their weekly wage." More than 75% of the first-offence inmates did not go on to reappear in prison. Many of the prisoners went on to lead fulfilling lives after their release, and Lady Martha loved hearing about the success stories of those who had turned their lives around.

After retiring from the prison service in 1983, Lady Martha rented the old gardener's cottage in what had been part of the walled garden of Broomhall when she was a child. She enjoyed hill walking and sea swimming (in all weathers) into very old age.

Fiona Gardner
Association Vice President (and The Telegraph)



Lady Martha Bruce at her 100th birthday party

Lady Martha joined the ATS in October 1941 just before her 20th Birthday and spent the War employed on various Heavy Anti-Aircraft sites gradually rising through the ranks and was commissioned in 1943. The ATS on gun sites were always known to be capable and adaptable, carrying out all the tasks on the site except actually firing the guns, which they never admitted to! As you know many towns and cities were destroyed during the Blitz and the Anti-Aircraft Batteries saved countless lives by intercepting bombers on the way to their targets so that terrible noise of the sirens was not heard and people did not have to spend another night in a damp, cold and sometimes flooded Air Raid Shelter. After the War came postings to Europe, most of the time being spent with the Central Medical Force in Austria, before returning to Scotland to join the Territorial Army in 1947.

Not surprisingly she joined 471 Mixed Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment as a Junior Commander where she served until 1955 when all the Anti-Aircraft Regiments were disbanded as, fortunately they were not required. Her next appointment was to command 317 Bn WRAC/TA. At that time there were WRAC Battalions all over the UK which usually had specific mobilization roles. In the Birthday Honours List of 1958, she was awarded the OBE, but two years later came the devastating news that all the WRAC/TA Battalions were to be disbanded. I can tell you from personal experience what heart ache it caused as I was a young officer commanding the Cannock Platoon of 323 Staffs Battalion and try as I might I could not find vacancies for the majority of my loyal platoon.



In the Ack Ack

Things were very different in Scotland. Lady Martha asked all the Scottish Regiments in 51st Highland Division if they had vacancies and if they did, managed to persuade them to take WRAC/TA. For this she became a legend not just in Scotland but throughout the UK. Her achievement inspired me later when I was the Staff Officer responsible for the paper on the integration of women into the Army.

In 1961 she was appointed Commander WRAC of 51st Highland Division in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and proved to be an inspirational leader. One of her ideas was to run a WRAC/TA Cadet Cadre. A successful Cadet said that she had been so grateful for the opportunity she had been given for so many years and said that throughout her life never a day passed without learning something from Lady Martha.

A further reorganisation meant that the link with 51st Highland Division was severed but the contribution made by the WRAC/TA was so valued that a final farewell dinner was held in Stirling Castle. As I was serving in Scotland at the time and had been commissioned from the TA, I was invited and saw the esteem first hand in which the WRAC/TA was held. It was a memorable, magical but poignant evening which I will never forget. On 4th March 1967 there was a Farewell Dinner for the WRAC/TA at the WRAC College in Camberley. Twenty senior representatives from the WRAC/TA were present together with four former Directors. The Director Dame Joanna Henderson proposed the toast to the WRAC/TA and Lady Martha responded as the Senior TA Officer. On 1st April 1967 she was transferred to the Reserve of Officers with the rank of Brevet Colonel.

Lady Martha's career in the TA spanned 20 years and she valued her Territorial Decoration with Bar very highly. It was a great sadness to her that she did not quite qualify for the second bar as she had to leave the TA in April 1967.

The dedication of many members of the TA was extraordinary, giving hours of their time and often travelling long distances, but Lady Martha was exceptional. Throughout her service her professionalism, dedication, commitment, and sense of duty were unwavering. She attended over 20 Annual Camps of 14 days (the most exciting probably being Dieppe), plus many attachments and courses, including the TA Staff Course. In addition to this she completed an average of 735 drill hours a year, or 15 hours a week, with her unit. The highest number of Drill hours in a single year was 1,320 or 26 hours a week.

After she left the TA the commitment to women who had served continued throughout her life. She was a founder member of the Fife and Tayside Branch of the Association and was a great supporter, being the Chairman for many years. Until recent years she always attended functions and meetings both locally and nationally.

In 1998 she was appointed a Life Vice President of the Association and as I was Chairman of the Benevolent Fund Grants Committee, I attended the same meetings, and her contributions were always sound, sensible and practical. As recently as 2019 she arranged for a group of Association members to attend a Garden Party with her at Holyrood House where they all met HM Queen Elizabeth 2.

Here today (at Lady Martha's Memorial Service) is a fellow Association Life Vice President, Sue Westlake, who met Lady Martha first when she was serving in Scotland and then on many occasions afterwards when she was Vice President. She acknowledges the enormous contribution that Lady Martha made to all aspects of Association life for so many years as well as in her local Branch. Also present today is Isobel Gordon, the TA Cadet who all those years ago was so inspired by Lady Martha that she went on to be the only WRAC/TA Officer to Command a mixed Signal Squadron in Scotland and who was also awarded the Territorial Decoration and Bar. Sadly, the past Area Chairman, Jo Young, who has regularly kept in touch with Lady Martha in recent years was unable to be present.

Lady Martha was an inspiration to us all and it was a privilege to have known her. Her life is reflected in the motto of the WRAC "Gentle in Manner, Resolute in Deed."

Audrey Smith
Association Life Vice President



Final dinner for the TA at the WRAC College (including Brig Dame Mary Railton & Brig Dame Joanna Henderson)

My memories of Lady Martha Bruce are from when I was a Trustee and then the Vice President of the WRAC Association. Lady Martha was a regular attendee at the Council meetings and always had a wise word or two to offer in discussions. Her knowledge of and continued interest in women serving in the Army was impressive with her own Service beginning in September 1941 when she joined the ATS as a volunteer. Lady Martha's military career continued for just under the next 3 decades when she left to join the Scottish Prison Service. This wealth of service across the decades meant that, on her appointment as a Life Vice President, her approach to any issues within the Association was always calm and measured with a very large dose of common sense.



Lady Martha was also a regular presence at the Scottish Area AGM for many years. She was familiar with all aspects of WRAC in Scotland and was very keen to preserve the history of all women who served in Scotland. I found her to be always patient, ready to offer a new Vice President sound advice and very sociable with the other members present. As her trips to London for Council meetings became more difficult, Lady Martha continued to support the WRAC Association in Scotland and was a consistent sounding board for the Area Co-ordinator.

Lady Martha lived a life of service and her dedicated support to the WRAC Association formed an integral part of this.

Ali Brown
Association Life Vice President



KATHLEEN (KAY) BERYL ALLAN (NEE KENDRICK) ATS/WRAC 18th November 1930 - 10th May 2023



It was with great sadness that I received the sad news from Kay's family that Kay had finally marched off on the 10th May 2023. Kay had been living in a nursing home for the past 6 months after suffering a stroke. It was so comforting to know that she was surrounded by her loving family when she passed.

Kay enlisted into the ATS in 1948 on her 18th Birthday. Whilst at recruit training in Guildford Kay was Christened in our spiritual Church Guildford Cathedral. She purchased a brick to help fund the build. After basic training Kay was posted to Salisbury where she was a Stewardess/Batwomen in the Officers Mess. After doing exceptionally well in her unit, Kay was posted to the Frimley Park Officers Training Camp. During her posting the ATS was disbanded, and King George VI declared that the women of the ATS had really served the Army well and a new Army Corps for Women would be formed. So in 1949 the WRAC was formed. Kay was demobbed from the ATS and immediately signed up for the WRAC.

Kay decided it was a good time to re-allocate and trained as a switchboard operator at Catterick Camp. She was then posted to Aldershot before a most

welcomed overseas posting to Moascar, Egypt in 1953. When the servicewomen wanted to leave camp, they had to be escorted by a male soldier for security reasons. This is when Kay met the handsome Cpl Kenneth Allan of the Royal Marines. The following year they were married in Egypt and the newlyweds were then posted to Malta.

Kay was a life member of the WRAC Association and one of the earliest members of the WRAC Dinner Club. She was a member of the Greater London Branch and attended many of our functions. Kay has also been my Buddy for over 5 years, and we have had some memorable outings together. She was so honoured to be asked to lay the flowers on behalf of the ATS at the National Memorial Arboretum, a day she will never forget. Another memorable day was when she met Prince Harry and shook his hand at the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey. Kay loved to talk and was delighted to be asked to broadcast live on BBC Radio London on the Jo Good show talking about her service and the Buddy Buddy Scheme. Kay's last outing out with me was to attend the WRAC Dinner Club in Nottingham 2021. She certainly kept us all on our toes that night.

Kay's Funeral was held on the 31st May 2023. Together with Kay's loving family, Pat Rosewell, Chrissi Mills, Pauline Milnes and Margaret Norroway were in attendance to give Kay her final salute. We salute you Kay and thank you for your service.

Pat Rosewell



JOAN AWBERY (NEE STITTLE) 9th September 1920 - 15th November 2022



Born September 1920 in Soham, Cambridgeshire, just two years after the end of the First World War, Joan was the only child of Harry Stittle, a harness maker and his wife, Bertha. Soham

and its surrounding area were home to many of Joan's extended family. Joan had happy memories of her childhood, sometimes playing in the Fens with her cousins, travelling the few miles there in a pony and trap. During the harsh winter of 1936 she would go skating with her father for miles on wooden skates tied to her shoes along the frozen Fenland drains.

Once Joan had left school aged 14, she cycled to Soham station, then the train to Ely and on to Cambridge where she went to the Technical College to learn shorthand, French, book-keeping and typing. Joan went to work at James Gravens and Son in Ely who dealt in the supply and repair of all types of steam engines and were an agency for the Ford Motor Company.

In 1941 Joan writes in her diary "War was going very badly. I thought I would take a hand in it. I went to the Recruiting Office in Cambridge to offer myself to the WAAF. They were just about to close for lunch, so I went into the next door ATS office instead". January 1942, Joan was training at Talavera Camp, Northampton during the coldest winter for a decade. Communal feeding, washing up in a single tub of warm greasy water, hard beds and nights spent with thirty or more snorers, groaners and teeth grinders under scratchy blankets. She was not used to this. Diminutive in stature, her uniform had to be altered to fit. The army regulation shoes to fit her size 3 feet took a long time to be found and until then she paraded and marched in her civilian shoes. Although life and training were tough, lifelong friendships were made.



Asked where she would like to be posted after training, she requested Scotland and was disappointingly sent to Cambridge. Here she was employed as a secretary to a Brigade Major, later transferring to the Army Cinema Service, which travelled around the coast of East Anglia to lonely outposts, showing films for training and recreation. In 1944 she was posted to Ostend and then on to Brussels for the remaining months of the war working in the BLA Legal Service

as a secretary. She writes that VE Day was etched in her memory; day after day seeing Belgians returning home from forced labour and concentration camps with each parade headed by bands and hordes of local residents. From Brussels she was posted to the Rhine Army HQ in Bad Oeynhausen, Germany. After being demobbed, she became secretary to the Chief Chemist at Chivers in Histon.

Joan married Kenneth Awbery in Cambridge, moved to Norwich to run a library and sweet shop, and went on to have three children. April Fools' Day was always something that Joan enjoyed; lunch boxes filled with coal and coat sleeves sewn up – her children still recall that it was not always funny if you were already late for school!

When the opportunities arose, Joan travelled extensively - in Europe, Africa, Russia, America and, throughout the UK and Ireland.

Her career included Avenue Junior School, where her office held the aroma of Witch Hazel, dispensed as a first aid remedy. She also worked at The Clare School, at the University of East Anglia in English & American Studies, and the School of Fine Arts in the Sainsbury Centre.

Retirement gave her the chance for a reconnection with the ATS through the local Norfolk Branch, becoming Branch Secretary and Chair. She revelled in her friendships made through the group and instigated and fundraised for a memorial to the 26 girls killed in a wartime bombing at Great Yarmouth. She had many opportunities opened to her through the WRAC Association, the Not Forgotten Association, Blind Veterans UK and Vision Norfolk, feeling particularly privileged to attend Buckingham Palace Garden Parties.

Joan embraced all technological innovations - electric typewriters, then computers, mobile phones, texts, emails, Alexa and digital photography. Even with her failing eyesight due to macular degeneration, she continued to email (always expecting an immediate response!) with the help of equipment supplied by Blind Veterans UK.

Gardening was Joan's true passion, and she would surreptitiously take cuttings from interesting or unusual plants anywhere she visited. She continued gardening well into her 90's and instructed her family and occasional gardener on the pruning, planting, and weeding of her garden, which won awards, hosted garden parties and family gatherings. This will be where she will be remembered, happy and at peace after a long and happy life.

Lyn Hatch

MARGARET BALLARD (NEE RUTTER)

**26 December 1921 -
October 2022**

Born in Belfast, Peggy, as she was known, was seventeen when World War 2 started and, when she turned eighteen, she volunteered for the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the ATS. Her role there was office based, though basic training had taught her to fire a rifle, a skill she, happily, never had to deploy. Her service was a time she remembered fondly, and she made good friends in the ATS, stationed as she was in various places around Northern Ireland.

In 1947, Peggy's parents returned to their roots in Sunderland and Peggy went with them. Working at the Sunderland Forge, she met Wilf Ballard, and they married in 1951, going on to have two children, Ian and Ann, a grandson, Ben and three great grandchildren, Stella, Charlotte and Archie. It was a close and happy family unit although Wilf died, too soon, at only 62. Ian, Ann and Peggy all ended up near each other in Yorkshire.

In 2020, she was suddenly struck down by three heart attacks in 48 hours and not expected to survive the night but the indomitable spirit of her generation and her own fierce determination, saw her survive another two and a half years and it was in a lovely care home in Ripon that Peggy peacefully passed away.

*Ann Whiers
Daughter*



SANDRA ANN BANKS (W/46597)

**1st November 1961 -
12th March 2023**



Sandra Ann Banks was born in November 1961 to Charles and Marie Christian in Workington, Cumbria, moving to Ormskirk, Lancashire, when she was a toddler. She was the second of 5 children - 3 brothers, George, Charles, Paul and her sister Jayne. She was involved with the Girls Brigade, playing

the cornet, while attending primary and secondary schools.

She joined the WRAC in November 1979 at the age of 18, going on to serve in Bielefeld and Sennelager. She met her husband, also a soldier, and married in May 1981. She served until March 1982, when the Army discharged her, as they did back then, for her pregnancy with me. She remained part of military life being an Army wife, and enjoyed it very much, going on to having my sisters Ami and Samantha both in Aldershot on separate postings in 1983 and 1988 respectively.

Over the next nearly twenty years, we were posted to, after Bielefeld, Aldershot, Hong Kong, Ripon, Cyprus, Winchester, Paderborn and finally York. That finished in 1999 when we settled in York permanently.

Mum volunteered for work with the Yellow Ribbon Club in Ripon, the younger Youth Club, all this whilst working at the primary school Holy Trinity as the lollipop lady! She also worked at the PRI shop on one posting. She had a very hard work ethic, always having a job, finishing her working life, due to poor health, at York City Council; Future Prospects, a subsidiary organisation of the council finding education and work for people that needed help.

Mum had a wicked sense of humour and zest for life, having many hobbies. Being part of the veteran's society was what Mum enjoyed, attending annual gatherings and being socially active in the WRAC community. In later years she loved to craft, but the job she was really made for was being a grandmother. She was known as 'Mims' to her 8 grandchildren - she adored them and, in true grandmother fashion, spoiled them at every opportunity.

Her second husband Colin, whom she married in 2011, was with Mum when she passed. It's unfair that she died so young, only having twelve weeks from diagnosis of cancer to passing. She is sorely missed by all.

Nicola Topp



SANDRA BURLEIGH-DAVIES **Died January 2023**

Some of you may remember Sandra, who played in the HMS Seahawk Royal Marine volunteer band down here in Cornwall at RNAS Cudrose. A lovely lady that nobody socialised with outside of band sessions. We knew she was very ill with cancer but only found out

recently that she died in January. She was previously a full-time musician in the WRAC and then as a volunteer bandy in the RMC band (we had no idea about that).

We add our deepest condolences to her family and friends and say how much we enjoyed her quick wit and wonderful company as well as her beautiful musicianship.

Kind regards
Kate Brian (nee Boxell)



WO1 BETTY GREEN **(ATS & WRAC, W/0350612)** **Died 24 October 2022**



Almost all of Aunt Betty's adult life was dedicated to the service of her country. She first joined the ATS in April 1948 having previously

served briefly with the Women's Land Army (WLA) during the war. After two years with the ATS she volunteered for the WRAC enlisting at Birmingham on 19th of May 1950. Thus began 34 years of unbroken service which saw her eventually retiring in January 1983 having been awarded her LS&GC and Bar, and the Meritorious Service Medal for her role during the evacuation of families resulting from the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

In retirement she lived a simple and quiet life in Wolverhampton enjoying football and tennis on the television and regular holidays abroad with her best friend WO1 Agnes Doig, and her sister Joan.

Both Betty and Agnes were amongst the first retired female senior NCOs to be invited to the Royal Hospital Chelsea as potential pensioners, however both decided to turn down this kind invitation and stay close to their respective families.

In her later life Betty spent her final few years in comfort at a local care residency before finally peacefully leaving us after a long illness on the 24th of October 2022 at the age of 93.

Lynn Ulke
Niece

COLONEL RACHEL MARY GREEN TD

28th February 1919 –
25th March 2023



Rachel Green died in March at the age of 104. She was born in Romford, Essex, the younger daughter of a much respected local doctor. Her mother was President of the area NSPCC and was awarded the Order of Mercy by King Edward VII in recognition of her exceptional charitable work in the region.

After attending a private school in Eastbourne, it was expected that Rachel would follow her older sister (by then a nursing Sister at St Thomas' Hospital) into a career in medicine. Rachel began pre-medical school training at the Royal Free Hospital in September 1938 but found that this was not her vocation and therefore enlisted in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) in November 1939 following the outbreak of war. She was allotted number W/1001: only a thousand other women had enlisted at this point. Rachel was subsequently commissioned in June 1940. Her initial service included postings to Storrington in Sussex and roles within a number of anti-aircraft units across the country.

Rachel was posted to Rome in Italy in October 1944, and joined the staff of the newly formed Alliance Control Commission, then based in the former HQ of Mussolini's office on the Via Veneto. Her role was on the staff of Section G4, dealing with transport to ensure the efficient distribution of food to Italian nationals who had suffered so much during the conflict. She had travelled out to Italy on a troop ship, docking in Naples, where by chance she attended a performance of Verdi's *La Traviata* in a newly reopened theatre, and this prompted her subsequent lifelong interest in opera. Rachel

herself wrote of this period "I little thought during my first days in Italy that the two and a half years I was ultimately to spend in the Eternal City were going to be quite the happiest of my life". Friendships with the opera singer Tito Gobbi and the ballerina Atilia Radici were formed during this time and these endured for decades afterwards. Rachel was affectionately known as "La Maggioressa" (this is a sort of nickname for the Italian word for Major, which they have turned it into a feminised version) to the theatre staff at the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma and was able to come and go at will to any and all performances, sometimes taking her seat in the wings or in the prompter's box off stage.

She travelled widely throughout Italy during her service years there (she left in 1947), sending vivid and informative accounts to her widowed mother back in England. These accounts remain with her family and provide extraordinary insights into a young woman's myriad experiences in the war-torn country which captured her heart in so many ways: forever after, Rachel would only drink Italian wines and drive Italian cars, and she holidayed nearly every year in Santa Margherita in the Italian region of Liguria.

Returning to England in 1947, Rachel was posted to Edinburgh before being granted a Regular Commission in the WRAC in February 1949. Rachel attended the WRAC Staff College in 1953 where she met the late Lieutenant Colonel Barbara Ridler OBE and the two formed a lasting partnership thereafter.

Rising through the ranks, Rachel's subsequent postings took her to Gibraltar, amongst other places, before she was appointed Commandant of the WRAC College in Camberley in 1969, a position she held until her appointment as Deputy Director of the WRAC in January 1972. Throughout her career Rachel's duties were nearly always concerned with the training and welfare of women. Rachel retired in March 1974 in the rank of Colonel.

In June 1976 Rachel was appointed as the Deputy Central Secretary of the Mothers' Union and served as Secretary to the Social Problems Committee. Her wide-ranging duties included organising the major events promoted by the global charity. One particular reception held at St James's Palace in the presence of Her late Majesty the Queen was such a success that Rachel's organisational plan for the event was subsequently used as the official template for future Royal events held there. In 1994 Rachel was awarded the Freedom of the City of London.

Rachel retired to Willingdon near Eastbourne with Barbara Ridler in 1980, moving into central Eastbourne in 1998. Barbara predeceased her in 2011, having been cared for devotedly by Rachel during her final years. Rachel always took a keen interest in her wider family, delighting in the achievements of her great nephews and nieces. Echoing the qualities she had demonstrated during her army career, Rachel continued to show her kindness and compassion to all, and was an inveterate supporter of numerous charities, particularly those for the welfare of children. As her health declined and her frailty increased, she needed greater support at her great age but was adored by her many carers who were bereft at her death. One young carer said in a message to Rachel's nephew a few weeks before her death "I am 27 years old and find Rachel the most interesting and strongest women I have ever met. She is always telling me little life lessons to take along the way such as "be kind always" and "be honest" but today she taught me how to salute, after shouting at me to "stand up straight girl!" with the biggest grin on her face! She was on top form today....".

A life well lived indeed. Rachel is survived by her nephews David Phillips and Richard Phillips KC.



GABRIELLE (GAYE) HALL (NÉE DUTTON)

19th September 1925 –
21st June 2022 (aged 96)



Gabrielle was born in Leeds, West Yorkshire, the sixth of seven children, five of whom served in the army during the second World War. Her father had served in the Royal Artillery, but he died when she was only two, so she had no personal memories of him. Childhood in a large single parent family, before the advent of the welfare state, was tough but loving.

Her adored older brother Dolphy was killed aged 21 serving with the Royal

Artillery during the siege of Malta in July 1942. Gabrielle joined the ATS on 1st June 1943, aged 17, hoping to emulate her older sister Marie who had been posted as a telephonist/telegraphist but, to her immense disappointment, after basic training in Harrogate she was posted as a cook to an anti-aircraft battery near Wrexham. One thing which did delight her however was that she was issued with more clothes than she had ever previously possessed, and she had plenty to eat!

She served throughout the rest of the war in anti-aircraft batteries in South Wales and the Midlands and was finally discharged from the army as a Lance Corporal in January 1947. She was instinctively well behaved but her records do show the occasional lapse, such as when she was confined to barracks for 7 days and docked 7 days' pay for being 2 hours late back from a night out! She also said that she sometimes felt the army's rules unfair, such as when the ATS girls on her camp were ordered not to speak to the black American GIs stationed nearby, or when she was split up from her closest friend Marjorie Clayton because her superiors had begun to suspect that they might be lesbians (as it happened, they weren't).

After the army she married twice, once to Bill (Easton), which ended in divorce without children and then in 1953 to Ernest (Hall), to whom she remained married until his death in 1992. They had a son, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Gabrielle's great passion in life was singing, and she sang (with or without an audience) all her life, including professionally. She had auditioned for the BBC and big bands but was unwilling to move to London to further her career, preferring to remain near family and friends in Yorkshire. One of her fondest memories from her time in the army was being able to get the sheet music for the latest popular music from the American soldiers and sing it in the pub!

In her later years, Gabrielle attended the ATS branch meetings in Leeds and enjoyed chatting to the other members. She also attended some celebratory ceremonies, proudly wearing her blazer with its ATS badges – she was very proud to have served.

Gabrielle had a stoical attitude to the tribulations which came with old age, including losing her sight, general infirmity and increasing deafness. When family and carers would express concern at her struggles with everyday issues she would invariably reply "oh, well it was tougher when I was in the army you know!".

Graham Hall (Son)

**ADA HOLLAND (NEE
STOKES), W/235757**
1925 - 6th January 2023, age 97



Ada was born in Bolton, Lancashire in 1925 to Jim and Ethel Stokes and was the youngest of their three children. She served in the ATS during WW2, joining up in February 1943 just before her 18th birthday and she served in Derby before being posted to Bruges. She returned to Bolton after the war and in 1949 she married Bernard Williams Holland and they had 2 children.

Ada loved to travel and after she was widowed at 60, she began the first of many overseas trips by returning to Bruges. She was always incredibly proud of her service to her country and remained active within the Bolton Branch WRAC Association. She last attended Bolton's Armed Forces Day event as an invited veteran in June 2022 at the age of 97.

Ada passed away in Bolton on 6th January 2023 after a short illness.

Jeanette Goldsmith
Grand-daughter



ROSE MARY ALICE IDE
1st November 1919 - 3rd
March 2023 (aged 103)

When Rose left school, she went to work for a local GP and it was from the balcony of the GP's home that she saw the first bombing of Portsmouth. She didn't hesitate in signing up to join the ATS. Rose served from January 1942 to January 1946, training at Northampton barracks as a teleprinter operator (Royal Signals), then posted to Bridlington, Bursledon & Naples, Italy.

She was sent to Northampton to join a training camp where she learned the important skills of signals, tele printing,

switchboard, wireless, clerical work and mechanisms. She learned about ohms, watts, and understanding how to apply her knowledge. She even worked on the plotting boards - pushing little planes to plot the course of aircraft flying over Europe. She said it turned her brain inside out - but very proudly taught her to stand on her own two feet. At the end of the war, she was sent to Naples to relieve the men, some of whom had not been home for three years and was reunited, briefly, with her brother, still stationed in Rome.



A keen traveller and photographer, Rose would visit relatives wherever in the world they were living. When work took her nephew, Steve and his family, to foreign fields including Vienna, South of France and Dubai she always knew there was a guest bedroom waiting for her. But she didn't stop there ... With her friend Nancy, there were very few other European countries and places in the UK she had not visited and photographed.

Rose's earlier experiences and training were significant in her many years working for the post office on the Island - starting as a telegraphist and steadily working her way through the ranks. She decided to take her civil service exams, got a very good pass and after more training at Bletchley Park, started working on the counter at the Ryde Post Office. Her last working years were spent in very important clerical work at the Newport Post Office.

Rose was always very independent (and often stubborn!) and, after her parent's death in the 60s, lived on her own, but she was very sociable. She loved meeting people, helping to organise speakers, parties and trips for her many clubs, never letting her deafness stand in her way. In her 90s she bought herself a laptop and an iPad and, remarkably, took herself off to classes to get to grips with technology. Unsurprisingly, even in her 100s, she was still going to keep fit classes!

From her first trip to London in 1942, she continued to love visiting the capital, going on many theatre trips and visiting many historic sites, particularly anything to do with the Royal Family. This was due to her Ide family special connections with Osborne house, where her grandfather worked for Queen Victoria. One of her proudest moments was (in the year of her 100th birthday) being presented to Sophie, the then Countess of Wessex, at the WRAC centenary celebrations.

Val Duke
Portsmouth Branch



MRS ROSEMARY JONES
September 1932 -
7th February 2023



Rosemary joined the WRAC in 1952 and after her training at Guildford, she completed her trade training to become a cook. Rosemary served in Catterick Yorkshire, and Hounslow Middlesex, completing just over 2 years of service.

In 1963 Rosemary joined The Hereford Branch of The British Legion. During this time she became their Standard Bearer, which continued for the next 29 years. This took her to special functions such as parading at The Drumhead Service Horse Guards, for Her Majesty the Queen's Silver Jubilee and again at Horse Guards for The Queen Mothers 90th Birthday Parade.

In 1974, The British Legion were given Royal Assent, Rosemary was very privileged to represent Herefordshire at Westminster Abbey for the Dedication Service. All the Standard Bearers stood in line and as Her Majesty the Queen Mother walked along the line, she actually stopped and spoke to her. This was such a special moment in Rosemary's life and to her, made her few years of service in The Women's Royal Army Corps very worthwhile. Rosemary became The RBL Standard Bearer for an amazing 39 years and even came runner

up for The County, for her outstanding Standard Bearing.

Rosemary joined Hereford Branch WRAC in 1991 and has been such an asset to the Branch over the years, regularly attending our monthly meetings and Association functions. Rosemary loved attending Dinner Club and Grand Reunions, but due to ill health recently, had been unable to attend. She took over as our Branch Chairman in October 2017. During her time with The Branch, Rosemary has helped out with many functions, including for numerous years at our Annual Picnic at Queenswood Park.

Over the years, Rosemary sold Poppies for Remembrance Sunday through the women's section of the RBL. This lasted for an amazing 55 years, which didn't go unnoticed as she received 2 Merit Award Badges. This well-deserved award was presented to her by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant, The Dowager Countess of Darnley CVO. Rosemary had also been presented with an Unusual Poppy Brooch more than 30 years ago, to mark her 25 year service with The RBL.

Rosemary passed away on the 7th February 2023 and will be sorely missed by all our Branch members and friends of the WRAC Association.

*Lynda Armstrong
Hereford Branch*



JOYCE KESSELL, ATS Died 17th July 2023, age 96

Joyce was our (the Association's) last remaining original ABF annuitant, and the Benevolent Fund has been supporting her since 2000. We have asked if the family would like to share an obituary on Joyce (she was not an Association member).



LORETTA MAUREEN MARGARET MARSHALL (NEE BURGESS) 29th October 1934 – 10th February 2023

Loretta was born in Woolwich, Kent to PC Arthur and Florence Burgess. Known to her family in England as Maureen, as a child she was evacuated twice to a safe place to avoid the Blitz bombing and rocket attacks during WW2. She graduated from school and

became a GPO switchboard operator at the Artillery Barracks in Woolwich and then various commercial establishments in London. Loretta also served in the British Army Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) with the Territorial Army Royal Artillery for about five years.

In May 1957 she emigrated to Canada, travelling by sea from Southampton on the RMS Invernia by way of Montreal to Toronto. In Toronto she took on any job that came – office work, photographer's assistant and joined the Governor-General's Horse Guards (GGHG) Militia for a year until moving to Barrie, Ontario upon her marriage to Wayne Marshall on 16th August 1958 who was then serving in the Canadian Army at Camp Borden. Thus began her nomadic life as a military spouse for the next 34 years.

She graduated from Barrie Business College with honours and began a life-long career of many administrative jobs in Canada and Germany in which she excelled, including Ottawa Transportation, the Federal Government, Ottawa Regional Government and CFB Europe.

As a young woman Loretta enjoyed her friends, field sports, dancing and her bicycle very much and was expert at knitting and handiwork. After retirement she was active in lawn bowling and curling in the Kingston area. She never lost her love of dancing and music, which were a highlight of her life. She was always hardworking and industrious and a perfectionist in all that she did. She was most happy when participating in Kingston Gospel Temple Choir and was the Church Seniors Co-ordinator for over 8 years. She was a very special person to many people, made friends easily, presented herself in a classy manner and will be greatly missed by all for making a truly happy, traditional English home for her family – always a Christmas with all the trimmings.

Loretta is survived by her beloved husband of 65 years, her loving son Peter – both in Kingston, Canada; sister-in-law, nieces and nephews in Kent; and nephews in Australia and Alberta, Canada.

It is with deep sadness that the family announced the passing of Loretta in her 89th year on Friday 10th February 2023 and extended their deep felt gratitude to the staff of Fairmount Home in Glenburnie, Ontario, for their exceptional care throughout her stay there.

[This has been abridged from an obituary in a local newspaper and seen by one of our members]

MRS PAMELA NESBITT (NEE ZANELOTTI)

**23rd July 1929 –
19th March 2023**



Pamela was born in Southampton on 23rd July 1929 and enlisted into the ATS in January 1947 following in the footsteps of her elder sisters Nina and Yvonne. She received her colours in February 1948 and for the following 12 months was stationed in DCTC Gresford and AA Command. In November 1948 Pamela was posted to BTA Austria. From Austria it was a UK posting and then on to BAOR. In all Pamela served for just under 12 years reaching the rank of Sergeant. In Germany she met and married her husband Robert "Bob" Nesbitt.

Once married, Pamela supported Bob through his army career touring the world, being stationed in Hong Kong, Singapore and Germany. Bob finally retired in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in York, where Pamela joined the ATS/WRAC Association. She became an active member of the York branch holding the position of Chair. She especially enjoyed the Association reunions and the Remembrance Day parades.

Sadly, Pamela passed away on the 19th March 2023. She will be sadly missed by family and friends alike.

"As a family we can all testify to the pleasure and sense of both camaraderie and purpose Mum found both serving in the ATS/WRAC and more latterly as part of the ATS/WRAC Association. I thank you for your continued support of all veterans, no matter the age or length of service".

Keith Nesbitt

WENDY RENDLE (NEE SCOTT)

Died 21st June 2023

Captain Wendy Scott worked in the same office as I did in Singapore, and I was her bridesmaid at her wedding there. We water skied together and practised for the Singapore Water Ski Championships and I realised that she was an extremely strong swimmer. In 1961, when she was in Tripoli as a servicewoman, she saved two men from drowning. Wendy was from Dartmouth.

Audrey Smith



COLONEL SUSAN PENELOPE RICHARDS

**1st March 1934 -
23rd March 2023**



Susan (she was known as Sue throughout her Army Service) was educated at Moreton Hall School, greatly inspired by the then head Bronwen Lloyd-Williams, and where she became Head Girl. She joined the Army in April 1954 and reported for training at the WRAC School of Instruction at Liphook. It was a hutted camp which had very basic facilities and was heated by coke stoves.

After 11 months of training, during which time the WRAC Motto Gentle in Manner, Resolute in Deed, was approved and which she followed all her service, she was Commissioned on 3rd March 1955 two days after her 21st Birthday.

There were many postings, during her long career, spanning over 30 years, but as a younger officer she was happiest when she was in the field of recruiting where she excelled. Always immaculate and an excellent speaker she particularly enjoyed being a member of the Army Team of Lecturers and often recounted how she could slip into her uniform in the car outside a school while maintaining her dignity in order to arrive without a crease!

In the early 1960s she was posted as an Instructor of Officer Cadets at the School of Instruction, a post reserved for the most able officers who were considered would have a positive influence on the cadets. After that she was posted to Hong Kong which she found fascinating and had a lasting impression.

Returning in 1965 she had a spell in Edinburgh before once more becoming involved in Recruiting and Selection based in Chester. She helped at the Investiture of the Prince of Wales and a treasured possession was the cushion which she sat on during the ceremony.

Her next appointment was as the Assistant Inspector of Physical Training (AIPT WRAC) which was a strange choice for someone who played tennis but no team sports, but she tackled the job with her usual professionalism. There were many occasions when I saw how able and caring she was but none more so than when her Quartermaster was diagnosed with cancer and died within 6 months. She had a great sense of duty, was always fair and supportive of her young officers, while being fun with an infectious laugh. She preferred the Beatles but was tolerant of Bach that she could often hear being played at full blast from my room next door. For most of her life she owned sporty cars which were often driven at great speed but always safely.

We met again when I was posted to Shrewsbury, and she was once again a Women's Services Liaison Officer. It was at this time I discovered how practical she was when she helped me with lots of little jobs in my new house. At this time, she was allowed to ride a Lipizzaner stallion which said much for her ability as a horse woman. I watched mesmerised. When Sue left Shrewsbury, she was posted to the WRAC College and after that returned to be the Assistant Director WRAC for Wales, and the West Midlands which made it much easier for her to get home to her family in Wales most weekends.

The next time we met was in BAOR. By this time Sue was the Deputy at the Record Office and I was the Commander WRAC. We dealt with the business with our usual professionalism and all my problems were speedily solved and then at the weekend we went to the Mosel for a Wine Fest. Suddenly realising we were going to miss the last bus we dashed to the bus stop and as we waited discovered other countries do not queue. When the bus arrived, Sue said follow me and we managed to get on the bus, I do not know how!

When Sue was the Deputy Director at the MOD and about to retire, I invited her to be the Inspecting Officer at a Passing Out Parade of WRAC Recruits at Guildford. She was immaculate, so enjoyed talking to the recruits and gave an inspiring speech.

Sue was a great gardener, and when I visited, she would fill the car with fruit and vegetables for me to take home. She always had a dog and was fortunate to be able to continue her riding by exercising an Arab stallion for someone locally. Fond of good food and wine she could be relied on to recommend an excellent restaurant and often submitted reports to the Good Food Guide.

Sue outlived most of her relatives and there were only four cousins at her funeral. The other Richards family who she had known all her life and were very supportive particularly in her later years, said that the Army was her family. She was always looked after by the Hereford Branch of the Association and the Secretary Lynda Armstrong made sure everyone kept in touch. Her Army family was there at her funeral. Susan Wing, the WRAC Association Chaplain who knew her very well, officiated at the funeral service. The Association National Standard Bearer, Sharon Baker-Joyce and the Birmingham Branch Standard Bearer Rosie Garrison were there. Elaine Smith from Hereford Branch played the Last Post and Reveille and there were also 20 members of the Branch present.

Audrey Smith
Association Life Vice President



**CELIA MARY SCARROTT
(ATS)**

**25th September 1925 –
22nd February 2023**



Celia, known as Mary, was born on 25th September 1925 at Gorseinon, South Wales. Although clever enough to pass her 11 plus she had to go to secondary school because of the family's finances. Leaving school at 14 she started work and held various jobs, but at the age of 17 she enlisted into the ATS to see the world. Her first posting was Wrexham, north Wales, then going 'abroad' to England! This was her first adventure out of her own country. Having come from the city of Swansea, it came as quite a shock to be posted to a little place called Bicester.

On the way to the army camp, she asked the driver of the bus how much further to Bicester and his reply was 'we have just been through it'. After finding her feet and making new friends they decided to try the local hop in the church hall. On hearing another Welsh voice, which was unusual at the time, she immediately went to find out who it belonged to only to find it was a boy called Ted taking the mickey out of her accent. Something must have clicked with this young man and it must have been love at first sight because their romance lasted for over 60 years only ending with his passing at the age of 80.

Ted, or Dad as I will now call him, joined the army a little after Mum because at 9 months younger, he was her toy boy. Many stories she would tell us over the years so here are a couple. When they were courting during the war Dad was posted away and he was leaving from Swindon railway station. Mum thought she would surprise him and obtained a 24-hr pass. She found him walking down the railway platform. True to form, the train which Dad was to catch was late and this meant that Mum missed her train to go back to camp. With no money she had no alternative but to sleep on the platform overnight when a young man approached her and

said that she could go home with him, and his mum would give her a bed for the night and he would take her back to camp in the morning. True to his word Mum had a comfortable night and a ride back to camp on the back of his motorbike with her uniform skirt pulled up as far as it would go. Arriving around the back of the camp she sneaked in so as not to be seen because she would have been charged with being AWOL. Another occasion in her billet she recalled her boss came to the girls in his pyjamas, in the early hours of the morning, to tell them that war was over before the public announcement!

When she came out of the ATS, and at the age of 21, the lovebirds married at the Civic Centre Swansea. Dad was still in the army and was being posted abroad so Mum unselfishly decided to move in with the in-laws in Bicester so that on his leave he didn't have to choose between visiting his mum or her. On his return married life could begin and along came Carol.

Moving into a new house and with a baby this became a new adventure. Enjoying dancing, football and many things including fitting in various jobs to help the family, life couldn't get much better. It was a long eight years before another much longed-for child came along and they named her Edwina. The years passed by and in the course of time the family expanded with three grandchildren, and five Great-Grandchildren. When things didn't run smoothly with some of the family she was always there to lend a helping hand.

When Dad passed away Mum became very lonely, so she joined a couple of clubs meeting up with old and new friends, Peggy, Brenda, June and Barbara to name just a few; enjoying coach tours home and abroad and lunches with Brenda and June. This stopped when her health started to deteriorate, and she had increasing mobility issues. Realising she needed 24 hours care she decided to go into a care home as she didn't want to be a burden to the family. Even then she tried to do things herself so as not to give the carers extra work.

Now is the time to say goodbye where you can reunite with Dad. You will be missed by all who knew you.

Karen Smith



**SUSAN SMITH
(NEE PUTTOCK)
Died 2nd June 2023**

Susan was an AN(SI) regular and reserve member of the Intelligence Corps. She was a member of the Y Services, whose Chair shared this information.

*Hazel Donald
Intelligence Corps Association*



**MARY SNODGRASS
30th September 1931 –
9th December 2022**



Mary was born in Devon and attended Seale Hayne College before working as a herdsman for several years before joining the Army.

For most of her service life she was an Experimental Assistant in Gunnery (EAG) at Shoeburyness, which was a strange existence as many of the firings were dependent on the tides and the starting time changed every day. Observations were made of firings and from these calculations were made to ensure that the guns performed as expected and the charge used were

within safe perimeters. It was quite normal for an EAG to spend her whole career in the Army in Shoeburyness. Mary was the exception. Early in her career she spent a tour as an EAG in Australia where she sustained an injury to her back which was a continuing problem although it never stopped her from doing things until later in life.

At the end of 1964 Mary was selected to be the Sergeant to go to 20 Trials Unit near Kirkcudbright which was to be responsible for the User Trials of the Guided Weapon Swingfire. By a quirk of fate, at the Christmas Party when we were saying farewell to Mary, I announced that I was going with her!

The work at 20 Trials Unit was unique as we were responsible for all the records of the trials from surveying the range, using strange tracking devices, to taking photographs with incredibly high speed cameras and special film imported from the USA. We often did some amazing things to get the records there on time for briefings. One of the problems was that we had to develop complete spools of 35mm film in a strange machine which we nicknamed the train set. As this was not practical, we soon persuaded another Trials Unit further up the coast to develop them while we waited. It was not unusual for us to leave with the developed films at 8pm, drive through the night, and have them ready to show senior officers in Lulworth Dorset at 9am the following morning. On one occasion we were in a blizzard and only just got over Shap Fell before it was closed to all traffic.

Mary was intelligent, adaptable and would always think round a problem to find a solution. She was also kind, caring and understanding. One Friday afternoon, I left Kirkcudbright for Stirling Castle, as I had been invited to a special dinner to say farewell to the WRAC/TA of 51st Highland Division in Stirling Castle, but my new car broke down after 50 miles at Beattock. I rang the AA and then the office, getting Mary as she was the only one still there. She said she would set off for Beattock immediately to take me back to Kirkcudbright. When she arrived, she said "you really would like to go to the dinner, I will take you, we should just get there in time, its only 70 miles." I made the dinner with 10 minutes to spare! The even more amazing thing was when I arrived at Beattock on my way back there was a dark blue Triumph Herald in the car park that I recognised with Mary sitting inside knitting who said, "I knew you would need a lift".

Despite having a disc fused in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary Mary's back gradually got worse and eventually she was no longer able to continue the active

life of an EAG. She retrained to be an Analyst which was a far more sedentary employment and was posted to Cheltenham, which is why someone from Exeter ended her life in Gloucestershire. Eventually she realised that service life was becoming a struggle and reluctantly had to leave the Army.

After she settled in Cheltenham, Mary made many new friends and became involved with the local community. Her most notable activity was making Christmas Cards for many years which raised an enormous amount of money for the Cobalt Unit in Cheltenham.

Mary was a very special person who I was privileged to have known.

Audrey Smith
Association Life Vice President



**WO2 (CSM) LAURA
WINIFRED SOWERBY,
ATS/WRAC
Died 28th April 2023, age 96**



Laura Sowerby passed away in her sleep at the ripe old age of 96. She was still a Sgt Major in the care home where she resided for the last 4 years, and is sadly missed by all the family.

Jane Berry (niece)

**ROBINA MCKENZIE
BORTHWICK VOWLES
Died 5th May 2023**

Robina, known as Ena, passed away on May 5th, 4 days short of her 98th birthday. She enlisted in the ATS in November 1941, aged 16. She served in Edinburgh, Belfast, Surrey and London where she was attached to Commando Headquarters.



In 1943 she married Canadian airman Gerald Vowles and joined him in Canada in 1946. They had 4 children, Mary, currently Honorary Consul for Canada in Scotland, Gerald, Alan and Bruce. Five years after Gerry's death in 1992, she returned to Scotland to live near her daughter and other family members and friends.

Ena was a proud veteran and was a member of the Canadian Legion for 35 years. She enjoyed her years of lunches in Perth with the WRAC Association before it closed, and proudly took her place in veteran's parades both in Canada and here, in the UK, for many decades.

Mary Vowles Duncan

**GEORGINA WALKDEN
(NEE WEEDON)
27th April 1924 -
16th March 2023**



'Ena', beloved wife of the late Baron Walkden, passed away peacefully at home aged 98. Ena had five children, thirteen grandchildren and fifteen great grandchildren. Towards the end of her life she sadly suffered from dementia, but since her husband's death in 1987 she proved what an indomitable spirit she had, moving from Wallasey to Chester and leading a very happy, independent life at Homedee House.

Ena joined the ATS on the 2nd January 1942 at the Peninsula Barracks in Warrington, becoming a Plotter and a Predictor Operator; and at the age of eighteen was promoted to Lance Corporal at Group Headquarters in Worthing Sussex.

She was a soprano singer and some of the recruits in the ATS came from a professional stage background and shows were put on to entertain the troops. While stationed at Canvey Island the Major informed her that they had entered her into a talent contest, and this led to her being auditioned at the Drury Lane Theatre in London. She was

accepted, but the Senior Commander refused to let her go there was a war on! Before being demobilised she was at HQ Army Post Office in Nottingham. She was very proud and happy to be a member of the ATS.

Peter Walkden



**WO1 (RSM) GLENYS (GLEN)
WILLIAMS
10 January 1931 -
14th March 2023**



Glen was born on a Saturday afternoon in January 1931 in Wyndham Street East near the RC Cathedral in central Plymouth. Her father Fred was at Home Park watching Plymouth Argyle play at the time so, not surprisingly, Glen became an avid and lifelong supporter of the team. She was the second eldest of 4 daughters and a son; she outlived her 3 sisters. Fred was in the Royal Navy for much of her childhood so Ethel, her mother, brought up the children virtually single handedly. Glen was named after her father's favourite cousin, Glenys, to uphold his proud Welsh heritage. She had a happy upbringing

but was evacuated during the war with her sisters to North Devon to stay with relatives to avoid the terrible bombings in Plymouth. She attended Stoke Damerel Grammar School on her return to Plymouth after the war and obtained employment with Mrs Chalkley's Milliners shop as a Saturday job. One of Mrs Chalkley's illustrious clients was the famous Plymouth MP, Lady Astor, who apparently always asked for Glenys Williams to serve her! As a result Glen became one of her great fans and she was so thrilled when a statue to Lady Astor was erected on The Hoe five years ago.

Glen joined the Territorial Army on leaving school and spent her first years locally in and around Devon - she particularly enjoyed her posting to Dartmouth and visited it whenever she could in her later life. After a while in the TA she decided to join the Regular Army and enlisted into the Women's Royal Army Corps and the rest, as they say, is history. She trained as a driver, but her leadership and personal skills were soon recognised so that she rose quickly through the ranks to reach the pinnacle of her career as a Warrant Officer Class One, Regimental Sergeant Major. On one occasion she led the WRAC contingent across the Albert Hall in front of HM The Queen and the Royal family during the Festival of Remembrance; such a proud moment for her family back home in Plymouth who were watching on TV.

She served mainly in the UK and will be remembered best as CSM in WONCO Wing, WRAC College, Camberley or as the RSM at 12 Company WRAC, Mill Hill. She also had postings to 68 Sqn RCT in Rheindahlen and proudly remembered her earlier career with her affiliation to the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC). At the end of her regular soldier service Glen was offered a Commission but declined as she wanted to return home to her beloved Plymouth which she did in 1970. She took up a Special Engagement with the WRAC as a Recruiter in the Army Careers Office in Mayflower Street, which is where I first met her, exactly 50 years ago. As you can imagine, she made an immediate impression on me - Glen, the ex-Regimental Sergeant Major and me, a naive and very impressionable young Officer (!) posted in as the Women's Schools Liaison Officer.

We quickly grew to respect each other and to enjoy each other's company and she would accompany me on many schools' career conventions and Military recruiting events - we had great fun and our mutual respect for each other blossomed into a lifelong friendship. When I was posted to West Berlin in the early 1980's Glen came on holiday for two years running to see me and to enjoy

life in The Cold War city behind the Berlin Wall. Exciting and enjoyable in equal measure, we had a ball, sightseeing by day, cabarets and cosmopolitan dining by night! She and her great friend, WO1 (RSM) Eileen Needham, made the most of their retirement years visiting the Far East, America and all of Europe; Paris, Venice and New York being Glen's favourite cities.

Glen was a great romantic at heart and her favourite pastimes were reading novels or going to the Cinema. She was an avid film fan and had a particular fondness for Vanessa Redgrave, Lauren Bacall, Bette Davis, Marlene Dietrich, Judy Garland, Ingrid Bergman and Vivien Leigh to name but a few!

However, in contrast to these more pleasurable pursuits she felt she also wanted to give back to her community so she trained and worked as a Samaritan in Plymouth, a job which she found both challenging but rewarding. She was a leading light in the WRAC Association Plymouth Branch for many years too and was one of the main organisers of our Grand Reunion in the city in 1984.

I kept in contact with Glen throughout my time in the Army but was able to visit her more in my retirement and I have only the happiest of memories of times spent with her. In her later years she enjoyed day trips to places closer to home like Buckfast Abbey, Dartmouth, Clovelly and of course her beloved Dartmoor. Glen appreciated fine dining and one of her favourite places was the Two Bridges Hotel on Dartmoor for three reasons; one because the food there is absolutely first class; two because Vivien Leigh had once stayed there (!) and thirdly and, most importantly, Glen's mother Ethel was once in service there as a teenager and she ran away in the dead of night back to Plymouth because she hated the isolation of the hotel and the Moor!

Those of you who remember her will recall that Glen was always absolutely immaculate, her outfits were colour coordinated with earrings to match and hair beautifully styled. She lived in the Glenholt area of Plymouth for the past 50 years; her home was her sanctuary, and she just simply loved the location and views over the Moor. She only gave up driving when her eyesight began to fail her four years ago.... once a driver, always a driver!

Glen was so special to so many people and in so many ways. She was caring, thoughtful and generous in every respect. A devoted and treasured sister, auntie, great aunt and friend. She lived a long and happy life to the full and touched and inspired many people's lives along the way; I am just thankful for the lovely memories I have of our long

friendship. Her motto was 'Carpe Diem', 'Seize the Day' and she certainly did that! Hers was a life well lived. She will be remembered with the greatest of respect and affection.

Sue Westlake
Association Life Vice President

Although Glenys wasn't an active member of the Plymouth Branch of the Association latterly, she was a special lady as she recruited me!

Ann Williams



Last Post

ADAMS, Margaret, of Clacton on Sea, on 10th March 2023 (WRAC)

ALLAN, Mrs Kathleen (nee Kendrick), of Surrey, on 10th May 2023 (WRAC)

BINNINGTON, Mrs Edith, nee Walker, of Bridlington, on 29th July 2023 (WRAC)

CARR, Mrs Barbara (nee Talbot) of Cheshire on 16th February 2023 (WRAC)

CARTER, Ms Bernice (nee Canetta) of East Sussex on 30th January 2023 (WRAC)

CHAMBERS, Mrs Sheila (nee Fenlan) of Leicester in December 2022 (WRAC)

CHAVASSE, Mrs Doris (nee Challingsworth) of Solihull on 26th July 2023 (ATS)

DOIG, Miss Agnes of Leicester on 27th August 2023 (WRAC)

DRONFIELD, Mrs Shirley (nee Goodhall / Saunders) of Mansfield on 23rd March 2023 (WRAC)

EDERLE, Miss Carol of Hindon, Wiltshire, on 11 April 2023. (WRAC)

FORD, Miss Joan, of Skegness on 22nd Jan 2023 (WRAC)

HARRIS, Mrs Iolene Patricia (nee Johnson), of Llandudno on 4th December 2022 (ATS)

HOLLAND, Mrs Ada (nee Stones), of Bolton on 6th January 2023 (ATS)

HOUGHTON, Mrs Jean (nee Apps) of Southampton on 8th August 2023 (WRAC)

HUDSON, Ms Gladys of Margate, in June 2022 (WRAC)

HURT, Mrs Brenda (nee Homer), of Nottinghamshire, on 30th April 2023 (WRAC)

IDE, Rose, of Isle of Wight on 3rd March 2023 (ATS)

JOHNSON, Mrs Sylvia (nee Brightwell) of Ipswich on 14th December 2022 (ATS)

JONES, Mrs Rosemanry (nee Reymond) of Hereford on 7th February 2023 (WRAC)

KINGHAM, Mrs Jane (nee Fredrix), of Rugby on 3 January 2023 (WRAC)

KINRADE, Mrs Jean (nee Murphy) of Glasgow on 26 Sept 2022 (WRAC)

MCLEOD, Mrs Mary of Aberdeen on 31st January 2023 (ATS)

NORIN, Mrs Peggy of Queensland, Australia in June 2023 (WRAC)

RAWLINS, Mrs Violet (nee Palmer), of Leicester, on 12th July 2023 (ATS)

ROBINSON, Mrs Anne, nee Lawson, of Leicester, on 17th July 2023 (WRAC)

SIMPSON, Mrs Daphne (nee Lane) of Nottingham, on 26 Jun 2023 (WRAC)

SOWERBY, Miss Laura, of Grimsby on 28th April 2023 (ATS/WRAC)

TOMKINS, Mrs Marisa, of Rochdale on 26th February 2021 (WRAC)

TOPP, Mrs Sandra, of York on 12th March 2023 (WRAC)

WADDINGTON, Mrs Vera (nee Edwards) of Leicester on 30th August 2023 (ATS)

WEST, Mrs Glynis (nee Webb) of Wellingborough on 26th June 2023 (WRAC)

WILLIAMS, Miss Glenys of Plymouth on 14 March 2023 (WRAC)

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Edward's son, Chris Crowcroft, grew up hearing stories of his father's time serving alongside the WRAC and as such has decided to leave a legacy to the WRAC Association. He wrote to us about his father's time as Director of Music and wonders whether the memories resonate with any of our readers.

Memories of the WRAC Band in the 1960s through the eyes of Director of Music, Capt Edward Crowcroft MBE

Capt Edward Crowcroft joined the Army in 1940 having been a professional musician in civilian life. He served with the Eighth Army, Royal Artillery, trained at The Royal Military School of Music, was appointed Bandmaster to the 1st West Yorkshire Regiment, the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Brigade. He was Director of Music of the WRAC Staff Band from February 1963 to 1969. Captain Crowcroft was an enthusiastic and popular Director of Music. He maintained a very high standard of performance and musical appreciation among his Bandswomen and, during his time as their Director of Music, the Band accepted an increasingly wide variety of engagements both military and civilian, one highlight of these being a very successful tour of Malta in May 1968.

When he took over the WRAC Band, he wanted his new band to be a 'good band,' not the male-dismissive 'good for women.' This indeed rang true - it was a highly regarded band. Life Vice President Audrey Smith remembers this to be the case and has fond memories of 'Ted' Crowcroft in his role as Director of Music. The Band Sergeant Major was Lyn Hopkin who later became Director of Music herself. She retired from the Army as a Major and was also awarded the MBE. She sadly passed away in 2016.

Back in the 1960's, marriage and pregnancy required servicewomen to leave the Army. One year the Band lost the entire cornet section to one or the other, not an issue Edward had encountered before. Memorable engagements included the Edinburgh Tattoo and a tour of West Germany, where he reported German ex-servicemen marching in the aisles when they played 'Alte Kameraden/Old Comrades'. Evidently a rare occasion since German soldiers were not encouraged to have military reunions.

Edward recommended LCpl Zara Bowness for the student bandmaster course at Kneller Hall, in effect to succeed him which she did as Captain Zara Bowness-Smith! Zara Bowness features in a BBC TV Omnibus documentary of the era on training military musicians, where she comments about 'giving as good as I get' as the only woman among men. Zara married fellow musician, Robert Smith, who was Bandmaster 3rd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment. She later became head of music in a South London comprehensive school, started the national Guide and Scout band with her husband and was a leading light in the Royal Choral Society. Sadly, the Association knows Zara to have passed away in 2015.

A significant moment in Edward's life was when he received the MBE in 1969 from HM Queen Elizabeth II; when he stepped forward to receive the award the palace musicians' gallery struck up 'Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill.' The last WRAC Director of Music, Major Ena Forster, attended Edward's funeral in Huntingdon in 1991. On the disbandment of the WRAC Ena transferred to the newly formed Adjutant General Corps Band as Director of Music. She sadly passed away in 2018.

Chris Crowcroft, Edwards' son, is an alumnus of The Duke of York's Royal Military School and graduate of St Catherine's College, Oxford. His career was in charitable fundraising and business sponsorship of the arts. He is leaving a gift in his will (legacy) to the WRAC Association in memory of his father in the belief that legacies are a vital means of helping valued causes survive and prosper after one's own time.

Chris's generosity is very much appreciated by the WRAC Association; for others who may wish to do the same please complete the form inside The Lioness, or call or email the office.manager@wraca.org.uk.



Legacies & Donations

IN MEMORIAM

Since the last Lioness kind donations were made by individuals and Branches in memory of the following persons:

Pamela Ashenden

Rose Ide

Joan Awberry

Maj (Retd) Ann Maskens-McIntyre

Col (Retd) Susan Penelope Richards

Ada Holland

LEGACIES

Since the last Lioness the WRAC Association very much appreciated the legacy received from:

Edna Green

Joyce Robson

Moir Colquhoun MBE

**Throughout the years we have
been enormously grateful to
those who remember
the Association in their wills.
Tens, hundreds or thousands,
every penny allows us to
continue to support women
who served.**



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Or phone their General enquiries.

Letters.....

Dear Editor,

Just a quick note to say thank you so much for including Mum's (Mrs Freddie Weatherley) obituary in the latest edition of 'Lioness' which I received this morning. She was immensely proud of her wartime service which she once described to me as 'The most exciting time of my life.' It's somewhat sad to think that having lived to nearly 102 years old there would be few, if any, readers of Lioness left alive today who would have known or served with Mum. Nevertheless, I am sure she would have been extremely pleased to have been remembered in a magazine she regularly enjoyed reading.

Best wishes,
Brian Weatherley.

This photo was passed to me (Jan Brodie Murphy) by Barrie (Taff) Williams who is a fellow Chelsea Pensioner living at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. He met and married a WRAC EAG (Experimental Assistant in Gunnery) who was W0402396 Cpl Susan Fennell (Williams on marriage). Susan is the servicewoman standing in the middle row, 5th person from right. Taff thinks the name of the female officer is Major Merrill's. Can anyone confirm this, or who it is?

Taff asks, does anyone remember his late wife or him from their Army days? He would love to hear from you.



Does anyone have a copy of the May-June 1972 Guildford intake photos? Sadly, I had a loose roof slate and all my boxed photos stored in the loft were destroyed by water damage.

Also, does anyone have any news or updates on WRAC W02 Winifred (Scotty) Parker-Wade, who retired in the 1980s to Cheltenham?

Issy Kempster

[Editor: If you can help please contact HQ Office and we will put you in touch with Issy]

Can anyone remember ...?

"In 1967 through to 1970 I was a junior NCO working in the pharmacy at Cambridge Military Hospital Aldershot. One of the units we supplied with medical drugs and equipment was the WRAC Depot - I think it was Guildford. This involved regular visits from the medical room staff. I became friends with the WRAC NCO, a Corporal, in charge at that time. I lost contact with her, but over the years have thought about her, and I would like to contact her. She started working there late 1967 / early 1968 and would have been about 20 years old then (so born between 1946 and 1949). If anyone can possibly let me have any info about her, I would be very grateful".

Thank you.
Don Turner (24051102 Ex RAMC)

[Editor: If you were, or knew, this person please contact HQ Office and we will put you in touch with Mr Turner]

Dear all

I am hoping someone can help me find a photograph of my Passing Out Parade, after our initial 6 weeks of basic training.

My name when I enlisted, 9th June 1972, was Marian Sandra Kelly. After doing my 6 weeks basic training I went on to Aldershot to do a driving course. I discharged myself on 16th October 1972 and returned to Ireland.

I would love to find a photograph of this happy time of my life.

Kind regards
Sandra Ricks

[Editor - if you are able to help please let the Office know and we will share with Sandra]

In March we had an enquiry from a WRAAC Qld (Australian WRAC, Queensland group) member who came to the UK in May and hoped to meet up with any of our members while in London or near Hadrian's Wall. Although we weren't able to connect her with anyone, she sent this email and invitation to meet up if anyone is in Australia:

"I had a great time in England, the highlights were my 3 days walk along Hadrian's Wall, catching up with my cousins in Andover and Kent, and lots of walking around London and the outskirts. I arrived home in Queensland Friday 2 June. If any of your ladies are ever coming to Australia, we have an extensive group of ExService organisations all over Australia and we keep in touch with each other on Facebook, email, and at get togethers, so don't hesitate to-get in-touch. We are always up for a coffee".

Deirdre Elliott
Vice President
Sunshine Coast Ex-Service and Serving
Women's Association Inc

The photo is dated 8th July 1960,
Shoeburyness, Essex, 17 INDEP COY

[Editor: If you can help Barrie/Taff please contact the Association Office and we will put you in touch with him].

Reading the WRAC Lioness gave me an idea about things I had forgotten about years ago. I joined the WRAC Band in 1949, the youngest at 17½, and the Band was only a few months old. I loved it and did my four years. The joy it gave me is still with me today. I have played in Brass Bands all my life and only gave up after the lockdown – it's time to hang up my horn at 91 years.

While in the army, around 1950/51, we had a job in Aldershot and were inspected by a group of officers. One Officer said to me, "well turned out but your hair is too long". I never forgot that voice. About 30 years later, playing golf at the Army Golf Club, I came across a lovely lady, Colonel Eleanor Bowles, that same officer who had told me off! We made good friends and spent many hours together at the Club. I am so sorry to hear of her death – a lovely, lovely lady. I will always remember her.

Janet Cox (nee Skelton)

Dear Editor,

I have just read the Association News and Updates "Congratulations" article, regarding members celebrating their 100th Birthday, and the article on page 97 headed "Keeping It In the Family" by Jeanne Kick BEM. I shared an office with this dear lady when we were both Recruiting Sergeants at the Central London Recruiting Depot, Great Scotland Yard, from 1968 until her retirement in 1977. I went on to serve a further five, completing 24 years' service.

Jeanne (or Johnny as she was always known to us, as her maiden name was Johnston) spent her entire life dedicated to service, in one form or another.

Best regards
Lee Telford



Volunteer at Oldham Cancer Support

I was on my way to my choir group for the over 50's when I saw an advertisement 'Volunteer receptionists needed for Oldham Cancer Support'. I had been employed as a clerical officer/receptionist in the NHS, which I enjoyed, so it seemed ideal for me, then aged 72 years. I applied and got the job. There are ten receptionists each doing half a day and five spares to cover illness, holidays, etc. We are a charity for people living with cancer – including close family members.

Along with my reception duties I have also manned stalls at our annual fairs. We also have a charity shop, and I was even asked to model some of their clothes for two events – which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Rene Burlinson (nee Dickinson)

[Editor: Just confirms how active so many of you are, regardless of age]

I would like to thank you all at the WRAC Association HQ for the very generous Christmas gift, and also the wrapped parcel. I will open that Christmas morning.

It was wonderful seeing you when you came up to visit us all. I know it did Pam (Richards) good to have two of you visit her (in the infirmary). She looked a lot brighter when I dropped in to see if she wanted any shopping.

I would like to congratulate all of the team on the wonderful commemorative issue of the Lioness on our past patron and Life Member, Queen Elizabeth II.

There was a large number (3 coach loads) of Chelsea Pensioners taken up to Westminster Hall to visit the Lying in State of Her Majesty. Such a moving and awesome occasion. Even now I still find it hard to believe she is no longer with us. It was like losing one of our family.

Wishing you all and everyone a very happy and healthy New Year, 2023.
Marjorie Cole



WRAC Association, Unit 11, Basepoint Business Centre, 1 Winnall Valley Road, Winchester, SO23 0LD

Tel: 0300 400 1992 (local rate call, including mobiles) Email: office.manager@wraca.org.uk

Benevolence: benfund@wraca.org.uk Tel: 07741 327094

Lioness: editor@wraca.org.uk

Website: www.wraca.org.uk

